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UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Background Guide 2026

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NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 National Model United Nations Spain Conference (NMUN•Spain)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Emma Ashley Bott and Assistant Director Salah Ahmed Rashwan. Emma Bott has a Bachelor of Management and a JD degree. She currently works as a Human Rights Officer with the Alberta Human Rights Commission. Salah Ahmed Rashwan is an International Computer Engineering student at La Salle – Ramon Llull University in Barcelona. He has represented his university internationally through academic and leadership initiatives, including National Model United Nations, and is particularly interested in the intersection of technology, artificial intelligence, and public policy. The preparation of these materials was supported by Deputy Secretary-General Caitlin Hopper.

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Urban Contexts
2. Greening Education

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 November 2026 in accordance with the guidelines in the Position Paper Guide and the NMUN•Spain Position Papers website.

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide, which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.

- The NMUN Rules of Procedure, which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory NMUN Conduct Expectations on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretary-General at dsg.spain@nmunstaff.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Emma Ashley Bott, Director
Salah Ahmed Rashwan, Assistant Director

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Committee Overview

Introduction

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency that coordinates with the United Nations through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).[1] UNESCO is a legally independent organization that entered a relationship with the United Nations in 1945.[2] Although it is financially and structurally independent from the United Nations, UNESCO works closely with several United Nations entities to promote common goals, including peace and security, and social and economic development.[3] Per its mandate, UNESCO has coordinated and produced several international standards for the promotion of peace through collaboration in the fields of education, intercultural dialogue, and communication and information.[4]

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

UNESCO's mandate is derived from Article 1, paragraph 3 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), and is fully defined by the *UNESCO Constitution* (1945).[5] UNESCO is tasked to promote collaboration among Member States in the fields of education, science, and culture to develop and maintain peace, the rule of law, and mutual respect.[6] Additionally, UNESCO is responsible for coordinating and supporting the development of knowledge and culture for "economic stability, political security, and general well-being of the peoples of the world."[7] UNESCO plays a significant role in coordinating international conventions and setting standards in the areas of education, culture, and science.[8] While the following list is not exhaustive, the mandate of UNESCO can be summarized as:

- UNESCO **will generally**: make policy recommendations to other bodies and Member States in the fields within its mandate; hold international conferences to deliberate issues and set standards; provide expert research and consultation to the primary organs of the United Nations system and synergize its work with other United Nations bodies through ECOSOC; work with other entities and organizations to implement programs in matters related to education, science, culture, communication, and information; maintain international standards and records of cultural, natural, and intangible heritage; provide support to Member States in protecting items of cultural significance, improving their education systems, and collaborating in scientific fields.[9]

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[1] New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2025-26*. 2025. p. 333.
[2] United Nations, General Assembly. *Agreements with Specialized Agencies (A/RES/50(I))*. 1945.
[3] United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. art. 63.
[4] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Basic Texts: 2016 edition*. 2016.
[5] United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. Art. 1; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. 1945. p. 5.
[6] Ibid. Art. V, Art. I, para. 1.
[7] Conference of Allied Ministers of Education. *Conference for the Establishment of UNESCO (ECO/CONF./29)*. 1945. p. 1.
[8] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Implementation of standard-setting instruments*. 2015.
[9] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO (ERI/2010/WS/2)*. 2010. p. 32.

- UNESCO **will not generally**: set norms and standards in fields other than education, science, and culture; demand action from Member States and other entities on policy development and implementation, typically encouraging and helping facilitate partnerships with organizations instead; request specific action from Member States and other entities on the promotion of access to education, cultural heritage, and scientific programs but instead provide frameworks and policy recommendations.[10]

Outlined in its *Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029*, UNESCO further serves as: an international forum for ideas, innovation, and policy advice in education, science, culture, and communication and information; a global center for policy analysis, monitoring, benchmarking, and the development and analysis of data and statistics; a standard-setter that supports their implementation; a facilitator and catalyst for international and regional cooperation.[11] UNESCO also plays a significant strategic oversight role with respect to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015).[12]

Governance, Funding, and Structure

UNESCO is governed by its own set of rules, including its organization structure, budget and membership being independent from the United Nations.[13] UNESCO currently has 194 Member States and 12 Associate Members.[14] Two major bodies, the General Conference and Executive Board, govern the work of UNESCO.[15] The General Conference, consisting of all UNESCO Member States, meets every two years.[16] The General Conference is primarily responsible for: electing the 58 members of the Executive Board, who serve four-year terms; deliberating on and approving recommendations from the Executive Board; summoning international conferences; considering reports from Member States; and advising United Nations organizations on matters of education, science, and culture.[17] The General Conference may also establish special and technical committees, create subsidiary organs, and invite observers on the recommendation of the Executive Board.[18] Every two years, the Executive Board: prepares the biennial agenda for, submits policy recommendations to, and implements decisions adopted by the General Conference; recommends the admission of new Members; nominates the Director-General; and reviews the budget.[19] Additionally, the Executive Board may advise the primary organs of the United Nations on issues relevant to its mandate, consult with representatives of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and independent experts, and request advisory opinions from the International Court of Justice.[20]

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[10] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO in brief*. N.d.
[11] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4)*. 2022.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Member States*. N.d.
[15] New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2025-26*. 2025. p. 333.
[16] Ibid.
[17] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. 1945. Arts. III-VI.
[18] Ibid. Arts. III-VI.
[19] Ibid. 1945. Art. V; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Executive Board in Brief*. N.d.
[20] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. 1945. Art. V.

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Member States*. N.d. Retrieved 25 October 2025 from: https://www.unesco.org/en/countries

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4)*. 2022. Retrieved 25 October 2025 from: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378083

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. 2022. Retrieved 25 October 2025 from: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137

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1. Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Urban Contexts

Introduction

Cultural heritage is not only monuments and collections of objects but also includes the practices, knowledge, and expressions that are fundamental to cultural identity which are the intangible parts of culture.[21] Intangible cultural heritage is also called living heritage and consists of oral traditions; performing arts; social practices; rituals; festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.[22] Urban settings are defined as where there is a population density, a concentration of administrative bodies and infrastructure and a diverse set of livelihood opportunities for the residents.[23] In urban settings there is the opportunity to exercise and recognize multiple cultures and there are many examples of intangible cultural heritage.[24] Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban settings will be of increasing importance as urbanization continues to accelerate, with an expected 6 in 10 people living in urban contexts by 2030.[25] Urbanization is a part of globalization, a process by which societies and economies become integrated at the global level where cultures, populations and economies are becoming increasingly interdependent.[26]

Respecting culture and heritage is not only a question of safeguarding, but also ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to experience, learn about, and take pride in their culture.[27] Intangible cultural heritage elements are passed down through generations.[28] Although heritage adapts over time, these elements of culture reinforce identity and respect for these aspects of culture are respect for cultural diversity.[29] The *Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) promotes the safeguard of cultural expression so that they are not lost and future generations are able to experience them.[30] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes the need to foster mutual understanding of other cultures along with cooperation.[31] UNESCO is the only Institution that acknowledges the connection between culture and development.[32]

UNESCO has identified 9 categories of threats to intangible cultural heritage including weakened practice & transmission; cultural globalization; new products and techniques; loss of systems; economic pressure;

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[21] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?.* N.d.
[22] Ibid; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *International Day of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.
[23] Cities for Children & World Vision. *Defining urban contexts.* N.d.
[24] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Cutting Edge: Culture and the City: forging place-based & people-centered public policies*. N.d.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Future Learn. *Urbanisation and globalisation*. N.d.; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Youth. *Globalization WPAY*. 2005; Peterson Institute for International Economics. *What is Globalization?*. 2024.
[27] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *International Day of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.
[32] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *About the culture sector*. N.d.

environmental degradation; decontextualization; demographic issues; and negative attitudes.[33] The continuation of intangible cultural heritage is becoming increasingly difficult, as these practices are becoming less frequent and sources of knowledge are becoming harder to come by.[34] Traditional systems of life are being replaced by new products and technologies where there is increasing economic pressures on efficiency.[35] As there is a shift to more urban populations, populations are more demographically diverse but open to more conflict and negative perceptions.[36] The world is becoming more and more globalized with culture and traditions are at threat of becoming homogenized.[37]

International and Regional Framework

The *Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* recognizes the connection between intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage creating a need to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.[38] The *Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* has laid out five domains where intangible cultural heritage can be manifested: oral traditions and expressions (including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage); performing arts (such as traditional music, dance and theatre); social practices (rituals and festive events); knowledge and practices (concerning nature and the universe); and traditional craftsmanship.[39] Under the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, States parties can request financial and technical resources.[40] The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) under article 27, stated that everyone has the right to participate in cultural life while the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) expand this idea under article 15 recognizes the right of everyone to participate in cultural life and use cultural life in development including the development of cultural life.[41] In 1972 the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* defined and promoted cultural heritage and natural heritage.[42] This convention established the World Heritage Fund in article 15 and 16 while encouraging States parties to set up their own national heritage fund in article 17.[43] Article 22 lays out the criteria for getting assistance.[44] *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972) and the *Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* are complementary conventions addressing cultural heritage that UNESCO works to implement.[45] While it started as a mechanism for post-conflict challenges it has shifted to focusing on

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[33] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Living heritage and threats*. N.d.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *International Day of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Youth. *Globalization WPAY*. 2005; Peterson Institute for International Economics. *What is Globalization?*. 2024.
[38] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, General Conference. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. 2003. p.3.
[39] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.
[40] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Toolkit for requesting International Assistance from the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.* N.d.
[41] United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948. Article 27; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966. Article 15.
[42] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, General Conference. *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. 1972.
[43] Ibid. Art. 15-17.
[44] Ibid. Art. 22
[45] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Working towards a Convention* N.d.

culture and development.[46] The African Union made 2021 the year of Arts, Culture and Heritage.[47] Cultural identity and heritage is Aspiration 5 of the *Agenda 2063*.[48]

The international community has recognised the importance of culture to achieving sustainable development and equality.[49] In the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), the General Assembly recognized that sustainable urban development and management are necessary for the quality of life.[50] In addition, the 2030 Agenda makes a commitment to support "intercultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect, and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility."[51] Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 (sustainable cities and communities) aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.[52] Target 11.4 on protecting the world's cultural heritage aims to improve "efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage."[53] SDG 4 (quality education) focuses on equitable quality education and long-term learning with target 4.7 on sustainable development and global citizenship.[54] SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) focuses on economic growth that is sustainable and inclusive with full and productive employment and work for all with target 8.9 on promoting cultural products as part of sustainable tourism.[55] Additionally, SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) focuses on the promotion of societies that are peaceful and inclusive with effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.[56] The *New Urban Agenda* (2015) commits to equitable and affordable access to culture.[57]

The *New Urban Agenda* works on achieving equitable and inclusive access to culture and cultural spaces.[58] At the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT), the *MONDIACULT 2022 Ministerial Declaration* was adopted with a call to action on the importance of cultural diversity.[59] The declaration focuses on cultural rights, culture in education and culture in public policies.[60] The declaration highlights the importance of culture to times of crisis, climate action, the economy and the digital community.[61] Lastly, cultural property is a topic of the declaration with sections on the illicit trafficking of cultural property as well as the return and restitution of cultural property.[62] The *Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies*

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[46] Council of Europe. *Regional Programme on Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe*. N.d.
[47] African Union. *2021: Arts, Culture and Heritage*. N.d.
[48] Ibid.
[49] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture is at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals*. 2023.
[50] United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 9.
[51] Ibid. p. 10.
[52] Ibid. pp. 14, 22.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid. pp. 14, 17.
[55] Ibid. pp. 14, 20.
[56] Ibid. pp. 14, 25.
[57] United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016. p. 8.
[58] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture is at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals*. 2023; United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016. p. 8.
[59] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *MONDIACULT 2022 Ministerial Declaration*. N.d.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

which was adopted in 2013 started emphasis on inclusive cities before the 2030 Agenda was accepted by the United Nations General Assembly.[63]

Role of the International System

UNESCO is the main entity for culture in the United Nations system and therefore it was fundamental to the inclusion of Intangible Cultural Heritage into the definition of cultural heritage and works to support the protection and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.[64] The International Day of Intangible Cultural Heritage is held annually on October 17th to raise awareness of intangible cultural heritage practices and their preservation.[65] It was created during the 42nd session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2023 with resolution 42/34.[66] UNESCO made significant efforts to expand the definition of cultural heritage to include traditions or living expression as intangible cultural heritage by adopting instruments such as the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972); the *Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*; and the MONDIACULT Declaration.[67] UNESCO provides financial and technical resources to States parties through the International Assistance mechanism.[68] In addition, UNESCO developed a Toolkit to guide any States parties applying to UNESCO for resources under the Convention *for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which was last updated in 2022.[69]

UNESCO has also established prize money and other funds for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.[70] For example, the UNESCO Executive Board approved the establishment of the UNESCO-Sultan Haitham Prize for Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding in the 224th session with the purpose to recognize efforts of organizations who are safeguarding, transmission and promotion of intangible cultural heritage and it is awarded every 2 years with prize money of $150,000 USD.[71] While the prize is new, the hope is that it can be used to share best practices in effective safeguarding strategies.[72] International Funds Supporting Culture is a part of the UNESCO Culture Sector and maintains multiple funds to promote culture.[73] UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) works to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.[74] The UCCN focuses on making progress towards the achievement of

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[63] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture is at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals*. 2023.
[64] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *About us.* N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?.* N.d.
[65] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *International Day of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.
[66] Ibid.
[67] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?.* N.d.
[68] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Toolkit for requesting International Assistance from the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.* N.d.
[69] Ibid.
[70] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Establishment of the UNESCO-Sultan Haitham Prize for Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding*. N.d.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *International Funds Supporting Culture*. N.d.
[74] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Creative Cities Network*. N.d.

the 2030 Agenda, specifically SDG 11.[75] Using knowledge systems and environmental practices of indigenous cultures, it can assist in addressing environmental concerns and climate change.[76] Having cultural industries to promote cultural tourism can also assist in the achieving SDG 8.[77] Inclusive Cities are an important concept for SDG 11 which focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.[78] UNESCO is mandated for addressing education and therefore education is a common theme in their actions.[79] Digital technology has a significant impact on people's lives including culture.[80] Technology impacts the access people have to culture and how people experience culture.[81] UNESCO has created a Programme on Cultural and Digital Technologies that has worked on projects such as mapping of food practices and online museum of artifacts.[82]

The Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage promotes the implementation of the 2003 Convention and reports to UNESCO.[83] This work is achieved by providing best practices and recommendations to members.[84] States parties to the Convention have the opportunity to submit requests for inscriptions of intangible heritage, programs, and projects which are reviewed by the Committee.[85] Living Heritage Elements are decided by the Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.[86] The Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage grants financial and technical international assistance through the International Cultural Heritage Fund.[87] There are three different types of financial assistance being Emergency Assistance, Assistance, or Preparatory Assistance.[88] In addition, the Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage prepares implementation such as operational directives and a resource plan for the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage through the Article 25 of the 2003 Convention.[89] The operational directives and resource plans of the Intergovernmental Committee for safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage are approved by the

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[75] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Creative Cities Network*. N.d.
[76] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture is at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals*. 2023.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.
[79] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education transforms lives*. N.d.
[80] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture and Digital Technologies*. N.d.
[81] Ibid.
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[83] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Functions of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *International Day of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.
[87] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Functions of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Requesting International Assistance*. N.d.
[88] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Requesting International Assistance*. N.d.
[89] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Functions of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.

General Assembly.[90] The meeting to decide on whether to give cultural practices and expressions intangible heritage status occurs annually.[91]

The International community has realized the importance of culture in public policy and international cooperation to achieve sustainable development.[92] Inter-Agency Platform on Culture was created in 2021 by UNESCO and brings together around 30 regional and international organizations to work with developmental banks focusing on culture and sustainable development.[93] The Inter-Agency Platform on Culture recognized the importance of culture to sustainable development.[94] In 2023, the platform started to co-design projects, build capacities and advocate for culture in the for Culture in Sustainable Development.[95] Culture has become an agenda item for the Group of 20 (G20) with the creation of the Culture Working Group in 2021.[96] UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development was where there was a declaration affirming culture as a global public good.[97] Creative cities as defined by the UCCN are cities that have centered themselves around developing themselves around cultural industries.[98] The UCCN is a way of increasing cooperation with cities that have been identified by UNESCO as a Creative City and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.[99] The Creative Cities are cities that have prioritized their culture and are looking to cooperate at an international level to assist others to do so.[100] UNESCO's position is that sustainable development cannot occur with a culture component and considerations.[101] UNESCO created a network of Category 2 Centres and Institutes in Culture that are the centers of expertise and provide technical assistance and support services to UNESCO and Member States in the area.[102] The Category 2 Centres focus on advocating for cooperation to improve and grow capacities for protecting cultural heritage.[103] It is important to note that these Centres are not legally part of UNESCO but UNESCO does create formal agreements with the Centre and the host country to support the work of the Centre.[104] The 2019 UNESCO Strategy for Category 2 Centres, adopted at the 40th UNESCO General Conference in November 2019, created the legal and managerial framework for Category 2 Centres.[105]

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[90] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Functions of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.
[91] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Browse the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Registrar of good safeguarding practices*. N.d.
[92] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture in the G20*. N.d.
[93] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Inter-Agency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development (IPCSD)*. N.d.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture in the G20*. N.d.
[97] Ibid; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *MONDIACULT 2022 Ministerial Declaration*. N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture in the G20*. N.d.
[98] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Creative Cities Network*. N.d.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture*. N.d.
[102] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Institutions and Centres*. N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Category 2 Centres and Institutes in Culture*. N.d.
[103] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Category 2 Centres and Institutes in Culture*. N.d.
[104] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO*. N.d.
[105] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Institutes and Centres*. N.d.

Category 2 Centres are different from Category 1 Centres which are a legal and institutional part of UNESCO.[106] In 2018, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) urged local governments, national governments, regional bodies and international organizations to protect the rights of indigenous peoples residing in urban settings including supporting the identities of indigenous people while being possibly separated from the traditional lands and natural resources.[107] UNESCO and UN-Habitat has worked with UN Tourism to create a series on Culture-Driven Sustainable Urban Tourism that launched in August 2025 with the intention to protect culture in a world where urbanization and tourism are increasing.[108] The UCCN Secretariat helped in the support of creation of this program.[109] The program uses expert panels and case studies to promote cultural interrogation into urban tourism.[110] The Council of Europe, supported by the European Commission, started the Regional Programme in 2003 operating in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Kosovo.[111] The Regional Programme focuses on institutional capacity building, heritage rehabilitation and local development.[112]

Addressing Barriers to the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

When practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage are weakened the protection of intangible cultural heritage becomes difficult. [113] This can occur when practitioners age leading to reduced practice and repertoire.[114] If there are no new transmissions, or if the transmissions of culture are hampered or halted, there can be a decrease in interest in the culture.[115] Ancestral language, cultural spaces, knowledge, and cultural materials can be lost.[116] UNESCO works to ensure that Member States have practitioners and continue to educate practitioners by requiring that Member States have practitioners from the local community participate in the inventorization of intangible cultural heritage under the 2003 Convention.[117] It is the position of UNESCO that the community practitioners should be the lead in the inventorization of culture with the State, agencies or institutions being supporting actors.[118]

Globalization introduced new practices and techniques, economic pressure and negative attitudes to communities that are threats to intangible cultural heritage.[119] The threat of globalization to culture has been recognized by UNESCO and the General Assembly.[120] Urbanization is part of globalization and it leads to a migration of people from rural to urban areas creating a population influx, which often leads to

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[106] Ibid.
[107] United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *UN-Habitat roots for the rights indigenous peoples in cities*. 2018.
[108] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO, UN Tourism and UN-Habitat launch Urban Solutions on Culture-Driven Sustainable Urban Tourism*. N.d.
[109] Ibid.
[110] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO, UN Tourism and UN-Habitat launch Urban Solutions on Culture-Driven Sustainable Urban Tourism*. N.d.
[111] Council of Europe. *Regional Programme on Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe*. N.d.
[112] Ibid.
[113] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Living heritage and threats*. N.d.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Involvement of tradition bearers and practitioners.* N.d.
[118] Ibid.
[119] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Living heritage and threats*. N.d.
[120] United Nations News. *UN official highlights risk globalization to cultural diversity*. 2003.

the degradation of the habitats of culture.[121] Environmental degradation is caused by the issues of climate change such as water population; natural disasters; mining; invasive husbandry; desertification; ecosystem degradation; and deforestation.[122] Culture is often subjected to tourisfication, theatrification, overcommercialization, misappropriation, and freezing.[123] Negative attitudes can start as disrespect then progress to intolerance, conflict and regressive policies of the state and the community.[124] Culture can be globalized through standardization of educational systems, mass media, the creation of new pastimes, socio-cultural changes occurring rapidly, and social media.[125] There are new practices and technologies that people use that are not a part of their culture including industrial production process and use of modern materials.[126] New technology is also surging and impacting the use of cultural practices.[127] People often submit to globalization due to economic pressures such as availability of food resources, limited financial resources, and fast changing economic changes.[128] The series on Culture-Driven Sustainable Urban tourism from UNESCO, UN-Habitat, and UN Tourism provide education from case study and expert panels to assist providing best practices to protect and promote culture.[129]

Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage Using Education and Awareness

UNESCO provides many different tools focused on creating education and awareness of intangible cultural heritage, including prizes to raise global awareness on the protection of intangible cultural heritage.[130] International Funds Supporting Culture has multiple funds that have specific scopes and topics which focus on the promotion of culture and heritage.[131] Each specific fund has a unique application process.[132] Category 2 Centres and Institutes in Culture work as technical and information basis to access information about culture in the area.[133] UNESCO's Category 2 Centres work to build capacities but by doing so they require participation at the local level.[134] UNESCO relies on Category 2 Centres and Institutes to be expertise centers supporting them and Member States in implementing the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.[135] The partnership allows these centers to benefit from the networks and prestige of UNESCO, but there are responsibilities that are

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[121] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Living heritage and threats*. N.d.; Future Learn. *Urbanisation and globalisation*. N.d.
[122] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Living heritage and threats*. N.d.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO, UN Tourism and UN-Habitat launch Urban Solutions on Culture-Driven Sustainable Urban Tourism*. N.d.
[130] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Toolkit for requesting International Assistance from the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.* N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Establishment of the UNESCO-Cultan Haitham Prize for Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding*. N.d.
[131] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *International Funds Supporting Culture*. N.d.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO*. N.d.
[135] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Category 2 Centres and Institutes in Culture*. N.d.

associated with the alignment.[136] The 2019 UNESCO Strategy for Category 2 Centres and Institute was adopted at the 40th Session of the UNESCO in November 2019 and provides the legal and management framework for Category 2 Centres and Institute.[137] Currently UNESCO supports more than 130 Category 2 Centres and Institutes.[138]

In the 2003 *Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,* UNESCO acknowledges that the States parties have a significant responsibility to safeguarding culture including intangible cultural heritage.[139] In 2025, UNESCO promoted the fostering of education focusing on arts and culture to protect intangible cultural heritage.[140] Building upon the MONDIACULT Declaration, UNESCO used the 1,200 national and local reports from between 2019 and 2024 to produce the UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies.[141] The report calls for action including the creation of a culture as a stand alone goal in the post-2030 agenda.[142] In 2024 at the UNESCO World Conference on Culture and Arts Education in Abu Dhabi, the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Education.[143] The framework calls for both appreciation and critical engagement on cultural diversity.[144] UNESCO recommends that education needs to include addressing stigma, xenophobia, hate speech, disinformation, misinformation and discrimination in the *UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education* (2019).[145] Formal education systems can start cultural education at any early age and focus on locally relevant curricula and settings.[146] Involvement of relevant ministries, agencies, and educator training institutions in the State is required for local relevancy.[147] State-level involvement in cultural education allows for the systems and approaches to be formalized with sustained implementation.[148]

UNESCO reports such as *Culture the Urban Future* provide guidance on how urban heritage can promote cultural and inclusive industries.[149] UNESCO reports such as *Culture the Urban Future* that were launched in 2016 provide an overview of how to protect, manage, and promote culture including intangible cultural heritage.[150] The report focuses on addressing the issues facing culture as well as the work achieved.[151] The report was constructed within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the *New Urban Agenda*.[152] The *New Urban Agenda* supports making culture accessible to all including cultural

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[136] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Institutions and Centres*. N.d
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, General Conference. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. 2003. Article 11.
[140] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.*UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies*. N.d.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural World Conference. *UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education*. 2024. p.1.
[144] Ibid. p.5.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid. p.7.
[148] Ibid.
[149] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture is at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals*. 2023.
[150] Ibid.
[151] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.'*Culture: Urban Future' - The Role of Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Local Development*. 2017.
[152] Ibid.

spaces in cities.[153] In 2025, UNESCO released the *UNESCO Global Report in Cultural Policies Cultural: The missing SDG*.[154] This report is based on the 2022 MONDIACULT Declaration and uses information from over 1,200 national, regional and local reports received by UNESCO between 2019 and 2024.[155] This report is a call for action from individuals on a local level for the international and national level to have culture as its own goal in a post 2030 Agenda.[156] The report also highlights how culture is promoted through the public policy particularly of national-level governmental entities.[157]

Conclusion

UNESCO is the prominent United Nations entity focusing on culture and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban settings.[158] Intangible cultural heritage is the practices, knowledge, and expressions that are fundamental to cultural identity.[159] The *Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* is the cornerstone document that guides the international community in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.[160] UNESCO focuses on education and awareness of intangible cultural heritage and uses a variety of tools.[161] Cultural heritage has the ability to be a driver and enable achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals when the international community works with Member States.[162] Intangible culture requires practitioners and the interest of future generations to be able to be interested to ensure its continuation.[163] Globalization, particularly urbanization, economic pressures and negative attitudes, are forces of threat to the continuation of intangible cultural heritage requiring the attention of the international and local community.[164]

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research on how to address this topic, they should consider: How does your Member State protect intangible cultural rights? What are the greatest barriers to protecting intangible cultural rights? How can UNESCO use their already existing tools and processes to improve the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage? How can UNESCO improve their already existing tools and processes to improve the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage? What threats to intangible cultural heritage are most prevent in your Member State?

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[153] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture is at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals*. 2023; United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016. p. 8.
[154] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.*UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies*. N.d.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *About us.* N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?.* N.d.
[159] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?.* N.d.
[160] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, General Conference. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. 2003. p.3.
[161] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Toolkit for requesting International Assistance from the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.* N.d.;
[162] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Culture is at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals*. 2023.
[163] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Living heritage and threats*. N.d.
[164] Ibid; Future Learn. *Urbanisation and globalisation*. N.d.

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2. Greening Education

"Parties shall cooperate in taking measures, as appropriate, to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognizing the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions under this Agreement."[165]

Introduction

The right to education, recognized as a foundational human right under international law since 1948, is increasingly understood as inseparable from preparing learners to live within planetary limits.[166] The intensifying climate crisis has reshaped the context where the right to education must be realized, as climate change disrupts learning infrastructure, displaces students, and transforms labor markets.[167] In response, the international community has framed education as both vehicle and beneficiary of the global transition toward sustainability.[168] This process is termed greening and has been applied across economies, cities, energy systems, and education.[169] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) leads the international response on integrating climate change into education systems.[170] UNESCO defines greening education as a whole-of-system approach that integrates climate change and sustainability across curricula, schools, teacher training, education systems' capacities, and surrounding communities.[171]

UNESCO finds that despite a robust international architecture supporting greening education, education systems remain underprepared to deliver on global commitments, with significant gaps in curricula, teacher capacity, and learning environments.[172] The 2024 *Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report on Education and Climate Change* found an average score of only 50% on environment and sustainability content across 76 country curricula and observed that 62% of countries lack specific national laws, policies, or strategies for climate change education.[173] Teacher capacity gaps compound the problem, as a 2021 UNESCO survey of 58,000 teachers found that 95% of primary and secondary teachers consider teaching climate change important while fewer than 30% feel ready to do so.[174] UNESCO attributes these gaps to limited financing, the narrow framing of climate change as a strictly scientific topic, weak teacher training systems, and the disruption of recent crises.[175]

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[165] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015. art. 12.
[166] United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217(III))*. 1948. art. 26; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200A(XXI))*. 1966. art. 13.
[167] United Nations Children's Fund. *Global Snapshot of Climate-Related School Disruptions in 2024*. 2025.
[168] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024. p. 14.
[169] Ibid.
[170] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership*. N.d.
[171] Ibid.
[172] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024. p. 14.
[173] Ibid. pp. 14, 17.
[174] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Getting Every School Climate-Ready: how countries are integrating climate change issues in education*. 2021. pp. 21-24.
[175] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024. pp. 22-25.

When UNESCO and Member States speak of greening education, they refer to the four pillars of the Greening Education Partnership launched at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit.[176] The first pillar, greening schools, focuses on climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable operations, and learning environments that model the sustainability they teach.[177] The second pillar, greening curricula, integrates climate change content and sustainability competencies across subjects, age groups, and education levels.[178] The third pillar, greening teacher training and education systems' capacities, equips educators with the knowledge, pedagogies, and institutional support to teach climate change effectively.[179] The fourth pillar, greening communities, extends the work of schools into local communities and connects formal education with Indigenous and local knowledge systems.[180]

International and Regional Framework

Recognition of education as a tool for climate action has evolved through landmark instruments, from the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) (1992) to the *Paris Agreement* (2015) and the 2030 Agenda.[181] The right to education itself is anchored in Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and Article 13 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), which establish education as a universal entitlement and a duty of States parties.[182] Article 6 of the UNFCCC established the basis for Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), requiring States parties to promote education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation on climate change.[183] The *Paris Agreement* reinforced that mandate under Article 12, requiring States parties to cooperate in enhancing climate change education and public engagement.[184] In the same year, the General Assembly adopted the (2030 Agenda), which placed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (quality education) and SDG 13 (climate action) at the heart of global development.[185] SDG target 4.7 on education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship commits Member States by 2030 to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through ESD.[186] Progress remains insufficient, as *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026* finds 273 million children and young people out of school in 2024 and learning outcomes declining in many regions.[187] SDG target 13.3 on improving education and awareness on climate change further commits Member States to integrate

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[176] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership*. N.d.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 1992; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.
[182] United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217(III))*. 1948. art. 26; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200A(XXI))*. 1966. art. 13.
[183] United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 1992. art. 6.
[184] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015. art. 12.
[185] United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 17.
[186] Ibid. pp. 17, 23.
[187] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026*. 2026. pp. 16-17.

climate change into national education systems.[188] The same report records 2024 as the hottest year on record and finds current national pledges insufficient to limit warming to 1.5°C.[189] SDGs 4 and 13 are reinforced by SDG target 4.C on the supply of qualified teachers, SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), which respectively address the educator capacity, lifestyle changes, and cooperation that greening education requires.[190] The General Assembly reaffirmed this framework in resolution 76/138 on "Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which positions ESD as integral to all 17 SDGs.[191]

A second wave of declarations and decisions shifted the global agenda from broad recognition of climate education toward measurable targets and time-bound action plans.[192] The *Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development* (2014), adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on ESD, closed the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and launched the Global Action Programme on ESD (2015-2019).[193] The Declaration identified five priority areas: policy support, whole-institution approaches, educators, youth, and local communities.[194] These areas set the structural template that the 2021 *Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development* and the 2023 *Declaration on the Common Agenda for Education and Climate Change* would expand and operationalize.[195] The Berlin Declaration committed signatories to integrate ESD as a key component of all levels of education and identified five action areas: advancing policies, transforming learning environments, building capacities of educators, empowering and mobilizing youth, and accelerating local-level action.[196] Under the UNFCCC process, the *Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment* (FCCC/CP/2021/12/Add.3), adopted at COP26 in 2021, established a 10-year framework (2021-2031) anchored in four priority areas of policy coherence, coordinated action, tools and support, and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.[197] The Action Plan adopted at COP27 in 2022 translated these priority areas into short-term, time-bound activities for the period 2023-2026.[198] A midterm review of the Glasgow Work Programme in 2026 will evaluate its effectiveness and identify emerging gaps, ahead of a final review in 2031.[199] Adopted at COP28 in 2023 and signed by 39 Member States, the Declaration on

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[188] United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. pp. 14-30.
[189] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026*. 2026. p. 34.
[190] United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. pp. 14-30.
[191] United Nations, General Assembly. *Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/76/138)*. 2021.
[192] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. 2024.
[193] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development*. 2014. p. 2.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development*. 2021. p. 1.
[197] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment (FCCC/CP/2021/12/Add.3)*. 2021.
[198] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Action Plan for the implementation of the Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment (FCCC/CP/2022/10/Add.3)*. 2022.
[199] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment (FCCC/CP/2021/12/Add.3)*. 2021. p. 3.

the Common Agenda structured commitments around three pillars of adapt, mitigate, and invest.[200] The *Pact for the Future* (A/RES/79/1), adopted by the General Assembly in 2024, reaffirms commitments to climate action, youth participation, and inclusive quality education.[201] Across these documents, common themes emerge of universal access, age-appropriate integration, teacher capacity, community engagement, and the inseparability of climate education from broader sustainable development goals.[202]

Regional frameworks complement these global instruments and adapt them to local realities.[203] In 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted the *Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development*, which calls on its members to make sustainability learning a priority in education policies, to support educators, and to invest in green learning environments, drawing on GreenComp, the European sustainability competence framework.[204] In the same year, the African Union adopted its *Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)*, which identifies improved climate literacy and awareness as a strategic intervention and promotes climate change learning across formal and informal education throughout the continent.[205] These regional frameworks translate global commitments into policies tailored to the climate vulnerabilities and education systems of each region.[206]

Role of the International System

As the lead United Nations agency for education and the architect of the Greening Education Partnership, UNESCO coordinates global, regional, and national efforts to embed climate change and sustainability into education systems.[207] The Greening Education Partnership, launched at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit convened by the United Nations Secretary-General in New York, brings together Member States and partner organizations under four pillars of action: greening schools, greening curriculum, greening teacher training and education systems' capacities, and greening communities.[208] Under the Partnership, UNESCO has developed two operational standards: the *Greening Curriculum Guidance: Teaching and Learning for Climate Action* (Greening Curriculum Guidance) (2024) Greening Curriculum Guidance and the *Green School Quality Standard: Greening Every Learning Environment* (Green School Quality Standard) (2024).[209] The Greening Curriculum Guidance provides Member States with a common understanding of climate change education content and a 10-step implementation roadmap.[210] The Green School Quality Standard defines minimum requirements for green learning

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[200] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Declaration on the Common Agenda for Education and Climate Change*. 2023.
[201] United Nations, General Assembly. *Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*. 2024.
[202] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. 2024.
[203] African Union. *African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)*. 2022. pp. 34-35; European Commission. *Learning for the green transition and sustainable development*. 2022.
[204] European Commission. *Learning for the green transition and sustainable development*. 2022.
[205] African Union. *African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)*. 2022. pp. 34-35.
[206] Ibid; European Commission. *Learning for the green transition and sustainable development*. 2022.
[207] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership*. N.d.
[208] Ibid; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Transforming Education Summit*. N.d.
[209] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. 2024.
[210] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Curriculum Guidance: Teaching and Learning for Climate Action*. 2024.

environments across four dimensions of governance, facilities and operations, teaching, and local community engagement.[211] UNESCO's *Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap* (2020) operationalizes the ESD for 2030 framework across the same five priority action areas identified in the Berlin Declaration.[212] Implementation is supported by ESD-Net 2030, a global network launched by UNESCO in October 2022 that connects national ESD for 2030 Country Initiatives, partner institutions, and a community of practice of educators, researchers, and youth.[213]

UNESCO also delivers regional and country-level technical support to adapt these global standards to national contexts.[214] Through the Climate Smart Education Systems Initiative, a partnership with the Global Partnership for Education, Save the Children, and the International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO provides technical support to 35 of the most climate-vulnerable countries.[215] In 2022 and 2023, UNESCO published regional studies on the impact of climate change and displacement on the right to education, culminating in a 2023 global report that synthesized regional priorities, including integrating climate change education into national curricula and protecting education in climate-induced emergencies.[216] The International Institute for Educational Planning also works with Ministries of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen climate-responsive educational planning and integrate climate change into national education sector plans.[217]

Multiple United Nations entities and partner organizations contribute complementary roles to greening education, while regional and civil society actors translate international frameworks into local action.[218] The General Assembly has framed the policy direction for greening education through a sequence of resolutions.[219] In resolution 57/254 on “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development,” the General Assembly proclaimed the Decade and designated UNESCO as its lead agency.[220] In resolution 74/223 on “Education for sustainable development in the framework of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” it acknowledged the ESD for 2030 framework and reaffirmed ESD as a key enabler of the SDGs, a position consolidated in resolution 76/138.[221] The UNFCCC Secretariat

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[211] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Green School Quality Standard: Greening Every Learning Environment*. 2024.
[212] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap*. 2020.
[213] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *ESD for 2030 Global Network*. N.d.
[214] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. N.d.
[215] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Climate Smart Education Systems Initiative*. N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO and partners catalyse cooperation and regional commitment to education, climate change and the environment*. N.d.
[216] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO and partners catalyse cooperation and regional commitment to education, climate change and the environment*. N.d.; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Asia-Pacific Regional Synthesis: Climate Change, Displacement and the Right to Education*. 2023.
[217] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Institute for Educational Planning. *How educational planning responds to climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean*. N.d.
[218] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. 2024.
[219] United Nations, General Assembly. *Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/76/138)*. 2021.
[220] United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (A/RES/57/254)*. 2002.
[221] United Nations, General Assembly. *Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/74/223)*. 2019; United Nations, General Assembly.

coordinates ACE through the ACE Hub, supports States parties in implementing the Glasgow Work Programme and its Action Plan, and convenes national ACE focal points to share good practices.[222] The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) leads on environmental education and biodiversity-related learning, complementing UNESCO's mandate.[223] UNEP's strategy for Environmental Education and Training frames environmental education as continuous lifelong learning, while its Youth and Education Alliance supports community-based environmental learning as a complement to formal schooling.[224] UNEP works through the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) to advance Member State commitments on the environment.[225] At its sixth session held in Nairobi in 2024, UNEA adopted 15 resolutions on the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.[226] Several of these resolutions include educational components on sustainable lifestyles and environmental literacy.[227] The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supports climate-resilient education systems, focusing on the most vulnerable children.[228] UNICEF's *Global Snapshot of Climate-Related School Disruptions in 2024* (2025) found that at least 242 million students in 85 countries had their schooling disrupted by extreme climate events in 2024.[229] In Mozambique, UNICEF has supported the construction or modification of over 1,150 climate-resilient classrooms across nearly 230 schools.[230] UNICEF also coordinates the Green Schools Initiative for West and Central Africa, which integrates climate change content and resilience training into basic education.[231]

Organizations outside the United Nations system also play an essential role in the international response to greening education.[232] The Foundation for Environmental Education, an independent international non-profit organization, operates the Eco-Schools program in over 60 Member States and serves as a strategic partner of the Greening Education Partnership.[233] Education International, a global federation of teacher unions representing more than 32 million educators, brings the voice of educators into international climate education negotiations and supports the greening teacher training pillar by advocating for professional development and decent working conditions for climate-ready teachers.[234]

Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/76/138). 2021.
[222] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat. *Action for Climate Empowerment*. N.d.
[223] United Nations Environment Programme. *UNEP strategy for Environmental Education and Training*. N.d.
[224] Ibid; United Nations Environment Programme. *Youth and Education Alliance*. N.d.
[225] United Nations Environment Programme. *United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions and decisions*. N.d.
[226] United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN Environment Assembly advances collaborative action on triple planetary crisis*. 2024.
[227] United Nations Environment Programme. *United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions and decisions*. N.d.
[228] United Nations Children's Fund. *Climate Change in Education*. 2024; United Nations Children's Fund. *Education in emergencies and crises*. N.d.
[229] United Nations Children's Fund. *Global Snapshot of Climate-Related School Disruptions in 2024*. 2025.
[230] United Nations Children's Fund. *Nearly a quarter of a billion children's schooling was disrupted by climate crises in 2024*. 2025.
[231] United Nations Children's Fund. *Climate Change in Education*. 2024.
[232] Foundation for Environmental Education. *Greening Education Partnership*. N.d.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Education International. *Climate change*. N.d.

Greening National Curricula and Teacher Training Practices

While most Member States have committed to integrating climate change education into national curricula and teacher training systems, persistent gaps in coverage, depth, and educator capacity continue to limit the effectiveness of education in preparing learners for environmental challenges.[235] UNESCO's 2024 GEM Report observed that, across 76 country curricula, the average score on environment and sustainability content was only 50%, with just 21% of countries adequately addressing climate change content and 12% biodiversity content.[236] The same report found uneven coverage by age group, with 34% of countries lacking green content in grade 3 social science syllabi compared to 16% at grade 9, suggesting that climate change content is often introduced too late to support cumulative literacy.[237] Per the 2024 GEM Report, 62% of countries lack specific national-level laws, policies, or strategies for climate change education, underscoring the gap between commitment and implementation.[238] UNESCO has not endorsed a single entry grade, but its *Greening Curriculum Guidance* emphasizes age-appropriate integration from ages 5 through 18 and beyond.[239] In the 2024 GEM Report, UNESCO attributed these patterns, including the late introduction of climate change content, to limited public financing for curriculum reform, narrow framing of climate change as a strictly scientific topic that overlooks the social sciences and humanities, and disruptions caused by recent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic.[240]

UNESCO's *Greening Curriculum Guidance* provides Member States with a holistic, age-appropriate, and competency-based roadmap for integrating climate change education into curricula at all levels.[241] The Guidance identifies six key concepts for green curricula of climate science, ecosystems and biodiversity, climate justice, resilience-building, post-carbon economies, and sustainable lifestyles, designed to engage the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral domains of learning.[242] It includes a 10-step implementation roadmap that supports countries through phases of reviewing existing education policies, engaging stakeholders, deciding on curricular strategies, training educators, and monitoring outcomes.[243] Under the Greening Education Partnership, UNESCO targets 90% of Member States to include climate change in their curricula by 2030.[244] As of late 2025, 60 of 81 Partnership partner countries plan to integrate climate change and biodiversity into their national curricula within three years, with 70 of 81 committed to providing related teacher training.[245] This indicates early momentum, although full coverage remains far from secured.[246] Several Member States have begun aligning national programs with the

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[235] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024. p. 14.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid. p. 16.
[238] Ibid. p. 17.
[239] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Curriculum Guidance: Teaching and Learning for Climate Action*. 2024. pp. 28-37.
[240] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024. pp. 22-25.
[241] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Curriculum Guidance: Teaching and Learning for Climate Action*. 2024. p. 16.
[242] Ibid. pp. 28-37.
[243] Ibid.
[244] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. 2024.
[245] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO at COP28: Making education the long-term solution to the climate crisis*. 2023.
[246] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. 2024.

Guidance.[247] In Madagascar, UNESCO supports curriculum reform integrating climate change and biodiversity from primary to secondary education.[248] Indonesia's Merdeka curriculum embeds climate change content across multiple subjects, including through the P5 program on sustainable lifestyles developed in cooperation with UNESCO.[249] In Costa Rica, climate change is taught from primary to secondary level in Sciences and Civic Education, supported by the country's National Strategy on Climate Change.[250] These national reforms operationalize SDG indicator 4.7.1, which measures the extent to which ESD and global citizenship education are mainstreamed in national education policies, curricula, teacher education, and student assessment.[251]

UNESCO has observed a persistent gap between the recognition of climate change education and the actual capacity of teachers to deliver it, requiring sustained investment in teacher education, professional development, and supportive education systems.[252] UNESCO's 2021 survey of 58,000 primary and secondary teachers found that 95% of teachers consider teaching climate change important, but fewer than 30% feel ready to do so.[253] The same survey reports that only 32% feel able to explain climate change in their local context, and only 23% feel prepared to teach about climate action.[254] UNESCO's 2024 GEM Report further found that 63% of countries have included climate change in a law, policy, or plan for teacher training, but only 19% provide such training to all teachers.[255] This indicates a significant gap between formal policy commitments and in-service teacher capacity.[256] UNESCO has attributed these gaps to limited financing for in-service training, time pressures within overloaded curricula, pre-service programs that often exclude climate content, and the absence of professional teaching standards recognizing climate change competencies.[257] In response, the greening teacher training pillar of the Greening Education Partnership promotes pre-service and in-service training at all levels of education, system-level capacity for climate-smart policy, planning, financing, and whole-of-system support for educators.[258] The Partnership targets all member countries to establish professional teaching standards that include climate change competencies by 2030.[259] Toward this goal, its working group on greening teacher training launched a draft Policy Discussion Framework for Teacher-Responsive, Climate-Smart Education Systems at COP29 in 2024, which remains under global consultation.[260]

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[247] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Climate change education*. N.d.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.
[250] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024.
[251] United Nations Statistics Division. *SDG Indicator 4.7.1: Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed*. N.d.
[252] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening teacher training and education systems' capacities*. N.d.
[253] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Getting Every School Climate-Ready: how countries are integrating climate change issues in education*. 2021. pp. 21-24.
[254] Ibid.
[255] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024. p. 22.
[256] Ibid.
[257] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap*. 2020. pp. 22-32.
[258] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening teacher training and education systems' capacities*. N.d.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.

Greening Schools and Communities

Greening schools and the communities they serve constitute the second strand of the Greening Education Partnership's whole-of-system approach, connecting climate-resilient infrastructure and sustainable operations with local and Indigenous knowledge systems.[261] The Green School Quality Standard defines minimum requirements for green learning environments across four dimensions of governance, facilities and operations, teaching, and local community engagement, providing a framework that shapes school operations and supports teachers' pedagogical practice.[262] Under the Partnership, nearly 112,000 schools across 98 Member States have aligned with the standard.[263] These include 32,944 nursery schools, 54,292 primary schools, 17,138 secondary schools, and 7,535 higher education establishments, reflecting early progress toward the Partnership's target of aligning 50% of the world's schools with the standard by 2030.[264] UNESCO promotes a whole-institution approach to ESD, linking governance, facilities, pedagogy, and community engagement so that school operations themselves model the sustainability that teachers teach.[265] At school-network level, the Foundation for Environmental Education's Eco-Schools program operates as a major Partnership partner in over 60 Member States.[266] In Kenya alone, more than 1,000 schools participate in the program, coordinated by the Kenya Organization for Environmental Education since 2003.[267]

The greening communities pillar, the fourth pillar of the Greening Education Partnership, extends greening education beyond schools to parents, local authorities, civil society, and Indigenous and local knowledge holders.[268] Indigenous and local knowledge systems are an essential complement to formal climate change education, offering centuries of accumulated wisdom on sustainable land management, biodiversity stewardship, and climate adaptation.[269] UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems Programme supports the integration of these knowledge systems into national curricula and school-based learning.[270] The Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform under the UNFCCC provides a global mechanism for Indigenous knowledge holders to contribute to climate education policy.[271] The 2022-2032 International Decade of Indigenous Languages, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 74/135 on “Rights of Indigenous Peoples,” further reinforces the role of Indigenous languages as carriers of climate-relevant knowledge.[272] Community-based learning is also central to UNEP's Youth and Education Alliance, which complements school-based education by mobilizing youth and community actors around environmental sustainability.[273] Together, these initiatives illustrate how

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[261] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership*. N.d.
[262] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Green School Quality Standard: Greening Every Learning Environment*. 2024. pp. 10-13.
[263] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Over 110,000 schools have aligned with UNESCO's green school quality standard*. 2025.
[264] Ibid.
[265] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap*. 2020. p. 28.
[266] Foundation for Environmental Education. *Greening Education Partnership*. N.d.
[267] Kenya Organization for Environmental Education. *Eco-Schools Programme*. N.d.
[268] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership*. N.d.
[269] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS)*. N.d.
[270] Ibid.
[271] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform: Functions of the LCIPP*. 2024.
[272] United Nations, General Assembly. *Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/74/135)*. 2019.
[273] United Nations Environment Programme. *Youth and Education Alliance*. N.d.

greening communities translates global commitments into locally relevant, culturally grounded climate education that reaches learners inside and outside the classroom.[274]

Conclusion

Greening education has shifted from a peripheral policy idea to a centerpiece of the international community's response to the climate crisis, but progress on translating commitments into curricula, teachers, learning environments, and communities remains uneven.[275] A normative architecture has emerged from the UNFCCC, the *Paris Agreement*, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the *Pact for the Future*, and a series of UNESCO World Conferences on Education for Sustainable Development.[276] This architecture has positioned greening education as a shared global priority and a core component of the right to education.[277] At the same time, UNESCO observes that 62% of countries still lack specific national-level laws, policies, or strategies for climate change education and fewer than 30% of teachers feel prepared to teach the subject.[278] The Greening Education Partnership and its operational standards, including the Greening Curriculum Guidance and the Green School Quality Standard, provide an emerging framework that Member States can adapt to national contexts.[279] Regional frameworks from the European Union and the African Union adapt these commitments to regional realities, while civil society networks such as Eco-Schools and Indigenous and local knowledge holders ground implementation in schools and communities.[280] As the international community approaches the 2030 horizon, Member States will likely consider how to align curricula, strengthen teacher capacity, scale green learning environments, and engage communities to deliver climate-ready education for every learner.[281]

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research on how to address this topic, they should consider: How can Member States align national curricula with UNESCO's *Greening Curriculum Guidance* while respecting linguistic, cultural, and Indigenous knowledge contexts? What financing mechanisms can ensure equitable progress on climate change education in low- and middle-income countries? How can teacher education systems deliver climate change competencies at scale, and what role should regional cooperation and South-South learning play? How can the Green School Quality Standard be

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[274] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS)*. N.d.
[275] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024.
[276] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. 2024.
[277] Ibid.
[278] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Education and Climate Change: Learning to Act for People and Planet*. 2024. pp. 14, 17.
[279] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Curriculum Guidance: Teaching and Learning for Climate Action*. 2024; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Green School Quality Standard: Greening Every Learning Environment*. 2024.
[280] African Union. *African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)*. 2022. pp. 34-35; European Commission. *Learning for the green transition and sustainable development*. 2022; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership*. N.d.
[281] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Greening Education Partnership: getting every learner climate-ready*. 2024.

implemented in conflict-affected and emergency-affected contexts where school infrastructure may already be compromised? How can monitoring through SDG indicator 4.7.1 be used to identify and address regional disparities? Through what means can UNESCO, the UNFCCC Secretariat, UNEP, UNICEF, and Member States coordinate to reach the Greening Education Partnership targets by 2030?

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