**ITALY**

***Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation***

*Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights*

*Comitato Interministeriale per i Diritti Umani*

**ITALY’S CONTRIBUTION**

**TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON CULTURAL RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

**OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL RIGHTS**

***May 2020***

**ITALY’S REMARKS**

Italian Authorities thank the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and want to provide the following information about climate change, culture and cultural rights.

**Introduction**

The Italian legal system aims at ensuring an effective framework of guarantees, to fully and extensively protect the fundamental rights of the individual. Indeed, we rely on a solid framework of rules, primarily of a constitutional nature, by which the respect for human rights is one of the main pillars.

On a more specific note, the Italian Constitution envisages the protection of all rights and fundamental freedoms included in relevant international standards, such as the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Human Rights Universal Declaration or the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The protection and promotion of rights – including economic, social and cultural rights – constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of both domestic and foreign Italian policies.

**Turning to the specific issue**

With regard to climate change, the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea has carried out many activities at the national level. In 2015, Italy adopted the National Adaptation Strategy to climate change (NAS) with the aim to give a common path, at national level, to deal with the impacts of climate change on natural systems and socioeconomic sectors.

The Ministry for the Environment worked for the implementation of the NAS through the development of the National Adaptation Plan to climate change (NAP). It updated background information about the impacts of climate change and outlines possible adaptation actions for specific sectors, including the health sector. Specific cooperation projects driven by the Ministry of Health have been implemented in parallel to strengthen adaptive and preventative measures to cope with environmental health and climate change-related hazards.

These include:

1) Adaptation; Evaluation of existing national information systems on climate and health; Estimation of the costs of the impacts of climate change on health.

2) National Policy Implementation; Strengthening of the efforts to raise awareness and capacity building to deal with the impacts of climate change on health; Strengthening of multilevel governance on the issue of climate change and health, with the aim to ensure coherence between national, regional and local planning.

With regard to the linkage between culture and climate change, on 28-29 September 2018 in Ravello, Italy, took place the International Conference on Culture Against Disasters - Protecting Cultural Landscapes as Prevention of Natural Disasters.

During the [fortieth session](https://en.unesco.org/generalconference/40) of the General Conference of UNESCO, which took place in Paris from 12 to 27 November 2019, the Italian Minister for cultural heritage addressed to the Forum of Cultural Ministers, the largest such meeting in more than 20 years, with the participation of 120 Ministers.

He affirmed that Venice set an example and a warning for the world. “What happened in Venice reminded us once again of our fragility in sight of climate change and natural disasters. This tragedy can become an opportunity to find solutions and prevent further damages: we must be able to react promptly, international action is needed, coordinated and guided by UNESCO.”

Countries reaffirmed the value of cultural diversity as an essential component of all societies, of intercultural dialogue and social inclusion. They furthermore agreed about the importance of extending access to culture and heritage for urban and rural communities, for vulnerable groups including diasporas. Other major priorities expressed concerned the need to take stock of the impact of the creative industries, and to provide lifelong arts and culture education for all.

After the recent tides, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre is closely monitoring the state of conservation of the World Heritage site of Venice and its Lagoon.

Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1987, Venice faces several threats from over-tourism, damage caused by a steady stream of cruise ships, and from the potential negative effects of new developments. The site is also highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. The frequency of heavy rains and floods has increased in recent years in the Mediterranean region especially, and the intensity of such floods is rising. Other sites are also affected by serious floods, such as Matera in Southern Italy, inscribed on the World Heritage List as Sassi and the Park of the Rupestrian Churches of Matera.

“We must prepare ourselves for the risks caused by climate change and we must protect the lives and the culture of our populations. For this reason – explained the Italian Minister for cultural heritage in his address to the Forum – initiatives like the ‘blue helmets for culture’ must be strengthened, to prevent and respond promptly to natural disasters. Because the global threats against our patrimony are not only terrorism, war and armed conflicts. And to respond to these perils we need an action plan for the protection of cultural heritage in light of climate change. The entire world must see the tragedy in Venice, because Venice is the world. Its cultural heritage belongs to humanity”.

Italy is also encouraging other nations to prioritize climate education.

Italy, together with Mexico, proposed that other nations can use the celebration of Earth Day in April as the occasion to announce their plans for climate and environmental education.

The 2020 commemoration also marked the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the birth of the environmental movement.

Last November, Minister of Education, Innovation and Research announced that Italy was to become the first country to make climate change lessons compulsory in schools. He intends to make the Italian education system the first education system that puts the environment and society at the core of everything we learn in school.

He announced that when children will return to class in September 2020 after their summer holidays, their annual curriculum will also include 33 hours — approximately one per school week — dedicated to climate change and sustainable development. That 33-hour-a-year lesson will be used as a pilot program to ultimately fold the climate agenda of the United Nations into the entire curriculum.

The entire ministry is being changed to make sustainability and climate the centre of the education model.

Last September, Italian Minister of Education, Innovation and Research also encouraged students to skip school and take part in the Fridays for Future protests which called on world leaders to take more decisive action to tackle climate change.

He described the movement — launched a year earlier by Swedish teen Greta Thunberg — as "essential", adding that students' future was being "threatened by environmental devastation and an unsustainable economic growth model".

**Conclusions**

Italian Authorities take this opportunity to reiterate their firm willingness to continue cooperating with all relevant UN Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and mechanisms.