

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Deadline for Application: 29 September 2023

7TH AFRICAN WORLD HERITAGE YOUTH FORUM

20 – 24 November 2023

Theme: *Engaging African Youth in Climate Action for World Heritage Conservation*

1. World Heritage and Climate Change

Climate change¹ poses unprecedented challenges to the survival of humans, animals, plant life and ecosystems. It threatens social and economic systems, while putting development gains at risk. No continent will be struck as severely by the impacts of climate change as Africa. The Africa Union’s Agenda 2063 makes it clear that climate-resilient communities and economies are an integral component of the continental vision for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

Climate change has become one of the most significant threats to World Heritage, impacting the Outstanding Universal Values (OUV), including integrity and authenticity, of many properties, as well as the economic and social development and quality of life of communities connected with World Heritage properties. Natural World Heritage properties serve as natural buffers against climate impacts and other disasters, providing space for floodwaters to disperse, stabilizing soil against landslides and blocking storm surges. Cultural World Heritage properties represented by cultural landscapes, historic cities, archaeological sites and vernacular architecture also demonstrate various locally developed strategies for mitigation against climate change through energy efficient built form and sustainable use of local resources (UNESCO 2022).

The Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention (2015) expressly recognizes the linkages between climate change and sustainable development, noting that “in the face of increasing disaster risks and the impact of climate change, States Parties should recognise that World Heritage represents both an asset to be protected and a resource to strengthen the ability of communities and their properties to resist, absorb, and recover.” The African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032) also supports the realization of this vision by setting out principles, priorities and action areas for enhanced climate cooperation and long term, climate-resilient development.

¹ The Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in Article 1, defines climate change as: “a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”

While a number of responses to the threats of climate change (e.g., assessing climate change risks, climate change adaptation and mitigation, capacity building and awareness raising) are primarily guided by States Parties to the Convention and managers of World Heritage properties, effective implementation of climate action requires the engagement and empowerment of various stakeholders, such as local communities, private sector, civil society and youth in particular. Around the world, young people have put the climate emergency on the global political agenda, demanding that global leaders respond and take action in an equitable and just way. To achieve meaningful youth engagement, there needs to be enhanced capacity and support for youth perspectives, as well as a recognition of the expertise and interest in climate issues carried by many youth climate action champions across the African continent.

2. A way to empower African young generations through World Heritage

Since 2016, as a build-up to the African World Heritage Day, young people (i.e., individuals aged 18 to 35) from all over the African continent come together in the *African World Heritage Youth Forum* to discuss and debate their involvement in the conservation, management and promotion of World Heritage. The African World Heritage Youth Forum targets motivated, active and driven African youth interested in engaging in a World Heritage network and eager to implement the outcomes of the Youth Forum in their home countries.

The close cooperation between the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), UNESCO (World Heritage Centre, UNESCO regional and country offices) States Parties to the World Heritage Convention (South Africa, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Cameroon) and other partners has ensured the successful implementation of the past six editions of the African World Heritage Youth Forum: 2016 in Robben Island (South Africa), 2017 in Gaoua (Burkina Faso), 2018 in Island of Mozambique (Mozambique), 2019 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), 2021 (Online) and 2022 in Yaoundé (Cameroon). Over 205 young people from 47 African countries were trained and mobilized for promotion and preservation of World Heritage in Africa. The Forum has increased awareness and mobilization of African communities across the continent through the celebration of African World Heritage Day on 5 May. It has also increased visibility of the role of African youth in safeguarding African heritage through extensive media coverage (national and internationally), social media networks and presentation of results at international platforms, such as the sessions of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee meetings.

Mobilizing public and political support for climate action inside and outside World Heritage properties is essential. For this reason, the **7th edition of the African World Heritage Youth Forum** will be held under the theme “*Engaging African Youth in Climate Action for World Heritage Conservation*” with an online phase taking place 23–28 October 2023 followed by in-person meeting in Cairo, Egypt, 20–24 November 2023.

3. 7th African World Heritage Youth Forum

The 7th edition of the African World Heritage Youth Forum will bring together African young leaders to share their perspectives, experiences and solutions for addressing the challenges posed by climate change. By empowering youth to play a leading role in conservation efforts and fostering cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration, the Forum will help to build a strong network of young leaders who are committed to Climate Action and conservation of World Heritage properties for the benefit of present and future generations.

3.1. Objectives

The Forum aims to empower the youth to develop tools to communicate effectively the impacts of climate change and implications of actions on World Heritage properties to various audiences, including policymakers, civil society, the private sector and local communities with subsequent benefits for conservation and management of World Heritage properties in Africa.

3.2. Expected outcomes

- a) Increased awareness and better understanding of the impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties in Africa;
- b) Adoption of African Youth Declaration expressing aspirations of the youth and a road map guiding youth Climate Action for World Heritage Conservation in Africa;
- c) Enhanced cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration among African youth to find solutions and take collective climate action towards conservation and protection of World Heritage; and
- d) Increased visibility of the role of African youth in Climate Action for the protection and promotion of Africa's heritage through extensive media coverage (national and international) and presentation of results at international platforms, such as the 45 sessions of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

3.3. Format of the Forum

The Forum will comprise three main distinct but interconnected phases. The first phase will be an online session focusing on the theoretical background concerning the general frameworks for World Heritage conservation and Climate Action in Africa. The first phase will result in the development of proposals by participants concerning climate heritage initiatives to improve the state of conservation of World Heritage in Africa. In the second phase, the participants will engage in hands-on activities, group discussions and guided visits to a World Heritage site in Egypt (Historic Cairo). During this five-day gathering, participants will finalize and present (pitch) their Climate Action projects as part of the official closing ceremony of the Forum. The third and last phase of the Forum will consist of follow-up on implementation of the projects through engagement of various stakeholders and partners.

4. Selection criteria of participants

Participants for this workshop shall be selected based on the following criteria:

- African citizen between the ages of 18 and 35 years old at the time of application
- Minimum of a post-secondary certified training and/or qualification
- Fluency in English (being the working language of the Forum)
- Personal attributes: motivated, active and driven individuals interested in World Heritage and Climate Action eager to implement the outcomes of the Forum in their home countries.
- Professional attributes:
 - Active leader/champion of Climate Action in Africa;
 - Engaged in conservation and promotion of Africa's heritage (natural and cultural); and
 - Acquainted with and active users of digital mediums and platforms of communication such as social media (YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram), websites, blogs, video conferencing (Zoom, MS Teams), etc.
- African regional representation and gender balance will be prioritized.

5. Language

The primary working language will be English. However, the African World Heritage Youth Forum promotes the idea of greater regional integration by advocating the principle that participants should be able to overcome language barriers and interact with facilitators and among themselves in other official languages of the African Union (French, Portuguese or Arabic).

6. Application procedure

Each applicant should submit the following application package:

- a) The completed application form online;
- b) Video of statement of interest (45 seconds); and
- c) Curriculum Vitae (maximum 4 pages) outlining the applicant's current position, qualifications, areas of expertise, work experience in the field of cultural and/or natural heritage (including World Heritage), climate actions, publications/reports, etc.

7. Contact

The application package should be submitted through the [African World Heritage Fund portal](#) by no later than **29 September 2023**. For any queries regarding the application process please contact the Head of Programmes at the AWHF, Dr Albino Jopela (jopsj@dbsa.org).