



From international courts to local insular communities: the (un)recognition of cultural heritage and local ecological knowledge in international climate-related decisions

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INTERNATIONAL
RIGHTS OF NATURE
TRIBUNAL



- DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS OF ACTION
- Initiatives and regulations: heritage, Indigenous rights, Indigenous knowledge systems, local knowledge, islands, rights of nature, climate action

Circa 40 countries have Rights of Nature Laws, with almost 500 initiatives.

Putzer, A., Cook, J., & Pollock, B. (2025). Putting the rights of nature on the map. A quantitative analysis of rights of nature initiatives across the world – Second Edition. *Journal of Maps*, 21(1).



2022: the Human Rights Committee decision on Australia’s failure to adequately protect indigenous Torres Strait Islanders against adverse impacts of climate change. Violation of rights, also cultural – spiritual connection with the territory.

2024: COP 29 agreed on the **Baku Workplan of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform**

- Gathering of Knowledge Holders;
- Regional Engagement;
- Seventh-Generation Round Table;
- Collaboration with constituted bodies and workstreams of the UNFCCC;
- Enhanced engagement with Parties;
- Overall Strategic Planning.



2023: UAE Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) Framework.

Cultural heritage as a key thematic target for climate action: recognizes that cultural heritage is threatened by climate change and can also be a vital source of knowledge for adaptation.

Emirates Declaration on Culture-based Climate Action, supported by more than 20 countries.

2024-5: Heritage Indicators.

The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) recognized cultural heritage as a critical non-economic loss and damage category.

Indicators (with sub-indicators):

- . Impact, vulnerability, risk assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning

2025: the International Court of Justice confirms States' climate obligations. This is justified under several laws.



Reflexions

- **Different scales** Local, national, regional, international levels
- **Different areas** Heritage, Indigenous rights, Indigenous knowledge systems, climate change, rights of nature, local knowledge
- **Small islands states** Specificities. Impacts of climate change are severe, cultural diversity, Indigenous populations (and its absence), vernacular cultures

Growing number of international documents related to:

- culture and climate change
- Local knowledge and Indigenous cultures in decision-making and international frameworks
- Rights of nature and the rights of communities to the environment

Complexities and opportunities

The **intersection** of climate change, cultural heritage, Indigenous and local knowledge has been acknowledged, but often in separate modes.

This can also allow communities and groups to struggle across different directions.



thank you

Kia Ora

Merci

grazzi ħafna

obrigado



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