

SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

10am - 5:30pm (CET) • 19 June 2025
Room XI • UNESCO HQ
bit.ly/45yQV9E

HOW DO WE BETTER INTEGRATE UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CLIMATE ACTION?

Climate change and anthropogenic activities are placing significant pressures on underwater cultural heritage (UCH). There is currently limited understanding and preparedness for how these pressures are managed. This scientific conference proposes to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change on coastal and underwater cultural heritage, foster dialogue among experts and stakeholders, and promote interdisciplinary collaboration.

PROGRAMME

Opening • 10am

- Ernesto Ottone R., UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture
- Arnaud Schaumasse, Ministry of Culture / Drassm (France)
- His Excellency, Mr. Miquel Iceta i Llorens, Chairperson of the Meeting of States Parties of the 2001 Convention
- Mr. Mariusz Lewicki, Permanent Delegate of the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Poland to UNESCO

Session 1: Understanding the threats • 10.15am

- Moderation by Franca Cibecchini, Drassm (France)
- 'The impacts of climate change on coastal and underwater cultural heritage', Colin Breen, Ulster University (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
- 'Drought and the impact of climate change on underwater cultural heritage in rivers: Paraguay case study', Sergio Ríos, National Department of Culture (Paraguay)
- 'Understanding sea level rise and its impact on coastal archaeological heritage', Nicolas Carayon, Ipso Facto (France)
- 'Threats to our ocean heritage and local communities from potentially polluting wrecks', Benjamin Ferrari, The Ocean Foundation (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)



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PROGRAMME

Session 2: Inventory and documentation • 11.30am

- Moderation by Robert Domżał, Museum Stutthof, STAB (Poland)
- 'Climate change: an emergency for coastal cultural heritage', Frédéric Leroy & Sybil Thiebaud, Ministry of Culture / Drassm (France)
- 'Inventorying and documenting heritage threatened by climate change in Maritime Southern Asia', Michael Feener, Kyoto University (Japan)
- The EAMENA database, Archaeological Heritage at Risk in the Middle East and North Africa', Ahmad Emrage, University of Benghazi (Libya) & Lucy Blue, Southampton University (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
- 'The lost cities of the Indus delta – an innovative digital heritage trail cataloguing and disseminating lost foreshore heritage', Amer Bazl Khan, MaritimEA Research (Pakistan)

Lunch • 1pm

Session 3: Loss or preservation by adaptation? • 2.30pm

- Moderation by Athena Trakadas, Ocean Decade Heritage Network (UNITWIN) 'Measures to safeguard heritage against sea-level rise, case study in the Caribbeans', Isabel C. Rivera-Collazo & Dominique Rissolo, UC San Diego (United States of America)
- 'Presenting the West Africa coastal areas management program (WACA)', Kwasi Appeaning Addo, University of Ghana (Ghana)
- 'Addressing coastal change: sustainable and resilient coastal cities (SARCC)', Garry Momber, Maritime Archaeology Trust (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
- 'Underwater cultural heritage: a tool for adaptability, examples from the Rising from the Depths project, East Africa', Caesar Bitu, National Museums of Kenya (Kenya)



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PROGRAMME

Session 4: Synergies and interdisciplinarity • 4pm

- Moderation by Krista Pikkat, Director for Culture and Emergencies, Secretary of the UNESCO 2001 Convention 'Integrating underwater cultural heritage into maritime spatial planning, a mitigation solution', Vera Noon, University of Edinburgh | ArchiMare Consulting (Lebanon)
- 'Underwater cultural heritage and marine biology, the necessity for a joint protection', Dalila Aldana Aranda, Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute (Mexico)
- 'Integrating Moana Nui knowledge in climate action regarding the protection of underwater cultural heritage', Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu, Va'aomanū Pasifika, Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa (New Zealand)
- 'Climate action and awareness raising, the role of maritime museums', Priit Lätti, Estonian Maritime Museum (Estonia)

Concluding remarks • 5.15pm

- Krista Pikkat, Director for Culture and Emergencies, Secretary of the UNESCO 2001 Convention



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PANELISTS

Session 1: Understanding the threats

Moderator



Franca Cibecchini (France)

Franca Cibecchini is a maritime archaeologist, responsible for the Corsican coastline, at Drassm (French Department of Underwater Archaeological Research), as well as one of the scientific coordinator of the MoMArch international master's programme, which is part of the Aix-Marseille University UNESCO Chair in Maritime and Coastal Archeology.

Panelists



Colin Breen (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Colin Breen is a professor at Ulster University. Its research focusses on historic landscape and societal change, environment and conflict, and the historical archaeologies of past maritime societies.



Sergio Ríos (Paraguay)

Sergio Ríos is a paleontologist at the Paraguay National Department of Culture, and has participated in the 2022 STAB mission focusing on three significant wrecks, dating from the Paraguayan War following the dramatic decrease in the level of the Paraguay River.

PANELISTS

Session 1: Understanding the threats

Panelists



Nicolas Carayon (France)

Nicolas Carayon is a specialist in the archaeology and geoarchaeology of ancient Mediterranean ports and coastal environments, currently with the research consultancy Ipso Facto.



Benjamin Ferrari (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Benjamin Ferrari is a representative of The Ocean Foundation working on ocean conservation and sustainable marine policy initiatives, notably addressing Potentially Polluting Wrecks.



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PANELISTS

Session 2: Inventory and documentation

Moderator



Robert Domżał (Poland)

Robert Domżał was the previous Chairperson of the STAB of the 2001 Convention. As a specialist in underwater archaeology and maritime museums, Robert Domżał has participated in many of the key endeavors for the protection of underwater cultural heritage in the Baltic Sea region

Panelists



Frédéric Leroy (France)

Frédéric Leroy, heritage curator and Assistant Director of Drassm, is also an expert on shoreline and landscape archaeology.



Sybil Thiebaud (France)

Sybil Thiebaud, maritime archaeologist, in charge of the French Nouvelle-Aquitaine and Vendée coastlines, regions very much impacted by climate change related issues, notably on the intertidal area.

PANELISTS

Session 2: Inventory and documentation



Michael Feener (Japan)

Michael Feener is a professor at Kyoto University, specializing in the history of Islam and Indian Ocean studies, with a focus on religious networks, law, and maritime cultures. He will discuss the Maritime Asia Heritage Survey.



Ahmad Emrage (Libya)

Ahmad Emrage, lecturer in the department of Archaeology and the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Tobra, University of Benghazi, has participated in, and directed, a number of excavations in Libya.



Lucy Blue (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Lucy Blue, associated to the Centre for Maritime Archaeology of Southampton University, has spent a career developing maritime archaeological capacity in the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean, also serving as the Maritime Archaeological Director of the Honor Frost Foundation.



Amer Bazl Khan (Pakistan)

Amer Bazl Khan is the founder of MaritimEAResearch, an organization dedicated to the documentation, preservation, and study of maritime and coastal cultural heritage, with a special focus on the archaeological sites of the Indus Delta and the broader South Asian maritime regions.

PANELISTS

Session 3: Loss or preservation by adaptation?

Moderator



Athena Trakadas (Denmark)

Athena Trakadas is a maritime archaeologist and researcher at the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde and External Associate Professor, at Saxo Institute, University of Copenhagen in Denmark. As Co-Chair of the Ocean Decade Heritage Network, Athena has a very good understanding of this session's challenges.

Panelists



Dominique Rissolo (co-presentation with Isabel C. Rivera Collazo) (United States of America)

Dominique Rissolo is a researcher and archaeologist affiliated with the University of California, San Diego, and serves on the NOAA Ocean Exploration Advisory Board, known for his expertise in Maya archaeology and the exploration of submerged cultural landscapes.



Kwasi Appeaning Addo (Ghana)

Kwasi Appeaning Addo is a coastal geoscientist and Director of the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies at the University of Ghana, renowned for his work on shoreline dynamics, coastal erosion, and climate change adaptation in West Africa.

PANELISTS

Session 3: Loss or preservation by adaptation?

Panelists



Garry Momber (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Garry Momber is a maritime archaeologist and Director of the Maritime Archaeology Trust (accredited NGO), recognized for his pioneering work on submerged prehistoric landscapes and underwater cultural heritage across Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Persian-Arabian Gulf.



Caesar Bitia (Kenya)

Caesar Bitia is an underwater archaeologist and Head of the Department of Coastal Archaeology at the National Museums of Kenya, specializing in the maritime heritage of the Swahili Coast and the Western Indian Ocean.



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PANELISTS

Session 4: Synergies and interdisciplinarity

Moderator



Krista Pikkat (UNESCO)

Director of Culture and Emergencies at UNESCO and the Secretary of the 2001 UNESCO Convention.

Panelists



Vera Noon (Lebanon)

Vera Noon is a multidisciplinary planning expert from Lebanon, and with the funding support of the Honor Frost Foundation, she is currently drafting a PhD at the University of Edinburgh, focusing into the intersection of Marine Cultural Heritage within international and regional Ocean Literacy initiatives.



Dalila Aldana Aranda (Mexico)

Dalila Aldana Aranda is a marine biologist and professor at the Center for Research and Advanced Studies in Mexico, specializing in marine resources and the impact of climate change, ocean acidification and microplastic pollution on marine species.

PANELISTS

Session 4: Synergies and interdisciplinarity

Panelists



Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu (New Zealand)

Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu is a Kanaka 'Ōiwi, Native Hawaiian, scholar of Critical Pacific and Indigenous Studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand, focusing on various topics, including working at the interface of social justice and environmental protection of islands, earth, waterways, and oceans in the Pacific.



Priit Lätti (Estonia)

Priit Lätti is a maritime archaeologist at the Estonian Maritime Museum, where he specializes in underwater archaeology and the preservation of shipwrecks.