THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES (LGMA) CONSTITUENCY

COP31 Guidance for Negotiators on CULTURE

The LGMA Guidance for Negotiators accompanies the LGMA COP31 Position and provides detailed recommendations, context and proposed negotiating text, setting out how each ask can be operationalized.

cities-and-regions.org/cop31-lgma-position

Background

Culture and climate action are profoundly interconnected. Well beyond physical infrastructure and ecosystems, the impacts of climate change affect memory, identity, livelihoods, cultural landscapes, knowledge systems, and the social fabric that holds communities together. This connection is bidirectional, as culture is also a cross-cutting dimension of territorial climate action: climate change affects cultural systems, but culture also shapes how communities understand risk, make choices, implement climate action collectively, and strengthen resilience. For many local, regional and subnational governments around the world, this connection is clear: culture is essential not only to advance climate action, but to achieve sustainable development, eradicate poverty, and reduce inequalities. It is embedded in landscapes, livelihoods, local economies, knowledge systems, and social relationships, and helps construct the identities of people and communities in ways that can strengthen social fabric and sense of place.

Culture is not merely a sectoral add-on to climate policy, but a key enabler of climate action, for example through heritage-based adaptation and culturally grounded resilience practices. It allows individuals and communities to challenge extractive, high-carbon models and to imagine different futures beyond business as usual. Culture shapes the values, priorities, behaviors, social norms, consumption patterns, and local development choices that can determine whether climate pathways are legitimate, equitable, and durable. It enables people to explore their histories, heritage, and sense of identity. It helps define transitions socially, build understanding of risk and vulnerability, and foster dialogue on needs, aspirations, and rights, while also facilitating the negotiation of trade-offs and building collective support for change.

Culture and heritage also drive territorial regeneration and collective resilience by reviving traditional ecological practices, strengthening diverse identities, protecting places of meaning, and sustaining local social fabric. Grounding climate action in local and Indigenous knowledge, traditional ecological practices, heritage stewardship, food systems, crafts, and local forms of resource governance strengthens community resilience, while safeguarding cultural rights and supporting cultural transmission and continuity across generations.

How the LGMA can contribute to the climate agenda and main calls to action

The Working Group advances the LGMA's recognition that **effective climate action must acknowledge culture and heritage as essential enabling conditions, rooted in the cultural contexts and knowledge systems of local communities.** In this line, the LGMA should advocate for culture to be integrated across adaptation, mitigation, climate finance, just transition, and loss and damage, as well as into multilevel climate planning and national commitments. Embedding cultural rights within the climate agenda will strengthen climate strategies by enabling them to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve, and local, regional and subnational governments are key partners in translating that knowledge, rights, and territorial realities into implementation.

To advance climate adaptation, cultural mapping, heritage safeguarding, local and Indigenous knowledge, and cultural risk assessments should be integrated into mitigation and adaptation plans. Local and Indigenous knowledge should be embedded in climate risk assessments and resilience strategies. Culture and heritage can also constitute an important part of territorial resilience infrastructure, for instance, through hubs for climate education, early warning dissemination, emergency responses and preparedness, continuity of

community services, knowledge transmission, and recovery after climate-related disruptions, while building trust, fostering social cohesion and community dialogue, and enabling communities to envision new climate futures through culture.

Culture and heritage also contribute to climate change mitigation and the achievement of the Paris Agreement's objectives. Cities and territories can drive mitigation through the adaptive reuse of buildings, traditional low-carbon construction, circular cultural production, responsible tourism, sustainable cultural mobility, the reduction of emissions by cultural actors and institutions, as well as by promoting sustainable changes in human behavior and social norms.

When the impacts of climate change surpass adaptation limits and threaten cultural rights, loss and damage frameworks must explicitly address culture and heritage. The loss of people's cultural and heritage assets, traditions, ways of being, and identities constitutes a non-economic loss that can destabilize the foundations of community belonging. Climate assessment and financing frameworks should acknowledge material and immaterial, economic and non-economic losses (including the erosion or damage to heritage, knowledge systems, cultural livelihoods, and the connection to the land). Dedicated cultural risk assessments need to be institutionalized across loss and damage frameworks, including the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, the Warsaw International Mechanism, and the Santiago Network, to identify human vulnerabilities and ensure that standard metrics do not overlook these impacts.

The Working Group therefore calls for greater cross-sectoral coordination to break down policy silos and integrate the culture and climate agendas. It further calls for meaningful participation, in agenda-setting, co-creation, and follow-up rather than consultation alone, of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, marginalized communities, and cultural actors, and for culture and heritage to be given a place in climate negotiations, the Global Stocktake, and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage.

Culture Working Group

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