Maritime Living Heritage and the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

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Keynote Speech

1. The Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-30)

Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, one in particular, SDG 14 Life Below Water, encompasses the conservation and sustainable use of "the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development."[1]

To this end, UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) laid the foundation for the *UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development* (*2021-30*) (hereafter Decade), which is about to start its Implementation Phase. The broadest aim of the Decade is to build scientific capacity and generate knowledge that will directly inform solutions to the aims of a range of SDGs, including SDG 14. The initiative promotes a common framework for supporting stakeholders in studying and assessing the health of the world's oceans. The Decade also provides the framework for building transformative partnerships in a multi-stakeholder context. By design, the Decade fully recognises that there needs to be a "paradigm shift" in how ocean science is obtained, and knowledge is generated.[2]

The Decade has been framed around moving from the "Ocean we have" to the "Ocean we want" by achieving the following Societal Outcomes by 2030 (six originally, with a seventh added in August 2020):

1. A **clean ocean** where sources of pollution are identified and reduced or removed.

2. A **healthy and resilient ocean** where marine ecosystems are understood, protected, restored and managed.

3. A **productive ocean** supporting sustainable food supply and a sustainable ocean economy.

4. A **predicted ocean** where society understands and can respond to changing ocean conditions.

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1. https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14

2. IOC/UNESCO, *Implementation Plan Summary* (August 2020): p. 6 (available at: https://www.oceandecadeheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/687-20-IOC-Decade-Implementation-Plan-Summary-compressed_1597065320-1.pdf).

5. A **safe ocean** where life and livelihoods are protected from ocean-related hazards.

6. An **accessible ocean** with open and equitable access to data, information and technology and innovation.

7. An **inspiring and engaging ocean** where society understands and values the ocean in relation to human wellbeing and sustainable development.[3]

In defining Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), the 2003 *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH* highlights that the "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith" which is "transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history".[4] ICH is also, importantly, noted as compatible with requirements of sustainable development. ICH – and particularly that which is related to different bodies of water – encompasses maritime cultural heritage or maritime living heritage – the very subject of this meeting, "Maritime Living Heritage: Building Sustainable Livelihood and Ecosystems in the Asia-Pacific Region."[5]

The Decade, in arguing for a paradigm shift in how ocean science is obtained and knowledge is generated, therefore, presents an opportunity to improve the focus on the ocean's natural and cultural heritage, as well as intangible/indigenous/traditional culture. Maritime Living Heritage not only can inform and contribute to this knowledge base, but also assist in developing solutions for sustainable development.

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3. IOC/UNESCO, *UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-30) Implementation Plan Version 2.0* (July 2020) (available at: https://www.oceandecadeheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ocean-Decade-Implementation-Plan-Version-2-0-compressed_1599176045.pdf).

4. UNESCO, 2003 *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH*, Article 2 §1 (available at: https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention).

5. I would like to thank the organisers of this meeting, the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific region under the Auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP) and the UNESCO Apia office, Director-General KEUM and the Office of Cooperation and Networking at ICHCAP for their kind invitation to deliver this keynote address.

2. Ocean Decade Heritage Network

Cultural heritage has been increasingly considered within the context of the Decade. In the Call for Action "Our Ocean, Our Future", launched at the first UN Ocean Conference in 2017, Member States recognised that the ocean "forms an important part of our natural and cultural heritage,"[6] and a call was made for stakeholders to "develop comprehensive strategies to raise awareness of the natural and cultural significance of the ocean."[7] After this, the draft Roadmap for the Decade – published in June 2018 and meant as stimulation for discussion – states that "'Ocean Science' should be interpreted broadly as encompassing: social sciences and human dimensions."[8] What these broad statements could mean for cultural heritage had to be clarified during the Preparatory Phase of the Decade (2018-20) where planning meetings, stakeholder forums, and regional workshops were held.

The Ocean Decade Heritage Network (ODHN)[9] was formed at the first global planning meeting of the Decade, hosted by the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen in May 2019. Eleven maritime cultural heritage specialists were in attendance, with the aims of ensuring that cultural heritage would be considered within the Decade whilst the Framework, Action, and the Implementation Plans were being drafted during the Preparatory Phase.

ODHN has since developed into a global network that represents a key stakeholder group of the Decade: cultural heritage specialists – marine archaeologists, heritage managers, ethnographers, Ocean Literacy specialists – who work in marine, underwater, and coastal environments and with coastal communities. Its almost 200 global members come from the general public, governmental, intergovernmental, and academic institutions, as well as NGOs.

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6. UN General Assembly, *Our ocean, our future: call for action*. A/71/L.74 (30 June, 2017): Annex §3 (available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1290893?ln=en).

7. *Our ocean, our future: call for action*: Annex §13.d.

8. UNESCO, *Revised Roadmap for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development*. IOC/EC-LI/2 (18 June, 2018): Annex 3, p. 5, §9 (available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265141).

9. www.oceandecadeheritage.org

ODHN's purpose is two-fold:

- To raise awareness in the cultural heritage community about the Decade and coordinate a targeted global response from the community to improve the integration of cultural heritage within the marine sciences during the Decade's Preparatory (2018-20) and Implementation Phases (2021-30).

- To have the essential role of culture acknowledged in delivering sustainable development in our seas and oceans, noting in particular the relevance to the Ocean Decade of the UNESCO's Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda.[10]

By becoming a partner of the Decade in May 2019, ODHN has been a key heritage stakeholder, able to provide feedback on working documents from meetings, and most importantly, the working drafts of the *Implementation Plan*, being presented for ratification at the UN General Assembly in autumn 2020.

The resulting document from the Decade's preparatory and stakeholder feedback process is the *Implementation Plan 2.0* (July 2020), which highlights: "Ocean science is broad: it encompasses natural and social science disciplines, local and indigenous knowledge... ."[11] There are further specific references to local and indigenous knowledge in the *Decade's Implementation Plan 2.0* that are worth referring to particularly here, such as:

• Stating that "Ocean Science recognises, respects, and embraces local and indigenous knowledge";[12]

• Defining the transformation of Ocean Science that "embraces local and indigenous knowledge as a key knowledge source";[13]

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10. https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators

11. *Implementation Plan Version 2.0*, p. i.

12. *Implementation Plan Version 2.0*, p. 1.

13. *Implementation Plan Version 2.0*, p. 7.

- Endorsing criteria for Decade Actions to "Collaborate with and engage local and indigenous knowledge holders";[14]

- And in managing data: "The data sources will include … less-quantifiable insights, such as indigenous and local knowledge."[15]

Furthermore, coastlines are noted as especially significant, particularly in "currently data poor regions such as …. coastal areas where much of the human interaction with the ocean is concentrated."[16]

3. Cultural Heritage and the Decade

One of the main points of discussion within ODHN has been to illustrate maritime cultural heritage's contribution to informing the Decade's seven Societal Outcomes. ODHN has proposed, with modifications:

A clean ocean: Cultural heritage can contribute to a clean ocean by enabling a better understanding of the extent and risks of legacy pollution from shipwrecks, mining waste, and land-based sources. A clean ocean is also important for the long-term preservation of MCH (UCH & ICH).

A healthy and resilient ocean: Culture heritage is fundamental to understanding how many coastal and marine ecosystems achieved their present form, and to understanding the pressures upon them. As such, cultural heritage is an important component of marine ecosystems.

A predicted ocean: Understanding "Ocean Past"—human interaction with the historic environment—is essential to understanding our ocean present and to forecasting change and its implications for human well-being and livelihoods.

A safe ocean: Cultural heritage informs the understanding of coastal inhabitation and intervention in the past and present— including the impact of previous catastrophes—to identify risks, present examples of human adaptations, and to encourage resilience.

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14. *Implementation Plan Version 2.0*, p. 17.

15. *Implementation Plan Version 2.0*, p. 19.

16. *Implementation Plan Version 2.0*, p. i.

A sustainably harvested and productive ocean: Cultural heritage is a major contributor to the Blue

Economy, especially through recreation and tourism: increasing productivity should enhance—not damage— irreplaceable cultural heritage.

A transparent and accessible ocean: Information about cultural heritage is also essential to understanding the past, present, and future of humanity's relationship with the seas and oceans.

An inspiring and engaging ocean: Information about cultural heritage is fascinating to the public and enables engagement with many topics of Ocean Literacy.[17]

4. Building Maritime Living Heritage Networks

ODHN arose out of a basic question: How can maritime cultural heritage be safeguarded as a key to reach a sustainable future within the Decade's framework? There are numerous ways in which to do this, and ODHN is not – and should not be – the only group of stakeholders that can propose viable solutions. Networks consist of building alliances and sharing information, as there is strength and momentum in working towards a shared goal. Indeed, building networks among coastal communities for safeguarding their intangible cultural heritage is a key to reach a sustainable future, locally and globally.

The *Implementation Plan Summary* of the Decade highlights the importance of networks in addressing the Decade's challenges and ultimately helping meet the Societal Outcomes. These can be found in Stakeholder Engagement platforms, be they regional, sectoral or thematic: "Existing or new groups of ocean actors that work together to contribute to the Decade vision. Groups could convene on a geographic basis (e.g. at the regional level), for a specific theme (e.g. deep ocean, underwater cultural heritage), or for a particular stakeholder group (e.g. NGOs or private sector)."[18]

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17. Modified from Trakadas, A., A. Firth, D. Gregory, D. Elkin, U. Guerin, J. Henderson, J. Kimura, D. Scott-Ireton, Y. Shashoua, C. Underwood & A. Viduka, The Ocean Decade Heritage Network: integrating cultural heritage within the UN Decade of Ocean Science 2021-2030. *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 14.2 (2019): 153-165.

18. *Implementation Plan Summary*, p. 16.

As the third objective of the present ICHCAP meeting is to "Establish a network of diverse stakeholders for the safeguarding of maritime ICH in the Asia-Pacific region,"[19] such a network – whether formal or informal – could be established and part of a stakeholder platform/s and/or programme/s focused thematically across regions or more locally. Another option is joining or forming alliances with existing networks that have similar and sometimes overlapping interests and goals – some of which, for maritime cultural heritage, are listed on ODHN's resources page.[20]

Ultimately, the Decade is a vital opportunity to improve focus on the ocean's cultural heritage including intangible/indigenous/traditional culture that can be safeguarded in order to reach a sustainable future in the face of modernisation or climate change. Networks created by stakeholders focusing on Maritime Living Heritage ensure that cultural heritage can be acknowledged as a medium for engaging the public in addressing the sustainability of our coasts, seas, and oceans. These networks also allow for synergy, giving voice to how cultural heritage can inform the Decade's "paradigm shift" of how ocean science is obtained, and knowledge is generated.

Figure 1. Beach seine net fishing, Amtar, Morocco (2007). Photo: © Athena Trakadas

19. ICHCAP, *Webinar Series on Maritime ICH; Maritime Living Heritage; Building Sustainable Livelihood and Ecosystems int eh Asia-Pacific Region* (October 2020), p. 2.

20. https://www.oceandecadeheritage.org/resources-2/