

DRAFT

STRATEGY FOR WORLD HERITAGE IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS): 2026-2034

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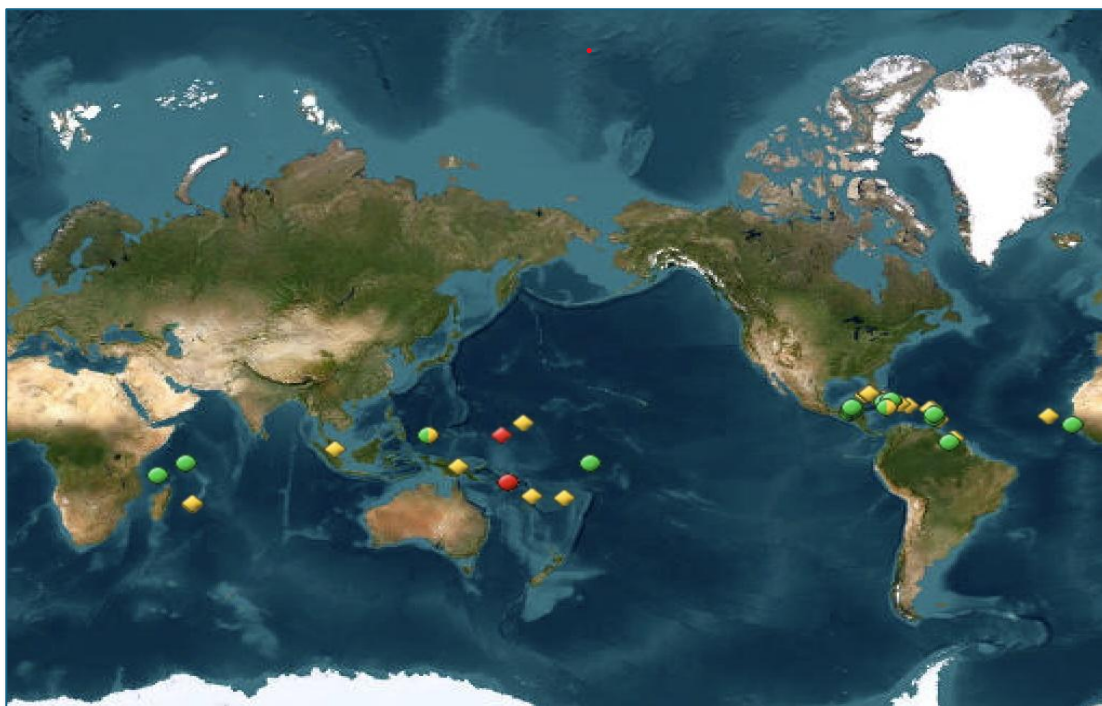
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INTRODUCTION

Within the Framework of UNESCO's 1972 *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (hereafter "World Heritage Convention"), and on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Convention, an international conference "The Next 50: The Future of World Heritage in challenging times - Enhancing resilience and sustainability" was held in Delphi, Greece from 17 to 18 November 2022. The conference emphasised the importance of prioritising UNESCO's support in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) States Parties (see Annex B), which are significantly impacted by climate change, and whose cultural and natural heritage are integral to adaptation solutions. In this context, UNESCO has initiated the development of a comprehensive SIDS strategy for World Heritage, ensuring sustainable conservation and management of their heritage, including preparation for sites on the Tentative List for their eventual nomination to the World Heritage List. Additionally, at its 42nd session of the General Conference in 2023, UNESCO adopted *The UNESCO Operational Strategy for SIDS* (2023-2029), known as "SIDS Operational Strategy". There are currently 37 World Heritage sites in 24 SIDS States Parties (Annex C), and 104 sites on the Tentative List from 32 SIDS (Annex D) as of July 2025. Out of 39 SIDS that have ratified the Convention, three States Parties have no World Heritage sites inscribed nor have Tentative Lists submitted yet (Nauru, Niue and Timor-Leste).



39 SIDS: relatively remote, vulnerable to environmental challenges and generally small in size

Smallest population: 1,269 (Niue)

Smallest land area: 26 sq. km (Tuvalu)

Population of over 10 million: Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Papua New Guinea

World Heritage Properties: 37 in 24 SIDS

Tentative List: 104 sites from 32 SIDS

The World Heritage Strategy for SIDS aims to develop clearly defined goals from an interregional perspective within the context of sustainable development and climate action. The consultation process has been broad and inclusive with a view to improving South-South cooperation;

developing actions for regional and international collaboration; knowledge sharing, experience and good practices; identifying opportunities for resource mobilisation; and strengthening inclusive planning with local communities and Indigenous Peoples to better integrate their knowledge and practices for the management of Tentative List sites and inscribed properties.

Comparative Regional Context

Regional strategies under the World Heritage Convention include initiatives in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. These have recognised the need for targeted capacity building and sustained financing mechanisms tailored to specific regional and contextual realities. For example, the Strategy for World Heritage in Africa, demonstrates the value of catalytic funding, regional pooling of expertise and structured capacity-building pipelines. Similarly, regional cooperation models in other parts of the world have emphasised peer learning, technical mentoring and phased implementation.

The proposed World Heritage Strategy for SIDS builds upon these experiences while responding to the distinctive vulnerabilities, geographic isolation, administrative scale, and fiscal constraints of island states. It recognises that SIDS share characteristics with the wider regions which they are a part, such as development pressures and capacity limitations, yet island contexts present specific exposure to climate hazards, narrow economic bases and governance structures that require a differentiated approach within the framework of the World Heritage Convention.

The proposed Strategy looks at existing programmes and documents that inform the SIDS Operational Strategy Accelerator Programmes and the existing regional Action Plans for World Heritage. A review of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting from SIDS, online consultations, existing reports and studies, and an extensive baseline survey have provided a detailed situational analysis. The pervasive challenges remain inadequate investments and financial resources, and inadequate human, institutional and technological capacity.

The global SIDS consultation meeting held in Kingston, Jamaica, from 23-24 October 2025 (and continued online on 8 December 2025) as well as an online consultation to present the finalised Strategy and costed action plan on 9 April 2026, which gathered and integrated additional recommendations, ratified the main objectives and proposed actions, all contributing to the final Strategy for examination by the World Heritage Committee.

This activity was made possible with the financial support of the Governments of Germany and Ireland as part of “Identifying and Streamlining World Heritage Global Priorities for Small Island Developing States”.

1. DESK REVIEW

There are 39 SIDS States Parties located in three regions: (i) Caribbean, (ii) Pacific, and (iii) Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea (AIS). While they are diverse in size and population, they share common social, economic, and environmental characteristics and vulnerabilities. The limited diversification of the economic sector in SIDS exacerbates the vulnerability of the cultural sector, further compromising the livelihoods of communities who are significantly impacted by environmental vulnerabilities. The adverse effects of climate change and disasters impact tangible cultural and natural properties – such as buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, coral reefs and coastlines – as well intangible cultural heritage, including the loss of oral traditions and languages. These challenges threaten investments in, and the development of, the creative sector. Additionally, the migration of young people (“brain drain”) necessitates urgent measures to safeguard culture in all its dimensions to ensure the transmission to future generations.

In 2014, the [SAMOA Pathway](#) called on the international community to support SIDS in strengthening heritage and creativity and further endorsed that “indigenous bio-cultural heritage recognises the deep connections among people, culture, knowledge and the natural environment, and can meaningfully advance sustainable development.”

1.1 UNESCO THEMATIC PROGRAMMES FOR SIDS

World Heritage Programme for SIDS

UNESCO's World Heritage thematic programmes are initiatives dedicated to specific aspects of heritage conservation and management, with the objective of supporting States Parties in safeguarding and administering their cultural and natural heritage. To specifically address World Heritage-related concerns in SIDS, the World Heritage Programme for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was adopted at the 29th session of the World Heritage Committee (Document [WHC-05/29.COM/5](#)) in 2005 following the Mauritius International Meeting where UNESCO organised a Plenary Panel on “The Role of Culture in the Sustainable Development of SIDS”.

UNESCO SIDS Strategy in the framework of the 1972 Convention

[UNESCO Rolling Operational Strategy for Small Island Developing States 2023-2029](#) (hereafter “UNESCO SIDS Strategy”), was endorsed by UNESCO’s Executive Board (216 EX/Decision 5.I.C) in May 2023. This over-arching Operational Strategy for SIDS recognises the multiple threats that jeopardise their World Heritage properties, and their cultural and natural heritage sites in general.

SIDS face unique challenges related to the conservation of their sites such as climate-induced and other natural hazards. SIDS World Heritage properties are not only exposed to acute disaster events such as cyclones, floods and volcanic activity, but also to cumulative and slow-onset climate impacts, including sea-level rise, coastal erosion, salinization, coral bleaching, droughts, biodiversity shifts and heat stress. These processes progressively erode physical fabric and ecological integrity, often triggering emergency response mechanisms. Beyond physical degradation, climate change generates significant non-economic losses, including loss of cultural identity and place attachment, disruption of traditional knowledge systems, decline in

ecosystem services supporting livelihoods, reduced intergenerational transmission of intangible heritage, and loss of sacred landscapes and cultural continuity.

For SIDS, where heritage and landscape are closely intertwined with identity, sovereignty, tourism-dependent economies, cumulative and non-economic impacts have far-reaching social and developmental implications. The integration of heritage into climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning is therefore not solely a conservation imperative but a development and resilience necessity as recognised by the UNESCO SIDS Strategy.

Limited financial and technical resources make it difficult to maintain and protect these sites effectively through mitigation and adaptation actions. The UNESCO SIDS Strategy further advocates for the adoption of advanced digital transformation technologies to aid vulnerable countries in crisis monitoring, preparation and response. These technologies include satellite imagery, 3D modelling, use of drones for heritage protection, tsunami and other early warning systems and artificial intelligence tools for natural hazard management, among others.

The implementation of the UNESCO SIDS Strategy is conducted through six Accelerator Programmes and the Partnership and Resource Mobilisation Plan. Key aspects of the Accelerator Programmes include:

- Capacity-Building
- Sustainability
- Financial and Technical Support
- Partnerships

The Accelerator Programmes are designed to be intersectoral and multidisciplinary, with each programme being led by a UNESCO Programme Sector. While none of the Accelerator Programmes specifically addresses World Heritage or natural and cultural heritage sites in and of themselves, they do focus on fostering innovation, capacity-building, and sustainable development, which can be used to support World Heritage and Tentative List sites. Accelerator Programme 3 is led by UNESCO's Culture Sector (CLT) and has CLT/WHC as a contributing subsector.

1.2 CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION IN SIDS

International Thematic Policy documents

A number of important international thematic strategies and action plans exist that have in turn informed regional and national plans, as well as national legal frameworks. Of note, over two thirds of SIDS have a national public policy or a strategy in place for culture. In consideration of the diversity of cultures, languages, and biodiversity among SIDS, the current focus is on those strategies and plans that emphasise integration of heritage conservation with sustainable development, with a particular focus on addressing present challenges like climate change and ensuring social and economic benefits for local communities. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage**
Published by UNESCO in 2023, the policy document provides a framework for addressing climate change as a significant threat to World Heritage properties. The document, adopted by the General Assembly of States Parties, establishes four key goals for 2030:

Assessing climate risks, Implementing adaptation measures, Strengthening mitigation efforts, and Improving knowledge sharing, capacity-building, and awareness. It emphasises a "transformative change" to make properties more resilient and better adapted.

- **Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention**

Adopted in 2015, the policy document emphasises that the World Heritage Convention already contributes to sustainable development and human well-being by protecting irreplaceable cultural and natural heritage. The policy aims to strengthen this contribution by carefully integrating environmental sustainability, inclusive social and economic development, and the fostering of peace and security into the conservation and management of World Heritage properties. This integration is seen as a way to ensure World Heritage properties are protected through activities that contribute to the social and economic development and quality of life of communities, without compromising their Outstanding Universal Values (OUV). While not specifically referencing SIDS, the policy recognises that for many properties, achieving sustainable development requires action at a scale larger than the property itself and calls for capacity-building and interdisciplinary cooperation among all stakeholders.

- **Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape**

Adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2011, the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* represents a holistic approach to urban heritage conservation, integrating it with contemporary development and sustainability goals. Key recommendations include integrating urban heritage conservation strategies into urban development policies, sharing tools and best practices for implementation, as well as fostering cooperation and partnerships between public and private actors. While not specifically mentioning SIDS, the core recommendations on climate action, integrated governance, sustainable tourism, community empowerment, and the use of digital technologies offer a pathway for SIDS to leverage their rich heritage as a source of resilience in an increasingly challenging global environment.

1.3 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE THIRD CYCLE OF PERIODIC REPORTING

The Periodic Reporting exercise serves as a fundamental conservation monitoring mechanism under the World Heritage Convention. States Parties are requested to submit a Periodic Report to the World Heritage Committee regarding the implementation of the World Heritage Convention within their respective territories. It uses a detailed questionnaire with thematic sections to collect information on legislative and administrative provisions adopted by States Parties (Section I), as well as on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties (Section II). The questionnaire of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting for all regions was extensively revised between 2015 and 2017, adding major updates such as integrating Sustainable Development and emphasising synergies with related conventions.

36 SIDS State Parties responded to the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting between 2019 and 2024, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Cook Island, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Niue, Palau,

Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu.¹

Key recommendations from World Heritage sites that responded to the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting on their management needs can be prioritised as follows:

- Secure Adequate & Sustainable Funding
- Enhance Conservation & Management Efforts
- Foster Community Engagement & Address Socioeconomic Impacts
- Improve Urban & Infrastructural Elements
- Implement Research & Monitoring Programmes
- Strengthen Legal & Institutional Frameworks

A recurring and critical challenge is the lack of financial resources. Insufficient and unpredictable funding significantly constrains the ability of management authorities in SIDS to implement conservation measures, maintain monitoring systems, address cumulative impacts from climate impacts and respond effectively to disasters or implement disaster risk reduction actions. In small island contexts, where properties are often located in fragile coastal and marine environments and management authorities operate with limited staffing, even short-term funding interruptions can have disproportionate impacts. Over time, such constraints increase the risk of gradual degradation, inappropriate interventions and loss of integrity and authenticity, thereby affecting the sustained protection of OUV. The need for more predictable and sustainable financing for management actors is therefore a fundamental condition for long-term conservation. Notably, only 56.7% of World Heritage properties in SIDS reported in the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting, that existing sources of funding are secure over the medium term, and only 16.7% reported security over both the medium and long term.

Regional World Heritage Action Plans

Although the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List² was adopted in 1994, the specific realities and vulnerabilities of small islands have become increasingly evident over time, particularly in the context of accelerating climate change, disaster risk, and fiscal constraints. Global frameworks such as the SAMOA Pathway and the Paris Agreement, together with findings from successive cycles of Periodic Reporting and regional World Heritage Action Plans, have underscored the need for a coordinated, cross-regional response tailored to SIDS realities. The present Strategy therefore reflects an evolution in the Convention's engagement with SIDS, consolidating accumulated evidence and responding to growing urgency within the international development and climate agenda.

This Strategy looks at regional World Heritage Action Plans in which SIDS are located³, which emerged from the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting.

¹ Nauru and Tuvalu ratified the Convention after the reporting period, and therefore, did not take part in this exercise.

² <https://whc.unesco.org/en/globalstrategy/>

³ Action Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean (2023-2029); Strategy for World Heritage in Africa (2022-2029); World Heritage Work Plan for the Pacific Region (2021-2025)

Each of these Action Plans emphasises and prioritises the “5Cs” Strategic Objectives adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2002 and 2007, namely:

- **Credibility:** Enhancing the Credibility of the World Heritage List by ensuring it represents a geographically balanced and representative testimony of cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value.
- **Conservation:** Ensuring the efficient conservation of World Heritage sites.
- **Capacity-building:** Facilitating the creation and implementation of efficient capacity-building initiatives, including support for preparing property nominations to the World Heritage List, as well as for comprehending and executing the World Heritage Convention and associated instruments.
- **Communication:** Enhancing public understanding, engagement, and support for World Heritage through strategic communication efforts.
- **Communities:** Strengthening community involvement in implementing the World Heritage Convention.

It goes without saying that any comprehensive strategy for SIDS will build upon the needs in these five areas.

Asia and the Pacific		Caribbean		Africa	
Maldives	1986	Guyana	1977	Seychelles	1980
Fiji	1990	Haiti	1980	Cabo Verde	1988
Solomon Islands	1992	Cuba	1981	Mauritius	1995
Papua New Guinea	1997	Antigua and Barbuda	1983	Comoros	2000
Kiribati	2000	Jamaica	1983	Guinea-Bissau	2006
Niue	2001	Dominican Republic	1985	São Tomé and Príncipe	2006
Samoa	2001	Saint Kitts & Nevis	1986		
Marshall Islands	2002	Belize	1990		
Micronesia (Federated States of)	2002	Saint Lucia	1991		
Palau	2002	Dominica	1995		
Vanuatu	2002	Suriname	1997		
Tonga	2004	Grenada	1998		
Cook Islands	2009	Barbados	2002		
Singapore	2012	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	2003		
Timor-Leste	2016	Trinidad & Tobago	2005		
Tuvalu	2023	Bahamas	2014		
Nauru	2024				

Notably, all SIDS States Parties have ratified the World Heritage Convention.

Africa

At the conclusion of the first UNESCO Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2014–2021), African Member States began discussions on continued support for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Africa. UNESCO's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa 2022–2029 was presented and adopted during the 41st session of the General Conference in 2021. Subsequent to the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting (2019–2020), the World Heritage Action Plan for Africa was developed to propose concrete targets and actions to meet the objectives of Priority Africa's Flagship Programme 3 'Fostering cultural heritage and capacity development'. A total of 24 activities were proposed to ensure the following four main outputs.

The dominant themes in the Action Plan’s activities list revolve around enhancing Africa’s representation, capacity, and sustainability within the framework of the World Heritage Convention. The main themes include: Capacity-Building and Training; Gender Equality and Youth Inclusion; Heritage Representation and Nomination Support; Site Management and Conservation; Education and Research; Community Involvement and Advocacy; Digital Innovation and Technology; Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship; Policy and Legislative Integration; and Regional Cooperation and Coordination.

Asia and the Pacific

A report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), commissioned by UNESCO office in Apia, informed the World Heritage Action Plan for the Pacific region for the period 2021-2025 – the fourth iteration of the *Pacific Regional World Heritage Action Plan*. The Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting provided a useful roadmap for charting where World Heritage priorities lie for the next 5 years in the region. The Action Plan reported that 12 Pacific States Parties out of 14 had ratified the World Heritage Convention; Tuvalu and Nauru, have since ratified the World Heritage Convention in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Similarly to the other regional action plans, this one is supported by the “5Cs” of the World Heritage Committee.

While Pacific SIDS share much in common with their Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea counterparts, they are perhaps unique in that there is an inseparable link between culture and nature in Pacific identities. Heritage is understood and managed holistically—through Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and land-sea relationships. Protecting Pacific heritage requires respect for, understanding of, and maintenance of traditional cultural practices, Indigenous knowledge, and the region’s systems of land and sea tenure. There is often no, or little, distinction made between tangible and intangible heritage in the region’s approach to heritage.

The main observation about World Heritage at the Pacific regional level is that its momentum has decreased over the last decade. One major reason for this decline is the lack of a formal entity with an accepted role to guide, establish, or drive regional actions for World Heritage. The Pacific Action Plan outlines a set of 29 key activities at both regional and national levels, addressing themes such as Leadership and coordination; Promotion and awareness; Capacity development; Funding; Periodic Reporting; Regional heritage list development. On average, each SIDS UNESCO Member State has about 6-10 specific national actions listed.

The *World Heritage Workplan for the Pacific Region (2021-2025)* contributed to the *Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific (2023-2029)*. The Action Plan was developed on the basis of the outcomes of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting and provides guidance for implementing the World Heritage Convention within the region and details strategies for capacity-building, awareness-raising, and applying the Convention to preserve cultural and natural sites. The plan presents a structured framework designed to support national strategies and facilitate stakeholder engagement at different levels. The Action Plan incorporates five Strategic Objectives, with a total of 34 actions/activities. Key areas include capacity-building for site managers and national focal points to enhance processes for identifying, nominating, and managing World Heritage sites; public awareness and education initiatives such as World Heritage in Young Hands; and efforts to strengthen national legislative frameworks and develop accessible heritage education

materials. The plan also suggests that countries create their own national action plans, allowing them to address local priorities and contexts.

Caribbean

On 11 December 2023, approximately 200 participants comprised of National Focal Points, Site Managers, and representatives from Category 2 Centres across the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre participated in the launch of the Action Plan. Based on surveys and consultations conducted in 2021 and 2022 as part of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting for the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the Action Plan outlines 39 distinct activities within the “5Cs” Strategic Objectives:

- Strengthening Representation and Credibility: The plan focuses on ensuring that the diverse heritage of Latin America and the Caribbean is adequately represented on the World Heritage List, enhancing the region's credibility in the global heritage context. Reinforcing existing national inventories is expected to play an important role.
- Effective Management and Conservation: It aims to reinforce effective management practices for the conservation and promotion of World Heritage properties in the region, ensuring their long-term preservation. Of relevance to SIDS will be the proposed development and implementation of disaster/risk preparedness plans, as well as climate adaptation and mitigation plans.
- Capacity-Building: The plan emphasises the development and implementation of capacity-building initiatives for innovative approaches to conservation, management, and promotion of World Heritage sites — with an emphasis on sharing of experiences, knowledge (including traditional/Indigenous) and best practices.
- Heritage Education and Awareness: It aims to enhance the use of traditional management systems, heritage education, communication, and awareness-raising strategies to protect World Heritage and foster community engagement.
- Community Participation and Stakeholder Engagement: The plan emphasises the need to improve the role and involvement of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and stakeholders for effective management of World Heritage properties. It also highlights the need to reinforce locally driven sustainable tourism opportunities around the World Heritage properties.

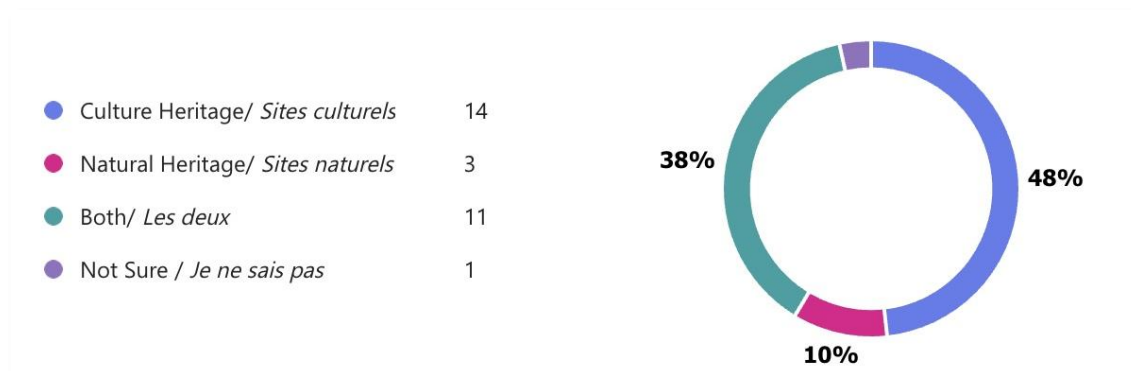


1.4 RESULTS OF BASELINE SURVEY: NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS FOR WORLD HERITAGE

As part of the wide-ranging consultations in the development of a comprehensive and representative Strategy, a questionnaire was disseminated in July 2025 via the Permanent Delegations of the SIDS States Parties to UNESCO and SIDS National Commissions for UNESCO with a request for it to be completed by National Commissions, World Heritage site managers, relevant ministries, and representatives from across the islands. Additionally, written statements were also sought, outlining any additional observations or expectations (including key themes, priorities, and challenges) to be addressed in the Strategy. These discussions support a more inclusive approach and ensure that a diversity of perspectives is reflected and be supplemented by a series of online regional consultations in September 2025 that provide additional space for a broad range of stakeholders to share their views directly.

Over a period of one month, 29 responses to the survey were received from the following 26 SIDS States Parties, representing 66.6% of SIDS: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

Among the respondents, the majority represented cultural sites.



Most respondents indicated that their sites receive the bulk of funding from either local or national government sources. While some World Heritage sites are managed by Trusts, the majority of organisations responsible for cultural/natural/mixed heritage sites in the countries represented are predominantly government.

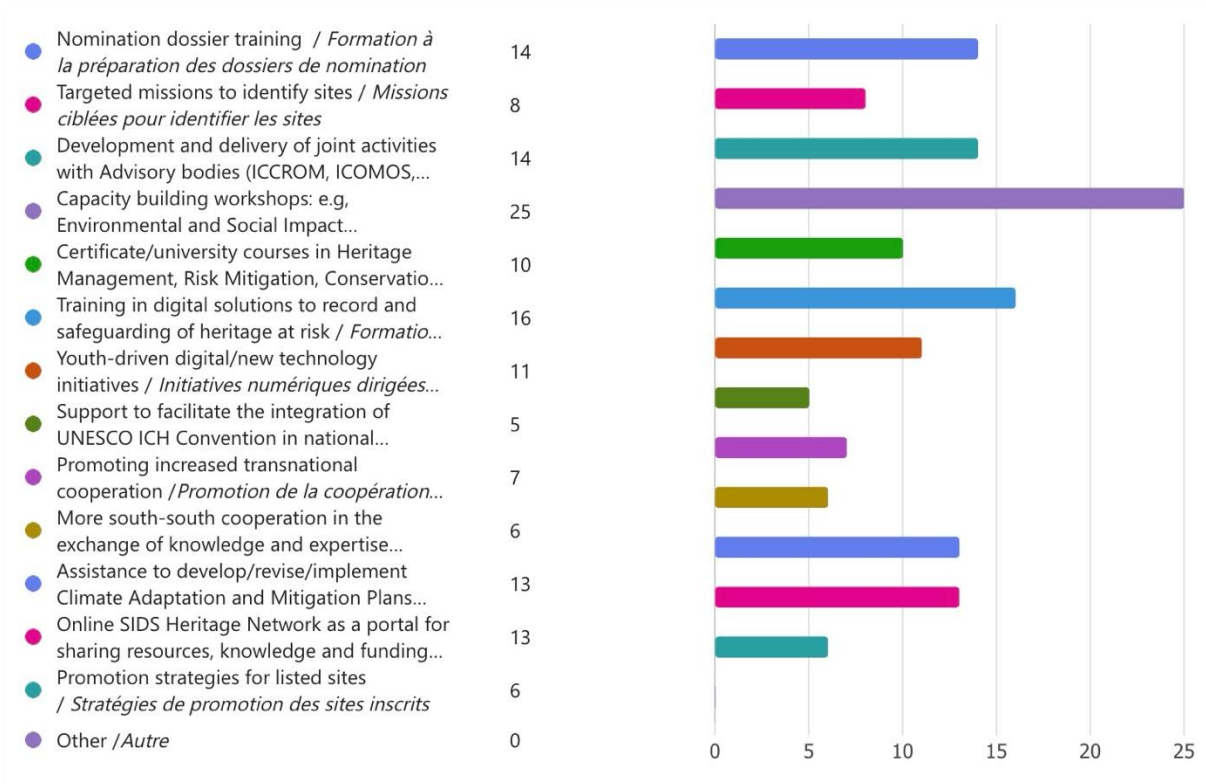
The World Heritage challenges selected as **most important** in each respondent country were ranked as follows, in order of priority:

1. Inadequate investments and financial resources – 65.5%
2. Lack of human, institutional and technological capacity – 44.8%
3. Lack of effective management plans – 34.5%
4. Incompatible zoning requirements on smallest islands / atolls – 27.6%
5. Reliance on external assistance for monitoring and conservation – 24.1%
6. Synergies between World Cultural and Natural Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) – 24.1%
7. Administrative ‘heaviness’ of the Convention and operational guidelines – 24.1%
8. Complicated nomination process – 20.7%

Proposed priority activities in the survey included:

- Nomination dossier training
- Targeted missions to identify sites
- Development and delivery of joint activities with Advisory bodies
- Capacity-building workshops
- Certificate/university courses in Heritage Management, Risk Mitigation, Conservation, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Tourism
- Training in digital solutions to record and safeguard heritage at risk
- Youth-driven digital/new technology initiatives
- Support to facilitate the integration of UNESCO ICH Convention in national legislation and regional policies
- Promoting increased transnational cooperation
- More south-south cooperation in the exchange of knowledge and expertise
- Assistance to develop/revise/implement Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plans and Disaster/Risk Preparedness Plans
- Online SIDS Heritage Network as a portal for sharing resources, knowledge and funding opportunities
- Promotion strategies for listed sites

Based on the survey results, several priority activities were proposed. Of these, **Capacity-building** ranked the highest, followed by **Training in digital solutions**, **Nomination dossier training**, and **Joint activities with Advisory bodies**. It should be noted that the majority (66%) of the 29 respondents replied that they do not have a disaster/emergency plan in place; 76% replied that there has been no formal risk assessment of collections or heritage sites within the last 5 years. Other closely ranked priorities included **Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plans**, and an **Online SIDS Heritage Network** as a portal for sharing resources.



Given that the survey does not represent 100% of SIDS, it cannot offer an authoritative state of affairs for all SIDS States Parties. It does, however, offer a window into some of the main priorities, including:

- **Capacity-Building and Training:** Many responses emphasise the need for targeted capacity-building, including specialised training for site managers, practical workshops, and knowledge exchange. Strengthening local skills and autonomy is seen as essential for effective heritage management and sustainability.
- **Funding and Resource Mobilization:** A recurring concern is inadequate funding and limited human resources. Suggestions include establishing dedicated heritage funds, seeking support from international partners, and improving access to financial resources to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of heritage programmes.
- **Governance, Legislation, and Communication:** Improved governance structures, clearer communication channels between national, regional, and international bodies, and strengthened legal protections are recommended. Respondents highlight the need for

having more streamlined and simpler nomination processes and consistent involvement of mandated institutions.

- Community Engagement and Inclusion: As expected, active involvement of local communities, youth, and site managers is considered vital. Respondents note the importance of public buy-in, integrating intangible cultural heritage (ICH), and ensuring that site managers are empowered and included in decision-making.
- Technical Assistance and Climate Resilience: Given that 24% of respondents selected climate change as the emergency that they are most concerned about, it is no surprise that there is a call for technical support in updating registers, using digital tools for monitoring, and integrating climate risk assessments into site management. Collaboration among island states and adoption of best practices are seen as key to building resilience against environmental and development pressures.

Additional written statements submitted from 14 SIDS States Parties further elaborated on these priorities. These include Cuba, Cook Islands, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Niue, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Tonga, and Trinidad and Tobago.

2. CONSULTATIONS

2.1 UNESCO FIELD OFFICES

Between 12 June and 26 July 2025, a series of online consultations were held with UNESCO Field Offices covering SIDS*⁴, specifically with Directors and/or programme specialists working directly with World Heritage in:

- **Apia** (Cook Islands, Federated State of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu)
- **Dakar** (Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau)
- **Port-au-Prince** (Haiti)
- **Jakarta** (Timor-Leste)
- **Kingston** (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago)
- **Nairobi** (Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles)
- **New Delhi** (Maldives)

The consultations revealed a series of interconnected issues, where foundational problems, particularly financial and institutional unpredictability, often cascade to create a range of practical and logistical barriers. Core challenges are not isolated incidents but rather symptoms of a structural misalignment between the World Heritage Convention and the diverse realities of local contexts. The most significant finding is that financial and institutional issues are not merely challenges; they are foundational vulnerabilities that create a domino effect, leading to subsequent problems in capacity, conservation, and policy implementation. The diverse challenges identified by the Field Offices have been placed into five interconnected themes.

Summary of Challenges:

1) Financial and Resource Constraints

Across all SIDS, financial unsustainability, whether lack of government funding or budget cuts, is a significant cross-regional issue. The UNESCO Office in Port-au-Prince provides a particularly stark example, noting that heritage sites are in an advanced state of dilapidation due to a lack of funds, even though well-trained experts exist. This lack of internal financial stability is often coupled with an over-reliance on external assistance and foreign governments for monitoring and conservation. This dependency creates a model that is not resilient and can be disrupted by global economic shifts or changes in foreign policy.

Although climate and development finance mechanisms increasingly recognise cultural heritage, SIDS face structural barriers in accessing these resources. Proposal preparation costs, fiduciary requirements, co-financing thresholds and lengthy approval cycles can exceed national administrative capacities. Small island administrations often lack dedicated climate finance units, technical expertise to prepare adaptation focused heritage proposals, multi-year budget predictability, and mechanisms to aggregate small

⁴ SIDS States Parties covered by each Field Office

scale heritage projects into fundable portfolios. Addressing these costs is essential to unlocking sustainable financing.

The Strategy as such promotes portfolio-based approaches, pooled technical assistance, standardised concept templates and strengthened integration of heritage within national climate and DRR strategies to improve absorptive capacity and reduce administrative burdens.

2) Institutional and Governance Deficiencies

World heritage implementation in SIDS is shaped by distinctive governance dynamics. Effective heritage management requires stable and competent institutional structures, effective legislation, policies and guidelines. Political and administrative turnover fundamentally undermines long-term strategic planning and communication, and several Field Offices noted that political instability has led to weak institutions and high staff turnover in Ministries and National Commissions for UNESCO. In many SIDS, world heritage responsibilities are assigned to small heritage units without dedicated legal authority or sustained budget lines, limiting their ability to influence national development decisions. Strengthening communication by National Commissions regarding World Heritage related decisions, policies, opportunities to national focal points, is essential. In some SIDS, there is a need for more intersectoral coordination of inter-related needs for World Heritage properties, for example between Tourism, Culture and Environment Ministries.

Additionally, customary land tenure systems, private ownership patterns and high coastal development pressures complicate site management and conservation, and buffer zone enforcement. These governance realities necessitate flexible, phased and politically realistic implementation approaches that prioritise institutional continuity, training of trainers models and integration of heritage within national planning frameworks. Recognising these structural governance dynamics strengthens the Strategy's realism and reinforces the need for adaptive implementation mechanisms.

3) Human Capital and Technical Capacity Gaps

These represent a direct consequence of the previous two challenges. The inability to develop and retain local expertise hinders everything from initial nomination to long-term conservation. Several Field Offices noted a lack of human resources/expertise at a national level and a poor understanding of how to implement the Convention; limited capacity to develop dossiers, manage sites, and implement conservation; the absence of local training programmes in cultural heritage is also a concern, meaning that professionals must travel for training. A particularly pervasive symptom of this capacity gap is the lack of inventories, a challenge cited by the UNESCO Offices of Kingston, Apia, Dakar, and Jakarta. Without comprehensive inventories, it is nearly impossible to make informed decisions about conservation, management, or even the potential for new nominations.

4) Policy and Strategic Implementation Barriers

There is a fundamental tension between the top-down, one-size-fits-all nature of the World Heritage Convention and the bottom-up realities on the ground. When international frameworks fail to align with local priorities and cultural systems, they are

met with resistance and ineffectiveness. For instance, several UNESCO Field Offices noted that management plans for World Heritage properties written by outside experts are not always effective. This is further complicated by local priorities, for example tourism, which are not always compatible with the management of World Heritage properties. Several UNESCO Field Offices noted that World Heritage status can limit traditional land uses, resulting in the Convention being perceived as an obstacle rather than a benefit. This points to a clear need for more local engagement for the development and implementation of management systems, which align with Indigenous knowledge systems and traditions.

“Strategy Fatigue” was also reported due to a proliferation of strategies and action plans – not just for World Heritage but for SIDS generally – with insufficient support for their implementation. The limited desire to revise Tentative Lists in some SIDS, and the perception that there is no added value of World Heritage status if traditional systems of management are in place, collectively demonstrate a philosophical and practical conflict.

5) External and Environmental Threats

There are also immediate and existential threats to heritage sites in SIDS, the ability to mitigate which is heavily dependent on having the financial, institutional, and human capacity to act. Climate change, disaster preparedness and new developments that affect sites on the Tentative List were cited as major issues in the Caribbean. Natural disasters have impacted most sites in the Pacific region. While these threats are critically important, the capacity to respond to them is entirely contingent on the foundational stability of the heritage system itself. For example, a country cannot effectively sensitise local disaster management agencies to cultural and natural heritage if it lacks a stable institution or the human capacity to conduct the training.

Challenge	Justification	Field Offices that cited issue
Financial and Institutional Instability	This is the most critical challenge as it acts as the primary root cause for a majority of other problems. Without stable funding and governance, a country cannot train experts, maintain sites, or develop policy. The Haiti FO's situation, where a lack of funds renders expert skills moot and leads to site dilapidation, is a prime example of this causal chain. The reliance on external assistance is not a solution but a symptom that perpetuates institutional weakness and a lack of local ownership.	5 Field Offices in 3 regions: Caribbean, Africa, Pacific
Human Capital and Technical Capacity Gaps	A direct consequence of funding challenge, this challenge is a fundamental barrier to effective implementation. The widespread lack	6 Field Offices in 3 regions: Caribbean,

	of inventories is a visible symptom, but the underlying issue is availability of local expertise and training. The problem is sometimes compounded by a deeper socio-political resistance to formalisation, where traditional systems of land ownership and management may view inventories as a threat.	Africa, Pacific
Mismatched Methodologies and Local Realities	This structural challenge addresses the fundamental tension between the top-down nature of the Convention and on-the-ground realities. The ineffectiveness of externally written plans and the conflict with local priorities (e.g. tourism, traditional land use) leads to a lack of buy-in. The widespread call for a reassessment of OUV and the integration of ICH signifies a philosophical barrier to be overcome.	5 Field Offices in 3 regions: Africa, Pacific, Caribbean
Gaps in Awareness and Communication	This systemic challenge is often symptomatic of the higher-tier issues. Political instability and high staff turnover make consistent communication difficult, and a lack of training leads to poor understanding of the Convention. While critical for effective implementation, resolving this challenge is contingent on solving the financial and institutional issues that cause them.	3 Field Offices in 2 regions: Caribbean, Pacific
Climate and Development Pressures	These are immediate, existential threats to heritage sites. However, they are ranked lowest in the hierarchy of challenges because the ability to address them is entirely dependent on having the foundational capacity, funding, and stable institutions to implement the solutions. For example, a country cannot effectively prepare for disasters without a stable institution and trained and available personnel.	2 Field Offices in 2 regions: Caribbean, Pacific

From these challenges, the most paramount priority remains capacity-building, and mirrors the results of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting. This is not merely a task to be ranked among others, but a foundational requirement that underpins the viability of every other initiative.

2.2 FEEDBACK: CATEGORY 2 CENTRES

African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)

The AWHF is an intergovernmental organisation created in 2006 by the African Union and UNESCO to address the challenges faced by African States Parties in the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, specifically, the underrepresentation of African sites on the World Heritage List and the insufficient conservation and management of these sites. In 2010 the AWHF gained the status of UNESCO Category 2 Centre.

International Centre on Space Technologies for Natural and Cultural Heritage (HIST)

HIST is a UNESCO Category 2 Centre established in Beijing, China, in 2011, hosted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) to apply space technologies for monitoring, managing, and protecting UNESCO-designated sites (World Heritage, Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks). HIST provides training, research, and data applications, fostering global collaboration to support sustainable development and the World Heritage Convention using remote sensing and GIS, and is now in its third operational phase (2025-2033). Within its key functions of monitoring and management, capacity building, research and development, and data sharing, HIST has indicated its commitment to contributing its expertise to implement the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS.

Regional World Heritage Institute in Zacatecas (RWHIZ)

RWHIZ is a Category 2 Centre created in 2010 by UNESCO and the Government of Mexico, in conjunction with the Government of Zacatecas, with a mandate to contribute to the implementation of the 1972 Convention in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. RWHIZ in particular commends the development of the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS for the emphasis placed on sustainable development and climate action, as well as the identification of capacity building as a cross-cutting pillar. These focus areas are fully aligned with the mission and priorities of RWHIZ, where challenges related to resources, management, and resilience to climate change are also central.

While valuing the inclusion of training in areas such as the preparation of nomination dossiers, strengthening of local capacities, the use of digital tools for documenting heritage at risk, and the promotion of World Heritage sites, RWHIZ proposes the inclusion of capacity building in Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) methodologies. RWHIZ reiterates its commitment to actively contribute to the regional implementation of this Strategy, particularly through:

- The exchange of experiences and good practices among Caribbean Member States;
- The organization of joint training workshops (both in-person and online); and
- The development of digital resources and materials to strengthen heritage management capacities.

Between 2023 and 2025, RWHIZ carried out six relevant activities, which included participants from SIDS. RWHIZ is committed to and has proposed additional training courses for the Caribbean during the 2026-2028 period.

World Heritage Institute of Training and Research-Asia and Pacific (WHITR-AP)

The Institute's mission is to strengthen the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Asia and the Pacific region through capacity building, training, research, the dissemination of

information and network building. WHITR-AP highlighted a number of current activities that align with the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS and indicated its willingness to develop further activities that align with the Strategy. To this end, it proposes a global meeting of the Category 2 Centres (C2Cs) to further identify how each of the C2Cs' activities could be streamlined to contribute to the implementation of the World Heritage SIDS Strategy.

2.3 REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS: NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

In August 2025, the World Heritage Centre issued a communiqué to the Permanent Delegations of all SIDS States Parties to UNESCO and to all SIDS National Commissions for UNESCO, announcing a series of online regional consultations scheduled for September regarding the development of the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS. For the consultations, each State Party was requested to designate a representative to provide a brief presentation outlining their country's perspectives on key themes, priorities, and challenges related to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the conservation of World Heritage properties.

In cooperation with – and with the technical assistance of – the UNESCO Offices in Nairobi, Apia, and Kingston, three regional online consultations were held as follows:

- African SIDS: 9 September 2025
- Asia and the Pacific SIDS: 12 September 2025
- Caribbean SIDS: 16 September 2025

In total, 36 SIDS States Parties out of 39 attended the consultations — along with regional agencies, Category 2 Centres, Advisory Bodies, universities, and experts — representing a total of about 150 participants.

Each meeting was prefaced by Opening Remarks by a directorate of the World Heritage Centre, followed by an introduction of the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS presented by the World Heritage Centre, followed by a presentation on initial findings from the Strategy development to date, as well as a thematic presentation tailored to the region.

During the consultations, each State Party representative was requested to deliver a concise five-minute presentation on their priority themes, actions and challenges. The online consultations were available in English, French and Portuguese for the African SIDS, and in English, French and Spanish for the Caribbean SIDS in order to facilitate the communication. These consultations were also accessible to all interested stakeholders seeking to contribute to the development of the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS, and an open discussion and remarks from stakeholders were welcomed at the end of each session. The primary goal of these consultations was to establish an inclusive forum that enabled a diverse array of stakeholders to express their perspectives directly, thereby informing the content of the Strategy and assisting in identifying prospective actions.

Africa

The discussions highlighted a strong commitment to heritage protection and valorisation as a cornerstone of sustainable development. **Priorities** that emerged include:

- Investment and Rehabilitation: Several SIDS prioritise direct investment and rehabilitation of cultural heritage sites.

- Sustainable Development: There is a clear goal to use cultural and natural heritage to foster a sustainable environment and improve the tourist experience. A special emphasis is needed on balancing the protection of natural sites with the needs of community agriculture, which can be achieved with greater community inclusion in decision-making.
- Capacity-Building and Technical Expertise: Strengthening the framework for heritage management is a significant priority. This includes: updating national legislation, developing new sites for nomination, enhancing capacity-building and training. Prioritising the use of new technologies is seen as a way to make sites accessible without development pressures.
- Regional Cooperation and Partnerships: Beyond strengthening existing and fostering new partnerships, Mauritius offered to act as a regional hub for SIDS and international cooperation. The suggestion to create a simple network, like an online platform, shows a desire for improved communication and mutual support among SIDS.

African SIDS continue to benefit from Priority Africa, especially within the context of capacity-building. While Mauritius has set an excellent example in best practices, African SIDS still face several recurring and significant **challenges**:

Direct Impact on Heritage: Climate change (especially sea-level rise) and natural hazards pose an urgent threat to heritage assets and place pressure on natural resources.

- Balancing Authenticity and Environment: A challenge exists in the use of traditional materials (e.g. lime) for site conservation due to modern environmental issues, which also affects the authenticity of World Heritage sites.
- Insufficient Financial Resources: The most persistent challenge is the need for increased and stable financial resources to implement programmes and support countries. Diversification of funding sources is seen as crucial.
- Capacity and Personnel: There is a general lack of institutional and personnel capacity.
- Absence of Management Plans: This is a noted difficulty, with the possible need for site-specific management plans as a response to climate change.
- Logistical Difficulties: difficulties due to the isolated nature of some sites.

Asia and the Pacific

On a conceptual level, there is consensus among Pacific SIDS that they are not small and would prefer the term “Large Ocean Spaces”. Some Pacific SIDS also emphasised the importance of management of existing properties over preparing or updating Tentative Lists. Additionally, some overarching **priorities** for SIDS in this region include an understanding of:

- Culture and Nature Intertwined: There is a fundamental belief that there is never a separation of culture and nature in the Pacific.
- Central Role of Community: Community involvement is seen as crucial. Challenges in nomination often revolve around ensuring that the community accepts protection systems.
- Complexity of Systems: Asia and Pacific SIDS face a complex landscape where legal systems vs traditional systems often clash.

Key **challenges** were identified as:

- Natural Hazards: Events like tsunamis cause communities to relocate and emphasise the need for a baseline study to document places affected by natural hazards that happen annually.
- Outward Migration: This was noted as a challenge, especially during the Covid19 pandemic. It should also be noted that there were some disaster-related opportunities: a lack of tourists during the pandemic allowed sites to bounce back, offering a chance to reset and look at ways to ensure sustainable tourism.
- Lack of Funding: This is the most common and significant challenge across the region, in particular to implement the World Heritage and Intangible Heritage conventions. The Cook Islands specifically requested a dedicated fund for community-led nominations.
- Insufficient Resources: Lack of human and technical resources and over-reliance on external experts is a major challenge, together with the lack of local resources and reliance on imports.
- Site Management and Protection: Protecting sites against vandalism with an emphasis on managing/improving current sites over nominating new ones.
- Buffer Zones and land rights: Issues with buffer zones exist because land is a connection between people and their ancestors, making nominations difficult as communities do not want to sell their land.
- Spatial Limitations: Small land areas pit urban development against heritage protection.

Caribbean

The Caribbean regional consultations centred on the overarching key themes above, with the following **priorities**:

- Regional Cooperation and Partnerships: A recurring priority is the need for more regional cooperation, coordinated enforcement, and strengthening partnerships with NGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and government agencies for marine protected areas management.
- Capacity-Building and Technical Expertise: This is a significant priority, with calls for capacity-building and improved technical expertise and training to manage World Heritage properties and update Tentative Lists.
- Strategy and Planning Integration: The importance of integrating heritage conservation into regular planning processes was highlighted, as well as integrating traditional knowledge into heritage policies.
- Resource Mobilisation: A key priority is resource mobilisation, especially through climate finance mechanisms, and addressing the limitations in funding for monitoring and research.
- Resilience and Disaster Management: The Strategy should be developed for resilience across multiple hazards with a view to improving disaster risk management for historic areas.
- Sustainable Development: Priorities for sustainable conservation include sustainable tourism and community development.

Consistent **challenges** for Caribbean SIDS related to climate, human and technical resources, and institutional frameworks:

- Climate Change Impacts: This is the most prominent challenge, including expected drier conditions and more frequent droughts, rising sea levels, increased and stronger hurricane activity, and climate change vulnerability generally.
- Coastal Degradation: Specific coastal challenges include coastal erosion, mass coral bleaching events, stony coral tissue loss disease, and coral reef decline.
- Exposure to Multiple Hazards: The region is exposed to seismic, hydrometeorological, and technological risks.
- Limited Resources: Challenges included financial constraints, especially limited funding for monitoring and research.
- Limited Expertise: There is a lack of technical expertise, insufficient capacity for Heritage Impact Assessments, site management plans and nomination dossiers, and a general need for capacity-building.
- Governance and Legal Frameworks: Challenges include fragmented legal and institutional frameworks, lack of political stability, and land tenure issues.
- Coordination and Development Pressures: Difficulties often arise in coordinating between government departments and community organisations. Development pressures, particularly in coastal areas, and conflicts with private developers pose threats to heritage sites.
- Invasive species: As a result of the region's dependence on imports and its high degree of exposure to extreme weather events, alien species have multiple avenues to reach the islands, and as such many of them are affected from the spread of invasive species that also affect heritage sites.

Summary of Key Themes, Priorities, and Challenges

The regional consultations, which saw remarkable attendance and valuable contributions confirmed a broad consensus among the three regions on the key themes, critical priorities and challenges facing SIDS in implementing the World Heritage Convention.

After an extensive review of presentations, discussions and written statements covering the three regions, the **Key Themes** were extracted from the main challenges outlined for each SIDS region, below, and include:

- i. Building and Maintaining Environmental and Climate Resilience
- ii. Building and Maintaining Human, Technical and Financial Capacity
- iii. Strengthening Governance, Management, and Policy Development and Implementation
- iv. Strengthening Community Engagement and Inclusion

Shared climate challenges that pose an urgent threat to heritage assets and natural resources across all regions include sea-level rise, more frequent and stronger storms, increased droughts, and coastal degradation. Other constant challenges are inadequate financial resources, alongside limitations in institutional infrastructure, human capacity, and technical expertise. The region also experiences challenges due to fragmented legal and institutional structures, insufficient management plans, and conflicts between heritage protection and urban or coastal development pressures. There is agreement that community involvement is paramount, and the Strategy should integrate heritage conservation into routine planning processes and encourage the inclusion of traditional knowledge and practices in policymaking and outreach.

The regional consultations successfully served as an inclusive forum for diverse stakeholders from all SIDS regions to express their perspectives.

Structural Barriers within the World Heritage System for SIDS

While many constraints affecting SIDS World Heritage properties originate at the national level, several are embedded within the operational architecture of the World Heritage Convention itself. The procedural requirements associated with nomination preparation, management planning, impact assessment, and periodic reporting generate disproportionate administrative and financial burdens for small administrations with limited technical staff. SIDS frequently encounter high costs in preparing nomination dossiers and supporting technical studies, Dependence on external consultants due to limited in country expertise, Difficulty maintaining continuity across multi-year nomination processes, Complex advisory body review cycles requiring sustained technical engagement, and Reporting obligations that duplicate data already collected under other international frameworks.

In addition, the highly specialised terminology and evolving conceptual frameworks underpinning the Convention are not always consistently interpreted and understood across contexts and may present challenges in how nomination dossiers are prepared. Technical language and methodological expectations of the Convention can be difficult to interpret without sustained exposure and mentoring, which may affect the clarity and consistency with which nomination concepts are articulated and defended.

These structural burdens are amplified by geographic remoteness, small populations, fiscal constraints and vulnerability to natural hazards. While the Convention's procedures are designed for universal applicability, they do not always reflect the administrative realities of small island states.

This Strategy therefore recognises that strengthening SIDS participation requires not only capacity development within States Parties but also procedural streamlining, modular toolkits, regional pooling of expertise and reduction of transaction costs across World Heritage processes. It also prioritises structured mentorship, peer to peer exchange, diagnostic tools, and simplified guidance materials to strengthen conceptual clarity and ensure that nominations and management systems are grounded in a clear and shared understanding of the Convention's requirements.

2.4 GLOBAL CONSULTATION MEETING, JAMAICA

In order to round out the series of regional consultations on World Heritage in SIDS, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre convened a global meeting from 23 to 24 October 2025 in Kingston, Jamaica, in cooperation with the UNESCO Regional Office for the Caribbean. Overall goals were to present the findings of the regional online consultations; share interregional experiences; assess interregional challenges and priorities; and identify recommendations and a roadmap for the final Strategy.

A total of 33 participants attended the Kingston meetings, representing 20 countries, namely:

Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cabo Verde⁵, Cook Islands, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands⁶, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Advisory Bodies, a regional organization (Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency), UNESCO Chair and experts. Additionally, there were over 30 people participated via Zoom on both days, including, Fiji, Nauru, and Singapore. Online representation from Category 2 Centres included: Wildlife Institute of India (WII), International Centre on Space Technologies for Natural and Cultural Heritage (HIST), and the Regional World Heritage Institute in Zacatecas (RWHIZ).

The Secretary General of the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO, Mr Everton Hannam, welcomed participants to the Opening Ceremony of the Kingston Meeting. This was followed by welcome remarks by Mr Eric Falt, Director, UNESCO Office in Kingston, and Jamaica's Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Honourable Olivia "Babsy" Grange. Hon Grange provided an inspiring message of welcome in the indomitable Jamaican spirit of "One Love", in addition to her message of support, encouragement and gratitude for the work being carried out for World Heritage in SIDS.

The Director of World Heritage Centre, Mr Lazare Eloundou Assomo, in his Keynote address, stressed that SIDS, as part of the global community are at the heart of the future of the World Heritage Convention. SIDS are home to rich and many still unknown cultural traditions, exceptional natural environments and deep connections to the oceans, making them the embodiment of the remarkable values that the World Heritage Convention seeks to protect, especially in the face of the most acute and complex challenges. In a precursor to presenting the background of the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS, he noted that the current efforts are not only timely, but necessary and urgent: a Strategy that emanates from what the people in the islands want and need, and which will serve as a powerful tool for resilience, identify and sustainable development across all the SIDS regions.

The Keynote address was followed by a presentation of findings of desk studies, consultations and structure of the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS by Ms Lorna Abungu, World Heritage Centre consultant. Each day was framed by a series of thematic discussions, case studies and lively discussions, each with an expert/moderator, presenters and rapporteurs. Unfortunately, the impending arrival of Hurricane Melissa resulted in the majority of international participants being flown out of Jamaica on the morning of the 24th. That morning's session however carried on with a small group of participants who remained, while the Plenary was ultimately held online on 8 December 2025. The sessions highlighted shared priorities and challenges for SIDS in heritage protection and sustainable development across five thematic areas:

- 1) **Climate Action:** Presentations and discussions emphasised that SIDS across Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific face similar vulnerabilities, including climate-related hazards, limited financial resources, weak stakeholder collaboration, unsustainable development, low public awareness of heritage, and

⁵ Online participation due to Visa issue.

⁶ Online participation due to Visa issue.

complex private ownership of heritage sites. Despite these challenges, significant efforts are underway to reduce disaster risk and vulnerability.

- 2) **Sustainability:** The discussions underscored that people and communities are central to the Historical Urban Landscape (HUL) approach. Integrating HUL into the final strategy was seen as essential, with urban tourism identified as a potential driver of sustainable development when grounded in community participation.
- 3) **Capacity Building:** This session stressed the importance of engaging youth in heritage preservation and management, including archaeology. Youth involvement was viewed as a pathway to increased awareness, skills development, and job creation.
- 4) **Management and Conservation:** The use of advanced technologies—such as laser scanning, drones, photogrammetry, LiDAR, and SLAM—was presented as a valuable tool for documentation, monitoring, conservation, and interpretation of heritage sites. These technologies offer particular benefits for SIDS through remote monitoring and high-quality data despite limited staffing, though challenges remain related to cost, data standards, intellectual property, and data storage.
- 5) **Communication and Outreach:** Community-led approaches to heritage nomination and management were highlighted, emphasizing traditional governance, youth engagement, education, and tourism. However, persistent challenges include land tenure issues, migration, funding constraints, and building resilience in communities dependent on nature-based livelihoods within World Heritage sites.

Overall, the discussions reinforced the need for integrated, community-centred strategies that address climate resilience, sustainability, capacity building, technological innovation, and effective communication.

Plenary Debate

As a result of the impact of Hurricane Melissa on Jamaica, the Plenary was rescheduled and held online on 8 December 2025, with a total of almost 50 participants. The Plenary debate focused on issues to be considered for further elaboration and a road map on the development of the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS. Ms Debra Kay Palmer, Director of World Heritage and Cultural Conventions, Jamaica opened the session with the key takeaways from the October meeting in Kingston. Session moderator was Mr Lazare Eloundou Assomo, with Ms Lorna Abungu as Rapporteur, and participants of the Plenary session confirmed the four main Strategic Objectives as:

- i. Building and Maintaining Environmental and Climate Resilience
- ii. Building and Maintaining Human, Technical and Financial Capacity
- iii. Strengthening Governance, Management, and Policy Development and Implementation
- iv. Strengthening Community Engagement and Inclusion

The duration of the Strategy was also discussed, and an eight-year period was agreed upon. In the discussions that followed, participants confirmed the Strategic Objectives and highlighted the need for a phased approach to the Strategy, emphasising that actions and activities should consider the need for:

- Addressing how the Strategy will be implemented and monitored in a light and practical way to reduce programmatic bottlenecks while seizing opportunities.
- South-south (esp. Africa and Caribbean) and inter-regional cooperation for nominations: SIDS may be distinct islands, but they are linked by shared natural environments, climate challenges and in some cases shared historical roots.
- Specific targets and clear ways to achieve them, e.g. percentage increase in World Heritage nominations over (xx) period of time.
- Improved and enabling legislation and policy ecosystem, as well as citizen engagement and the use of new technologies (where possible) to monitor and document sites.
- Taking into consideration the value of HULs in mapping and building out resilience.
- Mapping out inter-regional cooperation and developing a network/database of heritage experts.
- Developing and improving working partnerships with technology companies.
- Engaging Universities and regional higher education institutions as strategic partners in capacity-building and conservation, management and resilience building initiatives, particularly within South-South cooperation frameworks.
- Recognising synergies with local agencies and institutions and initiating joint projects.
- Keeping operating costs of National Trusts and other management bodies manageable, including shared licencing fees for new technologies.
- Strengthening inventories.

Human and institutional capacity building remain top priorities, and participants expressed the need for a monitoring framework to evaluate the implementation based on clear indicators and tangible results. The importance of including policy makers/governments in the forthcoming activities of the Strategy was underscored. Additionally, representatives of C2Cs expressed a strong desire to support capacity building and stressed the need to integrate a streamlined Strategy into their planning to better match it with ongoing programmes or expand them to further embrace the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS.

2.5 GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON FINALISED DRAFT STRATEGY (VIRTUAL)

Following the consolidation of inputs from regional consultations, the Kingston global meeting, and feedback from Category 2 Centres, a final round of virtual global consultations was convened on 9 April 2026 to discuss the near-final draft of the World Heritage Strategy for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The consultation brought together representatives from SIDS States Parties, UNESCO, Advisory Bodies, Category 2 Centres, regional organisations, and technical experts. This provided an opportunity to make suggestions on and validate the coherence, sequencing and implementation of the proposed Priority Actions, phased activities and costed framework. Participants broadly endorsed the structure of the Strategy, including its four Strategic Objectives and the phased implementation approach, highlighting that the Strategy reflects the realities of SIDS in terms of scale. Capacity constraints and exposure to climate and disaster risks.

Discussions during the consultation highlighted several priority areas requiring strengthening or clearer articulation. These included the need to explicitly recognise Preliminary Assessments as a distinct and resource-intensive step within the nomination process; to advance nomination support, capacity-building and legislation considerations earlier within Phase One; and to reinforce the role of regional cooperation, mentoring systems, and expert networks in addressing

capacity gaps across SIDS. Participants further emphasised the importance of integrating both policy-level and technical-level capacity-building tracks, enhancing the visibility of partnerships with regional organisations (including DRM agencies), and ensuring that the Strategy supports more accessible and continuous communication among SIDS through formal and informal knowledge-sharing platforms.

Additional feedback underscored the importance of embedding locally grounded and context-sensitive approaches within the Strategy. Participants emphasised the need to address the decolonisation of heritage methodologies and World Heritage processes, including a critical reflection on how OUV is defined, interpreted, assessed and validated in SIDS contexts, and how these processes can better reflect plural epistemologies. This includes recognising and integrating Indigenous, traditional and community knowledge systems as integral to significance evaluation, management and interpretation, rather than supplementary to externally defined frameworks. Participants also called for greater clarity on implementation timelines, cost assumptions and sustainability mechanisms, including opportunities for site-level revenue generation and the mobilisation of climate and development finance. The consultation concluded with strong support for the Strategy as a timely and necessary framework, with agreement that the revised document would incorporate the proposed refinements and be submitted to the World Heritage Committee for consideration.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, AND OUTCOMES

This chapter operationalises the World Heritage Strategy for SIDS by translating the Strategic Objectives into a phased and results-oriented implementation framework. It identifies priority actions (PAs), indicative activities and measurable outcomes, responding to the outcomes of the consultation process by strengthening clarity, measurability and delivery, and incorporating peer-reviewed expert input.

The Action Plan presented in Section 3.4 builds on existing mechanisms, guidance and partnerships, avoiding duplication and focusing on practical, scalable interventions that strengthen resilience, governance and capacity across SIDS World Heritage systems.

3.1 EXPECTED OUTCOMES BY 2034

- **Improved resilience of SIDS World Heritage properties**, with at least 80% of properties integrating climate-risk assessments, disaster preparedness and risk reduction measures into management systems, contributing to reduced disaster and climate-related impacts.
- **Strengthened and sustained participation of SIDS in the World Heritage Convention**, reflected in at least 10 nomination dossiers advanced or submitted, supported by strengthened Tentative List pipelines, increased readiness for serial and transnational nominations, broader uptake of Preliminary Assessments, and more predictable and continuous nomination processes across SIDS.
- **Enhanced technical and institutional capacity across SIDS**, supported through regional training, digital tools, and strengthened national and regional systems, and no properties on the World Heritage List in danger.
- **Operational and sustained SIDS World Heritage expert pool and mentorship system**, providing coordinated technical assistance for nominations, conservation, management and post-disaster recovery, and strengthening South-South cooperation and knowledge exchange across SIDS.
- **Strengthened integration of heritage within climate adaptation, tourism and development planning frameworks across SIDS**, including the development and submission of heritage-related funding proposals.
- **Improved governance, coordination and sustainability across SIDS**, reflected in strengthened management systems, including monitoring systems, deployed heritage impact assessments, sustainable tourism approaches, enhanced policy integration and more consistent reporting.
- **Stronger community engagement and inclusion**, with at least 60% of participating sites integrating Intangible Cultural Heritage and Historic Urban Landscape approaches, recognising and incorporating traditional, Indigenous and local knowledge systems, and strengthening community-led and customary approaches to heritage management.
- **Increased recognition of the value of World Heritage in SIDS** as a driver of sustainable development, resilience and cultural identity.

3.2 THEORY OF CHANGE AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Strategy sets out achievable and measurable goals over an eight-year timeframe (2026–2034), within the context of sustainable development and climate action, taking into account geographic distribution, community participation and gender representation. It adopts a light, flexible and demand-driven approach, recognising the limited technical and financial capacities of many SIDS States Parties. Implementation will be aligned with the priorities indicated by States Parties and supported through regional cooperation and global coordination, without duplicating existing strategies and frameworks.

The Strategic Objectives are underpinned by a Theory of Change that outlines how coordinated actions across SIDS will contribute to strengthened resilience, institutional capacity and the long-term sustainability of World Heritage properties. This approach responds to the specific challenges faced by SIDS, where World Heritage properties are exposed to disproportionate climate risks, limited institutional capacity, constrained financing, development pressures and fragile ecosystems.

Theory of Change

IF foundational baselines, inventories and governance systems are established; capacity is strengthened through regional training, mentorship, and peer exchange; digital tools and shared standards reduce transaction costs; communities, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approaches are embedded in management; including the integration of local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems and the promotion of context-specific and decolonised heritage methodologies; and heritage is integrated into climate adaptation, disaster risk management (DRM) and development finance frameworks.

THEN resilience, nomination readiness, institutional sustainability and community benefits will increase progressively.

This will **LEAD TO** stronger protection of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), reduced disaster-related losses, improved policy integration and the long-term viability of World Heritage systems across SIDS.

Within this framework, the Strategy is structured around four mutually reinforcing Strategic Objectives confirmed during the global consultations in Kingston, Jamaica:

- **Strategic Objective 1: Building and Maintaining Environmental and Climate Resilience**
This Strategic Objective aims to strengthen resilience of SIDS World Heritage properties to climate-induced and other natural hazards, environmental change and development pressures. It focuses on improving the identification and assessment of risks, strengthening preparedness and response mechanisms, and integrating heritage within broader climate adaptation and disaster risk management frameworks. Country feedback emphasised the need to strengthen climate risk assessments, disaster preparedness and the integration of heritage into climate adaptation frameworks. The

identification of threatened properties and climate-related risks was highlighted as a priority during consultations.

- **Strategic Objective 2: Strengthening Governance, Management and Policy Development and Implementation**

This Strategic Objective aims to improve governance coherence and access to sustainable financing. It focuses on reinforcing legal and policy frameworks, improving the effectiveness of management systems for World Heritage properties, and integrating sustainable tourism and visitor management within site governance frameworks, particularly in contexts where tourism is a key driver of both opportunity and pressure. The objective further supports improved coordination across sectors and promotes the integration of heritage into national development, climate and disaster risk management policies.

- **Strategic Objective 3: Building and Maintaining Human, Technical and Financial Capacity**

This Strategic Objective seeks to enhance institutional and human capacity for effective participation in the World Heritage Convention. It focuses on strengthening technical skills, expanding access to training and digital tools, and improving the ability of States Parties to mobilise and manage financial resources for heritage conservation and management. Capacity-building activities will be delivered through two complementary tracks: (a) policy and governance capacity; and (b) technical and operational capacity, through coordinated regional approaches.

- **Strategic Objective 4: Strengthening Community Engagement and Inclusion**

This Strategic Objective seeks to enhance community participation, youth engagement and inclusive approaches to heritage management, including through sustainable tourism opportunities where appropriate. It emphasises the role of local communities, customary approaches, Indigenous and alternative knowledge systems and intangible cultural heritage in strengthening the sustainability and relevance of World Heritage properties. States Parties remain the primary actors in implementation, with UNESCO and partners providing technical support and facilitation.

3.3 PRIORITY ACTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Objectives are operationalised through a set of Priority Actions that identify areas for cooperation, technical support and capacity development across SIDS. These Priority Actions are further implemented through phased activities and are supported by an integrated results, implementation and budget framework.

The Strategy recognises that in many SIDS, technical expertise is distributed across civil society, academia, diaspora networks, and independent professionals. Implementation will therefore adopt a multi-actor model that formally engages these actors alongside government institutions, reflecting the governance realities of SIDS and strengthening delivery across all Strategic Objectives.

Based on the consultations with SIDS States Parties and the outcomes of the global meeting in Kingston, the following Priority Actions have been identified to guide cooperation and support under the Strategy. These actions are to be implemented through phased activities and delivered through existing partnerships, including States Parties, UNESCO Field Offices, Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS, IUCN, ICCROM), Category 2 Centres, UNESCO Chairs, regional organisations, universities and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), with defined roles in technical delivery, capacity-building, mentoring and knowledge exchange.

Coordination in relation to the Strategy will follow a light and flexible structure. At the national level, States Parties may utilise existing national World Heritage committees or coordination mechanisms to identify priorities and guide implementation. Capacity-building activities will be delivered through coordinated regional workshops, online learning and peer exchange mechanisms. The Strategy prioritises adapting and applying existing UNESCO and Advisory Body tools, guidance, and methodologies, rather than developing new ones.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Priority Actions:

- Conduct climate and disaster risk baseline assessments
- Adapt disaster preparedness, recovery tools, and DRR integration to SIDS contexts
- Integration of heritage into climate adaptation and DRM frameworks

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: GOVERNANCE, POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Priority Actions:

- Support the preparation and revision of Tentative Lists, including site identification, Preliminary Assessments, OUV readiness diagnostics, and thematic studies for serial and transnational nominations
- Strengthen legislative, policy and site management frameworks, including alignment with World Heritage Convention requirements, and recognition of customary systems, traditional and alternative knowledge practices
- Support Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approaches in historic towns and settlements, and World Heritage and Tentative List sites, including selected urban and coastal contexts. This Priority Action links to climate resilience priority actions under Strategic Objective 1

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: HUMAN, TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Priority Actions:

- Expand the use of digital technologies for heritage documentation, monitoring and conservation (based on UNESCO's experience with the Dive into Heritage platform), and develop guidance on data standards, storage and repositories
- Establish partnerships and strengthen collaboration with existing UNESCO digital platforms, academic institutions, Category 2 Centres (C2C), UNESCO Chairs, and regional training institutions, including exploration of a regional capacity mechanism for Caribbean SIDS
- Deliver coordinated capacity-building, including training on World Heritage processes, digital tools, and access to sustainable financing opportunities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

Priority Action:

- Strengthen community-led heritage systems, engagement, livelihoods and inclusive participation, including customary governance, traditional, alternative, and ocean-based knowledge systems.

Priority will be given to adapting and applying existing UNESCO and Advisory Body tools, guidance and methodologies rather than developing new ones.

3.4 INTEGRATED RESULTS, IMPLEMENTATION AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK (2026 – 2034)

Implementation of the Priority Actions and relevant activities are sequenced across three phases to ensure that foundational systems are established before scaling interventions and consolidating for long-term sustainability.

- Phase 1 (2026 – 2028) focuses on establishing foundational capacity, baseline systems and assessments, and partnerships.
- Phase 2 (2029 – 2031) focuses on scaling implementation and strengthening institutional capacity across SIDS, including capacity-building activities and site-level interventions.
- Phase 3 (2032 – 2034) focuses on consolidating systems, integrating heritage into national policy frameworks and ensuring long-term sustainability.

The Strategy will include a Mid-Term Evaluation in early to mid-Phase 2 (around 2030) to assess progress, identify challenges, and enable course correction, including adjustments to implementation priorities and resource allocation. A Final Evaluation will be undertaken at the end of the Strategy period (2034-2035) to assess overall performance, outcomes and long-term impact.

These evaluations will be supported by an ongoing Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework, including periodic reporting by States Parties and partners, and the use of agreed indicators and means of verification to track implementation progress and inform adaptive management of the Strategy.

The budget is distributed across phases to prioritise foundational investments in Phase 1, scaling of activities in Phase 2, and consolidation and institutionalisation in Phase 3. Phase 2 represents the highest investment period due to the expansion of training, technical support and implementation activities across SIDS.

PHASE 1 (2026 – 2028): ENABLING FOUNDATIONS						
SO	Priority Action	Key Activities	Lead Actors	Budget (US\$)	Indicators (Target by 2034)	Means of Verification
SO1	Climate-risk baseline assessments	Adopt standardised methodologies and train national teams. Conduct pilot vulnerability assessments and establish baseline datasets. Assess coastal, marine and ocean-connected heritage systems, integrating scientific and traditional knowledge. Prioritise high-risk sites and undertake consultations to incorporate community-based and Indigenous knowledge systems.	UNESCO, States Parties, Advisory Bodies, Regional DRM organisations	600,000	≥15 priority sites, including coastal and marine systems, with baseline assessments completed	Assessment reports, baseline datasets
SO1	Disaster preparedness, recovery and DRR integration	Adapt and apply DRR, hazard specific, and post-disaster methodologies and tools to SIDS contexts to include ocean and coastal heritage risks. Initiate preparedness, safety and evacuation planning. Facilitate regional knowledge exchange on disaster response and recovery.	UNESCO, ICCROM, States Parties, Regional DRM organisations (i.e. CDEMA, SPC, CROP agencies)	320,000	Global and regional DRR tools adapted and applied across ≥3 SIDS regions	Guidance documents, training reports, and evidence of application in national or site-level DRR plans
SO1	Integration into climate and DRM frameworks	Adapt and apply existing UNESCO, ABs and DRM guidance, and pilot approaches to integrate heritage, including ocean and coastal heritage systems, into national climate adaptation and DRM frameworks. Align with national planning process and identify climate finance entry points.	UNESCO, States Parties, Advisory Bodies, C2Cs	200,000	Guidance adapted and ≥5 countries pilot integration approaches	Adapted guidance documents, pilot project reports, policy briefs, climate-heritage finance concept notes
SUB-TOTAL PHASE ONE SO1: US\$ 1,120,000						
SO2	Tentative Lists and Nominations	Provide technical assistance for site identification, Preliminary Assessments and OUV readiness diagnostics to support the prioritisation, harmonisation and updating of Tentative Lists. Identify priority thematic gaps to guide serial and transnational nominations. Provide technical support to States Parties without World Heritage properties through the Upstream Process.	UNESCO, States Parties, Advisory Bodies	500,000	≥10 SIDS update Tentative Lists informed by Preliminary Assessments and thematic studies	Tentative List submissions, Preliminary Assessment reports, thematic studies, and Upstream Process documentation
SO2	Legislative, policy and	Conduct legislative and policy gap analyses, including customary, marine tenure and ocean governance. Assess site management systems and tourism pressure.	States Parties, UNESCO	500,000	≥8 SIDS complete legislative and policy reviews and	Legal review reports, policy documents, site management

	management frameworks	Develop policy and management analysis aligned with World Heritage requirements and cultural seascapes approaches. Recognition and integration of customary laws, traditional knowledge systems and decolonised heritage methodologies into World Heritage processes.			site management assessments	assessments, and analytical reports
SO2	HUL-based planning approaches	Develop HUL tools and deliver initial training on HUL approaches. Pilot mapping and planning exercises at selected sites, including coastal and ocean-linked contexts.	UNESCO, Universities, States Parties	200,000	≥3 HUL pilot sites implemented	HUL pilot reports, mapping outputs, and planning documentation
SUB-TOTAL PHASE ONE SO2: US\$ 1,200,000						
SO3	Digital technologies and systems	Deliver training in GIS, aerial and terrestrial photogrammetry, laser scanning. Initiate pilot documentation projects for digital storytelling and interpretation, and repository systems.	UNESCO, Universities, UNESCO Chairs, Technical partners	400,000	≥50 professionals trained and applying digital documentation standards across participating SIDS	Training records, and digital documentation outputs
SO3	Partnerships and capacity systems	Establish partnerships with academic institutions, C2Cs and UNESCO Chairs and regional organisations in support of World Heritage processes and capacity-building in SIDS. Initiate regional networks in support of World Heritage processes. Establish national level expert working groups coordinated through national governments inclusive of civil society, diaspora, and independent experts. Develop, advertise and pilot a SIDS World Heritage Expert Roster and Mentorship Mechanism (drawing on Pacific Models) to support nominations, conservation and management. Conduct Caribbean C2C feasibility study.	States Parties, UNESCO, Universities, C2Cs, UNESCO Chairs, Regional and Non-governmental organisations		≥10 partnerships established; SIDS World Heritage expert roster framework developed and operational; Caribbean C2C feasibility study completed; ≥5 States Parties establish expert working groups	Partnership agreements, expert roster database and records, working group documentation, and feasibility study reports
SO3	Capacity-building and financing mechanisms	Initiate a demand-driven training model through which State Party-level working groups identify priority capacity gaps to inform training delivery by partners. Deliver coordinated capacity-building activities across SIDS to include training on World Heritage processes and nomination concepts. Identify financing opportunities and initial project concepts.	UNESCO, C2Cs, States Parties, Universities and Regional partners	320,000	Demand-driven training model piloted in ≥5 SIDS; Coordinated capacity-building programmes delivered and ≥5 project concepts developed	Training needs assessments, training materials, project concept notes, and workshop reports
SUB-TOTAL PHASE ONE SO3: US\$ 720,000						

SO4	Community engagement, livelihoods and inclusion	Establish community programmes and pilot initiatives. Support community-led participatory mapping and documentation incorporating varied knowledge systems and youth. Integrate customary, traditional and alternative knowledge systems into heritage approaches.	Communities, NGOs, States Parties	500,000	≥10 community-based pilot initiatives implemented to include customary and other knowledge systems	Project reports, participation records, and evaluation summaries
SUB-TOTAL PHASE ONE SO4: US\$ 500,000						
TOTAL BUDGET PHASE 1: US\$ 3,540,000						

PHASE 2 (2029 – 2031): SCALING AND IMPLEMENTATION

SO	Priority Action	Key Activities	Lead Actors	Budget (US\$)	Indicators (Target by 2034)	Means of Verification
SO1	Climate-risk baseline assessments	Expand and refine climate-risk assessments across SIDS World Heritage properties to include coastal and ocean-connected heritage systems. Prioritise high-risk sites and develop and implement integrated climate adaptation and DRM plans informed by local and traditional knowledge.	UNESCO, States Parties, Advisory Bodies, Regional DRM organisations	500,000	≥65% of properties assessed and priority sites supported with climate and DRM planning	Assessment reports, climate and DRM plans, national integration documents
SO1	Disaster preparedness, recovery and DRR integration	Deliver regional training on risk assessment, heritage impact assessments, and DRR tools. Strengthen preparedness and response systems. Enhance coordination with national and regional DRM agencies. Scale application of DRR tools for marine and coastal heritage systems.	UNESCO, ICCROM, States Parties, DRM organisations	800,000	≥20 States Parties trained and applying DRR tools and methodologies	Training reports, DRR plans, and inter-agency coordination records
SO1	Integration into climate and DRM frameworks	Scale integration of heritage into national climate adaptation and DRM systems and support the development of climate heritage finance proposals.	States Parties, UNESCO, Climate Change and DRM organisations	400,000	≥10 countries integrate heritage into national frameworks	National policies and plans, climate-heritage finance proposals, and planning documents
SUB-TOTAL PHASE TWO SO1: US\$ 1,700,000						
SO2	Tentative Lists and nominations	Support the preparation of nomination dossiers building on Preliminary Assessments and Tentative Lists developed in Phase One. Sustain nomination pipelines within national systems.	UNESCO, States Parties, Advisory Bodies	500,000	≥10 SIDS undertake Preliminary Assessments and	Tentative List submissions, Preliminary Assessment requests and reports, Nomination

		Provide targeted technical support to States Parties without World Heritage properties through the Upstream Process Pilot Programme. Tailored support for the preparation of potential future serial transnational nomination.			advance nominations; including serial and transnational nominations	dossiers, Upstream Process documentation
SO2	Legislative, policy and management frameworks	Strengthen legal frameworks and site management systems by integrating customary systems, alternative knowledge practices and coastal and marine heritage, and including conservation planning, monitoring, heritage impact assessments (HIA), and sustainable tourism and visitor management strategies. Develop and implement sustainable financing strategies, including site marketing, interpretation, and revenue generation mechanisms aligned with conservation objectives. Provide targeted technical support for corrective measures at prioritised World Heritage properties, particularly those on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Support aggregation of national needs into regional funding proposals including climate finance pipelines delivered through accredited entities. Support integration of cultural seascapes into national heritage and planning systems.	States Parties, UNESCO, Regional entities	500,000	≥10 SIDS strengthen governance, legal frameworks, and site management systems; ≥10 SIDS adopt integrated approaches; ≥5 regional funding proposals developed by SP Working Groups and UNESCO; 0 World Heritage sites on the List of World Heritage in danger in SIDS by 2034	Policy reports, management plans, HIA reports, tourism strategies, funding proposals, and concept notes
SO2	HUL-based planning approaches	Expand application of HUL approaches at selected sites and integrate them into planning and climate resilience frameworks	UNESCO, Universities, States Parties	250,000	≥10 sites applying HUL approaches; HUL approaches integrated into planning systems in ≥5 SIDS	Planning frameworks, HUL reports, implementation records
SUB-TOTAL PHASE TWO SO2: US\$ 1,250,000						
SO3	Digital technologies and systems	Implement digital documentation projects and expand monitoring systems across sites. Strengthen data repositories, systems and accessibility.	UNESCO, Universities, UNESCO Chairs, Technical partners	400,000	≥20 sites using digital documentation tools and monitoring systems	Digital platforms and databases, datasets, and system reports
SO3	Partnerships and capacity systems	Expand regional and inter-regional partnerships and operationalise expert networks including the SIDS World Heritage expert roster and mentorship system, providing	States Parties, Universities, C2Cs, UNESCO	400,000	Regional partnerships and expert roster	Programme reports, partnership agreements, roster usage records,

		technical support across SIDS for nominations, conservation and management.	Chairs, UNESCO, Regional organisations		operational across SIDS regions	expert deployment records
SO3	Capacity-building and financing mechanisms	Deliver advanced training programmes relevant to World Heritage processes, conservation and management planning, HIA, and digital tools. Implement mentorship and technical clinics and develop funding proposals and project pipelines. Scale demand-driven training programmes based on identified needs and strengthen coordination between working groups (WGs) and technical partners.	UNESCO, C2Cs, States Parties, Regional partners	550,000	≥20 capacity-building programmes delivered ≥150 professionals trained; ≥5 funding proposals developed and submitted	Training reports, funding proposals, and mentorship reports
SUB-TOTAL PHASE TWO SO3: US\$ 1,350,000						
SO4	Community engagement, livelihoods and inclusion	Expand community-led initiatives and strengthen livelihood and tourism-linked programmes, while enhancing youth engagement and participatory approaches. Expand community-led ocean heritage initiatives and knowledge transmission systems.	Communities, NGOs, States Parties	1,000,000	≥20 community initiatives scaled	Project reports, participation records, and evaluation summaries
SUB-TOTAL PHASE TWO SO4: US\$ 1,000,000						
MID-TERM EVALUATION: US\$ 100,000						
TOTAL BUDGET PHASE 2: US\$ 5,400,000						

PHASE 3 (2031 - 2034): CONSOLIDATION AND SUSTAINABILITY						
SO	Priority Action	Key Activities	Lead Actors	Budget (US\$)	Indicators (Target by 2034)	Means of Verification
SO1	Climate-risk baseline assessments	Institutionalise monitoring systems, maintain and update baseline datasets, and integrate climate-risk monitoring into national heritage management systems.	States Parties with support from UNESCO and Advisory Bodies	220,000	≥80% of properties integrating climate-risk assessments and disaster preparedness measures monitored through	Monitoring reports, national system records, and updated datasets

					institutionalised systems	
SO1	Disaster preparedness, recovery and DRR integration	Embed DRR within site management systems and national disaster frameworks and sustain preparedness and response mechanisms.	States Parties, DRM agencies with support from regional DRM organisations and UNESCO	550,000	DRR integrated into site management and national DRM frameworks across participating SIDS	Site management plans, national DRR frameworks, and implementation records
SO1	Integration into climate and DRM frameworks	Fully integrate heritage into national climate adaptation and DRM policies, planning systems and financing mechanisms.	States Parties, with support from UNESCO and national and regional organisations	330,000	Heritage integrated into national climate and DRM frameworks and financing mechanisms in ≥10 SIDS	National policies, planning frameworks, and climate finance programme documentation
SUB-TOTAL PHASE THREE SO1: US\$ 1,100,000						
SO2	Tentative Lists and nominations	Maintain and periodically update Tentative Lists, and sustain nomination pipelines, including serial and transnational nominations.	States Parties, with support from UNESCO and Advisory Bodies	400,000	Tentative Lists regularly updated and nomination pipelines sustained across participating SIDS	Tentative Lists submissions, periodic updates, and nomination pipeline records
SO2	Legislative, policy and management frameworks	Institutionalise national and site-level governance arrangements, including intersectoral coordination, community participation and customary governance mechanisms. Sustain site management systems and embed sustainable tourism, visitor management, and customary practices within long-term heritage management. Institutionalise multi-actor governance models, formally recognising civil society and non-government actors within heritage systems. Institutionalise governance recognising customary marine systems and flexible property boundaries.	States Parties, with support from UNESCO and relevant partners	360,000	Governance frameworks updated to include multi-actor participation and institutionalised and operational cooperation across participating SIDS	Legal instruments, management plans, monitoring systems, tourism strategies, policy documents, and governance frameworks
SO2	HUL-based planning approaches	Institutionalise HUL approaches within national planning systems and long-term heritage management including the embedding of cultural seascapes in planning systems.	States Parties, and Planning Authorities, with support from	300,000	HUL approaches integrated into planning frameworks	Planning frameworks, policy documents, and implementation records

			Universities and UNESCO		across participating SIDS	
SUB-TOTAL PHASE THREE SO2: US\$ 1,060,000						
SO3	Digital technologies and systems	Integrate digital documentation and monitoring systems into national heritage management frameworks and ensure long-term maintenance of data repositories.	States Parties, with support from Universities and technical partners, UNESCO	270,000	Digital systems operational across participating SIDS	System reports, repository records, and national system integration documentation
SO3	Partnerships and capacity systems	Institutionalise partnerships and sustain expert networks, and regional cooperation mechanisms, including sustained operation of the SIDS World Heritage expert roster, mentorship system and funded expert pool. Institutionalise expert pool and State Party level mechanisms, ensuring sustained engagement of civil society, diaspora and independent experts.	States Parties, with support from Universities and Regional organisations, C2Cs, UNESCO Chairs, UNESCO	360,000	Long-term partnerships and expert networks sustained across SIDS	Partnership agreements, network activity reports, programme records, and expert roster usage records
SO3	Capacity-building and financing mechanisms	Sustain capacity-building systems through refresher training, institutionalised programmes, and strengthened long-term access to financing. Sustain demand-driven capacity-building systems and embed them into national and regional heritage management and financing structures.	States Parties, with support from Universities, UNESCO, C2Cs and Regional partners	270,000	Sustained capacity-building systems operational and financing mechanisms accessed across participating SIDS	Training reports, programme reports, funding agreements, and financing records
SUB-TOTAL PHASE THREE SO3: US\$ 900,000						
SO4	Community engagement, livelihoods and inclusion	Institutionalise community-led participation, customary governance, traditional and alternative knowledge systems in heritage management and sustain livelihood initiatives and embed inclusive and participatory approaches within long-term heritage management systems.	Communities and States Parties, with support from NGOs and partners, UNESCO	600,000	≥60% of sites demonstrate sustained community engagement and inclusion	Project reports, participation records, evaluation and impact assessments
SUB-TOTAL PHASE THREE SO4: US\$ 600,000						
FINAL EVALUATION: US\$ 100,000						
TOTAL BUDGET PHASE THREE: US\$ 3,760,000						

TOTAL WORLD HERITAGE SIDS STRATEGY BUDGET ENVELOPE: US\$ 12,700,000

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Annexes

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