May 16, 2016

Executive Committee,
Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage

Re: Call for Information on Related to Migration, Displacement and Human Mobility

Dear Esteemed Members of the Executive Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the United States National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) in response to the call that was released by the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage for information related to migration, displacement and human mobility. I feel strongly that the policy framework for addressing climate displacement must take into account of the cultural heritage of the displaced people and their communities. Cultural heritage is a both a community asset to be conserved during relocation and a tool that can aid in the development of strong, socially cohesive communities once relocated.

In particular, I would note the following areas of relevance:

1. The role of cultural heritage as a tool for integration and social cohesion (Use of heritage to help displaced communities, whether temporary or permanent, to create a sense of the familiar and maintain familiar practices and social relationships by modifying their environment; and use of the heritage associated with the place of relocation to help create inclusion for the new arrivals).

2. The need to preserve where possible and/or document and memorialize the tangible heritage left behind by displaced communities (Strategies for reducing the rate of deterioration, recording, minimizing loss of important scientific information, preservation of examples of past technologies, and commemorating, representing and interpreting for future generation the sites, places and cultural land and seascapes left behind), and

3. The need to conserve the Intangible Heritage, Traditional Knowledge, and movable heritage of displaced persons’ and communities’ (Strategies for conserving and perpetuating the collective scientific and intangible heritage values of displaced communities amidst relocation and diaspora).
In these regards, several members of US/ICOMOS as well as cultural heritage colleagues from elsewhere in the world will be making submissions in response to your call. I hope that you find these submissions helpful and that you will give them your full consideration.

The cultural heritage community has organized a platform for addressing these issues referred to as the Pocantico Call to Action on Climate Impacts and Cultural Heritage, drawing on the work of organizations like the Society for American Archaeology and the International Council on Monuments and Sites. The heritage sector looks forward to assisting in the addressing of these difficult issues.

With best regards,

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