

# The new proposed GEO Community Activity Earth Observations for Climate Change Impacts on World Heritage Cities (CCI-WHC)



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



World  
Heritage  
Centre

# History



- ❖ Protection of the natural and cultural heritage from adverse climate change impacts, was asserted as a priority initiative by the **Greek Prime Minister's statement** at the **Climate Action Summit** in New York ([September 2019](#))
- ❖ An official statement on the role of EO in this endeavor was made by the **Head of the Greek Delegation Team** during the “Action on Climate Change” Session at the **GEO-XVI Plenary** ([November 2019](#))
- ❖ With the supporting partnership of **UNESCO** and the **WMO**, the Greek proposal on “Addressing climate change impacts on cultural and natural heritage”, was included by the **UN Secretary General** in his “**Report on the 2019 Climate Action Summit and the Way Forward in 2020**” ([December 2019](#))
- ❖ The Greek Initiative was presented at a side event in the framework of **UNFCCC COP25**, in Madrid, by the **Minister of Environment and Energy of Greece, the WMO Secretary-General and UNESCO** ([December 2019](#))
- ❖ Following consultations between the **GEO Secretariat, the Greek GEO Office** and the **WHCentre of UNESCO, official exchange of letters between GEO Secretariat and UNESCO's WHC Directors** took place, and the collaboration was decided to be initiated by launching an open call for a GEO Community Activity, co-led by UNESCO and Greece ([June 2020](#))

# History



Our Ref: 2020-24/GEO/UNESCO WHCentre  
ct

Ms Mechthild Rössler  
Director  
World Heritage Centre  
UNESCO  
7 Place de Fontenoy  
Paris 75007  
France

Geneva, 9 June 2020

**Subject: Group on Earth Observations And UNESCO World Heritage Centre**

Dear Ms Rössler,

I refer to the various consultations between representatives of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHCentre) and the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) aimed at establishing means for collaboration and realising the potential of earth observation in addressing issues related to World Heritage properties, specifically World Heritage Cities.

The UNESCO WHCentre and its 1972 World Heritage Convention provide an authoritative framework to monitor and manage the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. The WHCentre has been at the forefront of exploring and managing the impacts of climate change on World Heritage. GEO is an intergovernmental partnership connecting government institutions, academic and research institutions, non-

Furthermore, the proposed Community Activity will support the implementation of the fourth GEO engagement priority under development, the New Urban Agenda adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016 and aimed at bolstering the global commitment to sustainable urbanization where World Heritage Cities play a crucial role.

If you agree that this letter reflects the outcome of the various consultations, I would be grateful if you could confirm the understanding reached between GEO and the WHCentre in writing.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Dr Gilberto Camara  
Secretariat Director



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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科学及文化组织

**Culture Sector  
World Heritage Centre**

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Secretariat Director  
Group on Earth Observations  
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16 June 2020

Ref.: DIR/CLT/WHC/20/010

Dear Mr Camara,

I wish to thank you for your letter and for your valuable initiative. The subject of Earth Observation and Climate Change for World Heritage Cities is both timely and urgent. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre would be delighted to partner with the GEO Secretariat to co-lead along with Greece, a Call (included herewith) to gauge the interest and support of the GEO community to develop a Community Activity incorporating elements of urban heritage in the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme.

I agree with the outcome of the various consultations reflected in your letter and confirm the understanding reached between GEO and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

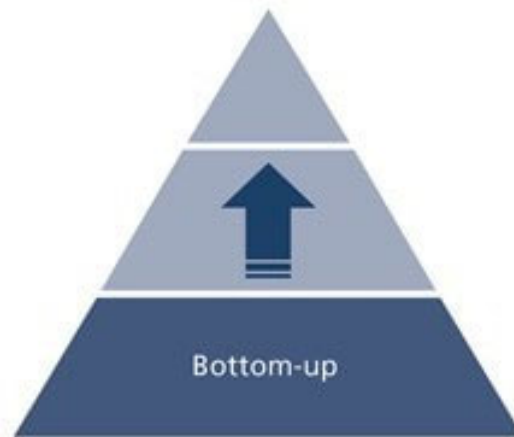
We look forward to a fruitful collaboration.

Yours sincerely,

Mechthild Rössler  
Director

# Earth observations to monitor and enable mitigation and adaptation strategies to shield urban cultural heritage from climate change risks

An **open invitation** to gauge the interest and support of the GEO community to propose a new **GEO Community Activity** incorporating **urban cultural heritage aspects into the Work Programme**, with a focus on priority engagement areas & in cooperation with **UNESCO**, was launched in July 2020.



*create a better future by protecting our past*

## *The Why*



While untapped, EO hold great potential to monitor and enable specific mitigation and adaptation strategies to shield urban CH from CC risks, by

- ✓ accelerating and improving the provision of documentary evidence of CH
- ✓ offering continuous monitoring and a means to standardize practices
- ✓ engaging multiple disciplines and building upon systems and frameworks already in place
- ✓ addressing gaps that exist in relation to integration and usability of products, along with increasing technical capacity

## *The How*

The CCI-WHC Community Activity facilitates the achievement of the whys by

- providing a forum for relevant partners to share practices, needs and expertise
- matching user needs to EO assets to enrich and coordinate processes for the preservation, monitoring and management of urban cultural heritage
- enabling a modernization of practices through co-producing targeted tools and services



# Planned Activities

*Additional activities and details will materialize through co-design as the CCI-WHC CA continues to develop*

1. Establishment of a coordination office to facilitate effective governance and coordination;
2. Engagement with and collection of needs from users at differing levels and within a variety of domains, building off existing work in the arena;
3. Matching of needs with EO assets and provision of a plethora of EO expertise to cultural heritage stakeholders and vice versa;
4. Collection of global best practices, assisting in building awareness and networking;
5. Development of a set of indicators to pinpoint climate change impacts on world heritage cities, the risk for the individual monuments and, in parallel, explore interdependencies with other urban elements;
6. Translation of global policy frameworks and mechanisms into local practices, aiding Member States in addressing elements related to climate change, the SDGs, and disaster risk reduction; and
7. Concretization of synergies among partners, construction of a plan for funding attraction and strategic design of short- to long- term roadmap activities.

# Contributors



**GEO Members:** Austria, Canada, China, Cyprus, Ecuador, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Vietnam, Zimbabwe

**GEO Participating Organizations:** African Climate Change Research Centre (ACCREC), European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), Eurisy, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations University – Institute for Environmental and Human Security (UNU-EHS), World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

**GEO Associates:** AmericaView

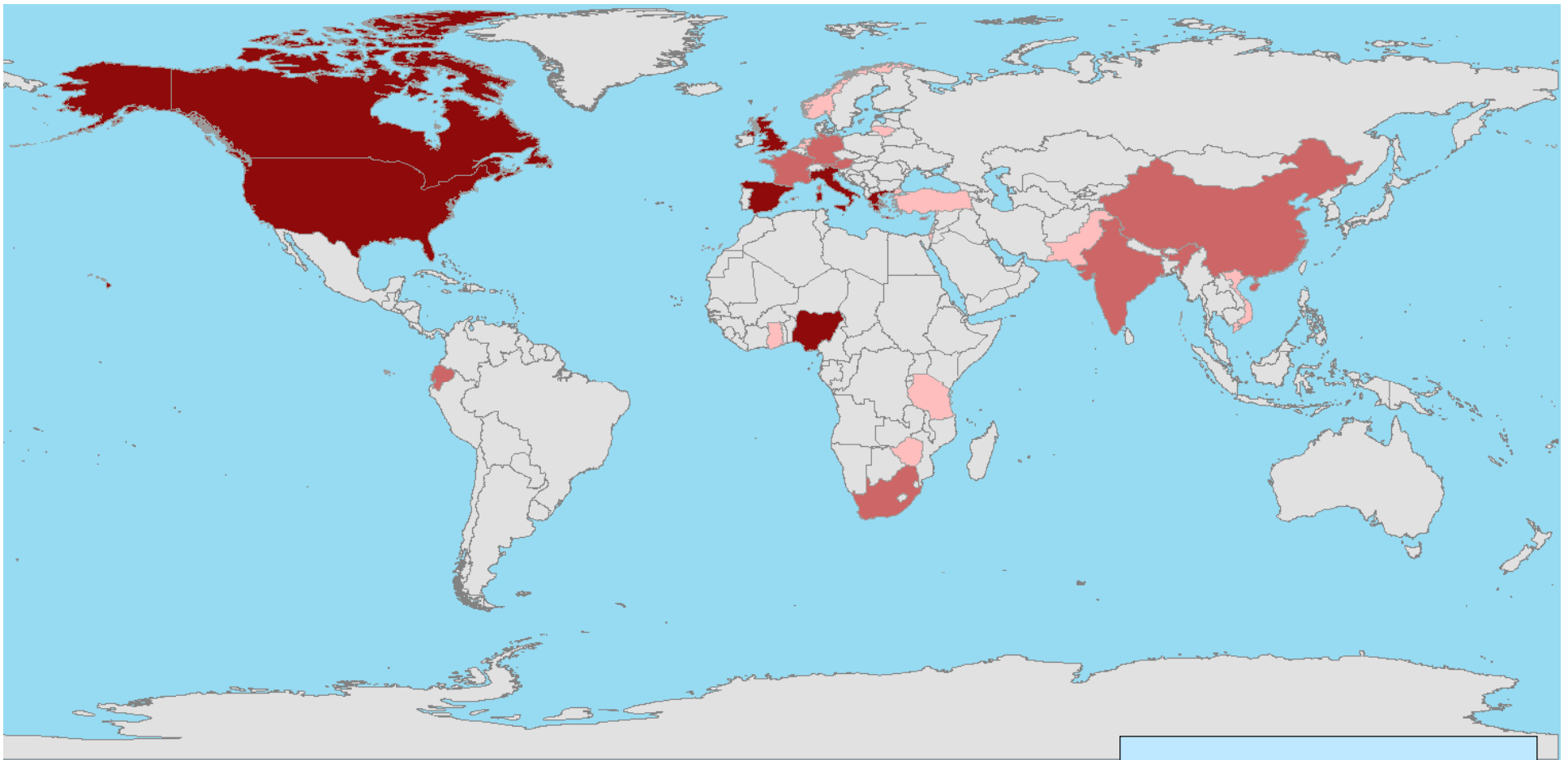
**Other Contributors:** International Centre on Space Technologies for Natural and Cultural Heritage (HIST), International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Programme Office of Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR), Intern. Society for Digital Earth (ISDE)

## Points of Contact

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# Geographical representation



- **72** valid Eols
- **24** countries
- **10** International Organizations
- **84** Entities



## Participating Countries number of participations





# Contributors profile

