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Statement of Support for the Launch at COP28 of the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action

On behalf of the nearly 1,500 organisations and individuals that have signed the Global Call to Put Cultural Heritage, Arts and Creative Sectors at the Heart of Climate Action, cultural voices hail the political commitment of UN member State Parties to advocate for culture- and heritage-based climate action as a critical positive step toward responding to the Global Stocktake and supporting implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Dubai, UAE (4 December 2023) –

At COP28, [the United Arab Emirates \(UAE\) and Brazil have announced](#) the launch of the **Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at the UNFCCC** (GFCBCA), an international coalition of UN Member States aimed at building political momentum for the recognition of culture as a uniquely powerful force and positive resource for a more effective climate change policy.

The formation of the Group of Friends is a timely and urgently needed framework for response to the shortfalls in achieving both the mitigation and the adaptation goals of the Paris Agreement – shortfalls attributable, in part, to the failure to adequately address the cultural, historical, and ethical dimension of the causes and responses to anthropogenic climate change.

The [Global Stocktake synthesis report](#) released by the UNFCCC in September found that the world is not on track to meet the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement. To strengthen the global response, it said, governments need to support “systems transformations,” “whole-of-society approaches,” “integrated, inclusive policymaking” and immediately strengthen “social” enabling conditions while “finding creative ways to overcome” “social and capacity barriers” and “siloed responses.”

The Group of Friends will thus provide a much-needed platform for highlighting the crucial but still too often neglected socio-cultural dimensions suggested by the Global Stocktake. This international coalition of UN Member States will:

- Promote international consensus on the urgency of including culture in climate change policy for unprecedented inclusivity in global climate action.
- Confront the threat climate change poses to cultural sites, traditional practices, and indigenous knowledge systems.
- Advocate for culture-based solutions to the climate crisis at COP28 and provide a voice in climate discussions for behaviour change.

The launch of the Group of Friends under the co-chairmanship of the UAE and Brazil, hosts of COP28 and COP30 respectively, is a key step towards realising the ambitions of artists, culture and heritage advocates, professionals and volunteers, scientists, and other cultural voices from across the world who have united ahead of COP28 around the [Global Call to Put Cultural Heritage, Arts and Creative Sectors at the Heart of Climate Action](#). The Global Call urges climate negotiators to put cultural heritage, arts and creative industries at the heart of climate action by adopting a ground-breaking “**Joint Work Decision on Culture and Climate Action**,” a UN process which would trigger policies and frameworks to enable culture to contribute fully to climate solutions.

The aims of the Group of Friends align with years of climate action and advocacy by cultural heritage, arts and creatives industries, including NGOs, creative and design businesses, cultural and research institutions, and local governments and municipal authorities. It creates space to bridge the culture and climate communities. It also builds on incremental progress at COP26 [and COP27](#) such as the inclusion of culture in the Global Goal on Adaptation framework, as well as an [enhanced focus on culture and heritage by the IPCC](#).

Diverse organisations that have signed the Global Call strongly support the basis for the Group of Friends’ approach and firmly believe that by unlocking the power of culture from arts to heritage to help people imagine and realise low carbon, just, climate resilient futures, national governments can achieve more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2025. The Culture Sector stands ready to support the GFCBCA to deliver on their objectives after COP28.

Ministers from all regions of the world are expected to attend the inaugural meeting of the GFCBCA at COP28 on 8 December 2023, reflecting the enormous value that co-creation and cooperation can bring, particularly through North-South and South-South knowledge exchange. The culture community congratulates those visionary States that are attending this inaugural meeting. Civil society encourages other UNFCCC Parties to join the GFCBA over the coming days at COP28 and beyond. The next important step is to connect all the dots on culture-based climate action through the tabling and adoption of the Joint Work Decision at COP29 leading to a new UNFCCC workplan on culture at COP30.

Cultural heritage, arts and creative industry leaders recognize and commend the COP28 Presidency and UAE and Brazil, under the leadership of Salem bin Khalid Al Qassimi, Minister of Culture (UAE) and Margareth Menezes, Minister of Culture (Brazil) to include and make visible Non-State constituencies, and their contributions to climate action and ambition within the launch of the GFCBCA. This level of inclusion has set the bar for future COP proceedings and we are committed to fulfilling the promise of this collaboration.

QUOTES FROM SUPPORTERS

The quotes are reflected in alphabetical order, according to the last names.

“Today multilevel action and deeper cooperation with cities, regions and other subnational governments is fundamental to better embrace culture in climate action. ICLEI welcomes wholeheartedly the new Group of Friends of Culture-Based Action and is fully committed to enhancing the potential of culture and heritage as a powerful resource for addressing climate change and stimulating stronger global climate action, drawing on the crucial cooperation of leaders at every level,” said **Yunus Arikon, Director of Global Advocacy; ICLEI World Secretariat**

“I fully support the global call to put culture into climate policy! If we want a systemic change in the climate realm, we have to change first our deep belief systems, our habits, our moral models – ultimately our culture. We have to change our hearts and minds. Without cultural change, we will not succeed in changing the way we deal with planet earth!” said **Werner Bachstein, Chairman of the Community Arts Network, Director of the Community Arts Lab by Porticus**

“On current trajectories we are not going to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. We need all the tools at hand to get on track including - especially - the arts and culture. The Group

of Friends and Global Call could not have come sooner,” said **Melvin Benn Managing Director, Festival Republic**

“COP28 is a landmark in the global advocacy efforts to integrate culture in the climate change agenda. With the launch of the global Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action, we will see political momentum and a more focused and sustained effort to address the threat that climate change poses to heritage sites, landscapes and traditional practices and indigenous knowledge. It will also harness the power of culture, heritage and the creative sector to drive climate action, engage all communities in the production of solutions and contribute to more robust and durable outcomes for a just and equitable transition to a low carbon climate resilient future,” said **HRH Princess Dana Firas of Jordan, Co-Chair, Culture at COP28 Working Group, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador**

“COP28 presents a historic opportunity to push for the political recognition of the role of culture and heritage in the fight against climate change. It is also crucial to translate this effort into concrete actions on the ground. This is an ALIPH priority,” said **Mr. Valéry Freland, Executive Director, International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (ALIPH)**.

"Based on the experience of the last ten years in our region, we are convinced that the protection of cultural and natural heritage allows the implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies against the effects of climate change. We highlight the results achieved by the Global Call to Put Cultural Heritage, Arts and Creative Sectors at the Heart of Climate Action. We celebrate the creation of the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action and we hope that the states parties will actively engage in this urgent global call," said **Architect Mauro García Santa Cruz, Director of the Research Institute in Architecture and Territory (INISAT FAD UCALP), Argentina**.

“Brazil's role as a Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action is a remarkable influence as we collaborate towards COP30. Brazil is recognised as the most biologically diverse country globally and is equally distinguished for its rich cultural diversity, encompassing a multitude of Indigenous cultures, heritage, and artistic expressions. I am optimistic that this leadership, together with this incredible mobilisation of the cultural sector, will translate into the action we need to ensure that culture has a legitimate place in climate policy,” said **Thiago Jesus, People Palace Projects, Brazil**

“Our Kingdom of Tonga: Culture and Heritage. Koe Otua mo Tongo Ko Hoku Tof’ia. God and Tongo Are My Inheritance. We value ourselves and nature as God’s Creation,” said **Uili Louisi, President OHAI Tonga, artist and climate change advocate**

“Art and Culture has a unique influence on public discourse and therefore an important role to play in society’s response to the climate crisis. The cultural community serves as a catalyst for education, creativity and innovation; allowing us to shift our thinking, explore new possibilities, and lay the foundation for the future. For too long, this community has been sidelined from the political discourse but now culture is finally in reach of being placed at the heart of climate policy. I have no doubt that the phenomenal work of the team will lead to some creative solutions and positive developments in climate policy,” said **Heath Lowndes Managing Director, Galleries Climate Coalition**

“Logic tells us that the answers to human-caused climate change will be found in human creativity inspired by our shared humanity. We need both State and Non-State actors working to bring this truth to climate policy and It is very exciting to see that happening with the launch of the Group of Friends. Placing culture at the core of climate action will give it the “soul” needed for transformative impact,” said **Architect Moe Moe Lwin, Co-Chair, Culture at COP28 Working Group, The Siam Society/SEACHA, Myanmar**

“The launch by national governments of the Group of Friends is a much overdue opportunity to put heritage, cultural rights and Indigenous knowledge and practices at the center of efforts to solve the climate crisis,” said **Adam Markham, Deputy Director for Climate & Energy, Union of Concerned Scientists, USA**

“A human rights-based approach to solving the climate crisis needs meaningful access to culture and knowledge at its heart. We welcome the launch of the global Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at COP28 as a step towards mainstreaming culture into climate policy in a sustainable way. We celebrate any opportunity to break down barriers and ensure that the potential of all stakeholders to contribute to finding solutions and enabling a just, climate resilient future is being recognised,” said **Vicki McDonald, President, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)**

“We know that bombarding people with facts and figures isn’t enough to prompt large scale action. What makes a difference is stories and emotions, that people can relate to in their own lives and be a spur to change. This is why we now need culture to be a major element in climate

policy,” said **Dr Nicholas Merriman, Director Horniman Museum, Chair environment and ecology, National Museums Directors Council UK**

“Our endangered cultural and natural heritage monuments are the “chakras” of the Earth. By giving them the mission to raise awareness and mobilise their millions of visitors they can become the ideal catalyst urging a collective shift in consciousness worldwide,” said **Alexandra Mitsotaki, Co-founder and President, World Human Forum**

“As a member of the Climate Heritage Network since 2022, ICOM advocates alongside other cultural organisations for the inclusion of culture and heritage in international climate policy frameworks as a source of resilience and inspiration for imagining more just, low-carbon and climate resilient futures. On behalf of the global museum community, ICOM strongly encourages the adoption of the Joint Work on Culture and Climate Action decision,” said **Emma Nardi, ICOM President**

“ICOMOS welcomes this important and timely new Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at the UNFCCC, which acknowledges the central role of culture and heritage to climate action. The climate crisis necessitates wide-ranging changes to how we live. Culture and heritage are embedded in every aspect of people's lives, and so are an essential and central part of this transition,” said **Teresa Patricio, President, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)**

“The Global Stocktake found that the world is not on track to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement but many of its proposed correctives double down on existing approaches. We need a stocktake of the stocktake. What is missing? Who has been left out? The glaring answer is the socio-cultural dimension and cultural voices — a gap that the new Group of Friends boldly aims to help fill,” said **Andrew Potts, Coordinator, Culture at COP Working Group Secretariat; Europa Nostra/European Heritage Hub**

“With COP29 expected to be held in Europe, European civil society committed to cultural heritage is already mobilising to support the ambitions of the Group of Friends. To keep alive the spirit of 1.5°, working together, we must secure a Joint Work decision at the next COP that finally puts culture and heritage at the heart of international climate policy,” said **Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic, Co-Chair-Designate, Culture at COP29 Working Group, Secretary-General, Europa Nostra & Leader of the European Heritage Hub**

"We consider that the creation of the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action will allow the further development of new cultural tools focused on people and in harmony with the common home," said **Architect Guillermo Rubén García, Executive Director of the Institute for Sustainable Urban and Territorial Development, La Plata City Foundation, Argentina.**

"The Global Call is catalyzing an unprecedented cultural mobilization at COP. The creative industries must unite to bolster and amplify UNFCCC's climate ambition endeavors, both within our sector and beyond. To achieve this, we should actively involve cultural leaders and practitioners, consulting with them to expedite climate negotiations and leverage their platforms for heightened awareness of the outcomes," said **Samuel Rubin, Director, Impact & Partnerships, Co-Founder, Entertainment + Culture Pavilion**

"UCLG welcomes the launch of this new Global Group. Cities and local governments are ready to lead more ambitious Culture-based Policies on Climate Action," said **Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)**

"Our ancestors, in all the continents, knew a lot about how to live successfully without destroying our environment. We cannot exclusively pin our hopes on new technologies for limiting climate change. After all, technology has caused climate change. We must also look to the wisdom of our ancestors for cost effective and implementable solutions. Ancestral wisdom must be on the COP agenda," said **Jim Stent, Siam Society/SEACHA (Thailand)**

"For far too long culture - arts, heritage and creative industries - has been absent in climate policy frameworks, yet culture is one of our most powerful, enduring and universal manifestations of who we are and how we live - in short, what matters to us. So it is with great joy that I welcome the Group of Friends and urge us all to support this game-changing initiative by joining the Global Call to Action," said **Alison Tickell, Julie's Bicycle; Global Call to Action Campaign Director**

NOTE TO EDITORS

About the **Global Call to Put Cultural Heritage, Arts and Creative Sectors at the Heart of Climate Action:**

The Global Call to Put Cultural Heritage, Arts and Creative Sectors at the Heart of Climate Action is driven by a diverse worldwide coalition. Coordination of the Global Call campaign is being

provided within the framework of the [Climate Heritage Network](#) Culture at COP28 Working Group. The Working Group is co-chaired by HRH Princess Dana Firas ([Petra National Trust](#)) and Arch. Moe Moe Lwin ([Southeast Asian Cultural Heritage Alliance](#) (SEACHA) and [The Siam Society](#)). Princess Dana has also been named as the CHN Envoy to the High-Level Ministerial Dialogue on Culture-Based Climate Action which will be held at COP28 on 8 December.

The Global Call Campaign is being led by Alison Tickell of [Julie's Bicycle](#), a leading not-for-profit, mobilising the arts and culture to take action on the climate, nature and justice crisis. [Europa Nostra](#)/[European Heritage Hub](#) provides the Secretariat for the CHN Culture at COP28 Working Group

For a full list of Global Call signatories or to reach the Global Call in any of 14 languages, please visit: <https://www.climateheritage.org/jwd> (English) or <https://www.climateheritage.org/jwd-arabic> (Arabic)

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