

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Huangshan Dialogue on UNESCO Sites and Sustainable Development

### *UNESCO Facilitating Sustainable Development*

#### Outcome of Session: Disaster Risk Assessment and Mitigation for UNESCO Sites

#### **Introduction**

In an era defined by climate change, UNESCO-designated sites – World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks - are exposed to natural and/or man-made hazards, with potential impacts on the sites themselves as well as the communities living in and around them. Because of the high natural and cultural value of these sites – their environment, their cultures and their local economies - the impact of the loss or deterioration of a UNESCO site can resonate across the world.

The need for disaster risk reduction at World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks has been universally emphasized, while the importance of disaster risk reduction has been further reinforced through global post 2015 agendas such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To answer to these global commitments, multiple stakeholders – from academia to communities, governments, the private sectors, and others - must collaborate closely to address both disaster risk reduction and mitigation.

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Huangshan Dialogue on UNESCO Sites and Sustainable Development, UNESCO HIST and IRDR co-organised the session *Disaster Risk Assessment and Mitigation for UNESCO Sites*. The aims of the session were as follows:

1. Recognize the importance and needs of disaster risk reduction (DRR) at the internationally designated areas (IDAs) (or sites), bearing in mind SDGs and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, as well as the Paris Agreement;
2. Identify and initiate possible cooperation based on the practical experiences and knowledge in addressing hazards and disaster mitigation to date; and,
3. Develop suggestions and recommendations for UNESCO to address and improve DRR in Biosphere Reserves, UNESCO Global Geoparks and World Heritage sites.

#### **Recommended Actions for Disaster Risk Reduction for UNESCO Sites**

The following recommendations and key discussion points were made during the session:

1. The use of remote sensing and related technologies for hazard risk assessment and early warning has significant potential for further application.
2. An integrated, comprehensive global database on the application of remote sensing

- and related technologies for disaster risk reduction would be of considerable value.
3. Engineering solutions to mitigate disaster risk must be designed so as to be appropriate in the context of local conditions, with standards aligned with trends in hazard intensities.
  4. The comprehensive, recently completed DRR survey among UNESCO-designated sites has yielded important data and results with the potential to serve as the basis for decision- and policy-making.
  5. Existing levels of site-to-site and other modalities of international cooperation do not reach their full potential – considerable benefits could be derived from increased and intensified cooperation.
  6. Local and traditional knowledge of cultural and natural heritage – ranging from knowledge of techniques, materials, landscape ecology, agriculture and more – are essential components in reducing and mitigating disaster risk and should be given full consideration.

Towards the implementation of DRR at UNESCO-designated sites, the following actions were recommended by the participants of the session:

1. Consider the establishment of an international task group on DRR for IDAs. This task group could be composed of committed DRR organizations such as IRDR, IDMR and ICL, under the overall guidance of UNESCO. First understanding on the modality of such a group would be discussed between UNESCO and IRDR in the upcoming year.
2. Continue the discussion on DRR for IDAs started at the Huangshan Dialogue, with particular attention to relevant indicators under international frameworks (Sendai, 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, Paris Agreements, New Urban Agenda, SAMOA Pathway, etc.)
3. Identify and promote concrete DRR actions at IDAs through the design and implementation of field projects and research cooperation, with focus on sites affected by recent major natural hazards such as Jiuzhaigou Biosphere Reserve/World Heritage and Kathmandu Valley as demonstration cases.
4. Through UNESCO and IRDR, bring the issue of DRR for IDAs to the attention of the 2019 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.