



4TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON  
**Small Island  
Developing States**  
27-30 MAY, 2024  
ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

## **SIDS4 Conference Side Event**

### **Climate - Crisis - Cultural Heritage: New technologies in the Digitisation of Heritage Threatened by Climate Change**

27<sup>th</sup> May 2024, 4:00pm, American University of Antigua, ID Overflow

Organized by: German Federal Foreign Office, German Archaeological Institute, Global Centre for Climate Mobility, Permanent Mission of Tuvalu to the UN, Permanent Mission of Palau to the UN

#### **Background on the Event:**

Under the theme "Charting the Course Toward Resilient Prosperity," the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) hosted a roundtable discussion titled "Climate Crisis Cultural Heritage: New Technologies in the Digitisation of Heritage Threatened by Climate Change." The event aimed to address the urgent need to preserve cultural heritage in the face of climate change. Up to now, cultural heritage has not been a significant part of the discussions about climate change effects. However, cultural heritage is directly linked to identity, genealogy, and human dignity. It is of paramount importance to put its preservation on the agenda in global climate change discussions. Digital documentation of tangible and intangible heritage is a means of safeguarding the cultural heritage that is in jeopardy from climate change effects such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events and time is of the essence.

#### **Panel Speakers and Key Points of Statements:**

1. Jennifer Morgan - State Secretary and Special Representative for International Climate Policy of the German Government.

- Emphasized the urgency of integrating climate change policy with cultural heritage preservation. She highlighted the Digital Twins project in Tuvalu, a collaboration between the German Federal Foreign Office, the German Archaeological Institute, and the UN Global Centre for Climate Mobility, aimed at documenting and preserving cultural heritage using advanced digital techniques.

2. Dr. Annette Kühlem - Archaeologist, German Archaeological Institute.

- Provided the introduction to the topic, outlining projects by the German Archaeological Institute on the preservation of cultural heritage in Oceania and the significance and possibilities of digital documentation technologies. The key factors are the cost and time efficiency.

3. Dr. Maina Talia - Minister for Home Affairs, Climate Change, and Environment, Tuvalu.

- Highlighted Tuvalu's frontline position in the climate crisis. Emphasizing the existential threats and the urgent need for cultural heritage preservation he stressed the role of the Rising Nations Initiative, in collaboration with the German Archaeological Institute in cultural preservation efforts in Tuvalu. Digitization in Tuvalu presents opportunities for enhancing appreciation for its heritage,

but requires addressing challenges such as community engagement, cultural protocols, data sovereignty, intellectual property rights, and ensuring sustainable digital preservation strategies.

4. Ms. Roraima Ana Andriani - Special Representative of INTERPOL to the United Nations.

- Underscored the Small Islands Lighthouse Programme's role in safeguarding SIDS' cultural heritage through advanced technologies like the ID-Art Mobile Application, crucial for digital documentation and protection of artifacts and sites against environmental threats, emphasizing collaboration with international organizations and community involvement.

5. Prof. Kamal Amakrane - UN Global Centre for Climate Mobility (UN GCCM)

- Stressed the critical importance of raising awareness about the threats posed by climate change to cultural heritage, advocating for the protection, preservation, and nurturing of heritage and culture as vital sources of empowerment and resilience in the climate crisis, including the role of bearers of cultural information living in diaspora.

6. Mr. Richard Gokrun - Director, Tuvalu Climate Action Network (TuCAN).

- Provided valuable insights into the effects of climate change on all aspects of daily life in Tuvalu and how the destruction of physical sites such as taro patches or community houses leads to the loss of intangible heritage that is connected with them.

7. Florian Laudi - Director for the United Nations and Counterterrorism at the German Federal Foreign Office, German Federal Foreign Office.

- Moderated the roundtable discussion, facilitating dialogue and contributions from various participants. He summarized the roundtable outcomes and highlighted the importance of cultural heritage and its preservation for human dignity.

Roundtable participants provided insights from their respective countries, described how currently the most frequent limitations are a lack of personnel, funding, and equipment, discussed with the panel the possibilities and limitations of digitising intangible heritage, and provided ideas for the safeguarding not only of cultural heritage but also of intellectual property rights.

### **Key Issues Discussed:**

- The impact of climate change on tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- The urgency of digitizing endangered cultural heritage sites and objects.
- Strategies for using state-of-the-art digital documentation technologies.
- Specific case studies from Palau and Tuvalu on cultural heritage preservation.
- Collaboration opportunities among small island nations and international stakeholders and researchers.
- Finding global solutions that respect the unique local realities of each island community.

### **Key Recommendations for Action:**

- Increase global awareness of the threats climate change poses to cultural heritage and identity.
- Implement comprehensive digitization projects for at-risk cultural sites and objects.
- Develop and share best practices for preservation and documentation technologies.
- Foster international collaboration to support local initiatives and capacity building.
- Respect local realities and adapt global solutions to fit the unique needs of each island.
- Create an actionable plan outlining concrete steps for safeguarding cultural heritage.
- Ensure community involvement in all stages of cultural heritage preservation efforts.
- Develop best practices for addressing copyright issues and intellectual property rights.

The roundtable provided a platform to share information, raise awareness, foster collaborations, and develop practical strategies to protect cultural heritage in small island developing states.