

## Concept Note:

### **From Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to Big Ocean Sustainable States (BOSS): Safeguarding Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) for Sustainable Development**

#### **Summary**

Under Water Cultural Heritage (UCH) is much beyond shipwrecks. Submerged human settlements and caves, stone fish traps, ancient ports that are abundant in SIDS and at the Blue Continent are the important part of UCH. UCH holds great potential for reconstructing past cultures, advancing climate knowledge, and contributing to the Blue Economy. Given the strong connection of SIDS to the ocean, the SAMOA Pathway supports “SIDS to conserve their valuable UCH” and invites “SIDS to become parties to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage” (paragraphs 54 and 58).

The UCH Convention was adopted with a view to protecting UCH that becomes increasingly accessible due to the advancement of technologies from several threats including “treasure hunting” and ill-managed development projects. Its State Cooperation System provides a comprehensive coverage of UCH regardless of its location including the High Seas or the Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), strengthening the ocean governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

UNESCO Side Event on Safeguarding UCH for Sustainable Development aims to provide updates on the UCH safeguarding for Sustainable Development and the promotion of the UCH Convention in SIDS.

The Event will feature presentations from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) that became the first state party from the Pacific to the UCH Convention in 2018, a renowned maritime archaeologist Dr William Jeffery, the Pacific Community (SPC), and the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO).

The audience will obtain up-to-date information on how the diverse UCH in the Pacific are contributing to scientific research and education, environmental protection, youth employment, and the Blue Economy through sustainable tourism. The findings of the ongoing research on the stone fish traps in Yap will also be presented to showcase the Pacific peoples’ unique living heritage, while new initiatives on the Marine Eco-Tourism will be introduced.

## Introduction

Grounded in UNESCO's SIDS Action Plan (2016-2011), much of UNESCO's work in SIDS contributes to the implementation of SAMOA Pathway on Oceans and seas (paragraph 58) and SDG 14: Life under Water, which aim to increase the economic benefits to SIDS from the sustainable use of marine resources including tourism, among others.

Special mention should be made to the reference in SAMOA Pathway to the importance of Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH). The document supports "SIDS to conserve their valuable Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH)" (paragraph 54) and invites "SIDS to become parties to the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage" (paragraph 58).

The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH Convention) was adopted in 2001 by UNESCO to fight against the extensive pillage, commercial exploitation and illicit traffic or unethical recovery of UCH. The UCH Convention considerably increases the legal protection of UCH. It also responds to the need for scientific guidance and facilitates inter-state cooperation. The UCH Convention is becoming more and more relevant at a time when the destruction, pillage and commercial exploitation of UCH as well as the industrialization of the seabed are increasing.

There has been an increasing attention to the UCH contribution to the Blue Economy. For example, the dive trails and guided tours at the SS Yongala, a steel passenger and freight steamer that sank off Cape Bowling Green, Queensland, Australia in 1911 due to cyclone, attracts some 8,000 divers per year, while the Vasa Museum in Stockholm that displays the only almost fully intact 17th century ship that sunk in 1628 brings an estimated USD 300 Million each year to the city.

## Background and Rationale

Since the 2014 SIDS Conference, the Pacific SIDS has made a significant progress in the UCH safeguarding. Capacity building workshops were held in Palau in cooperation with UNESCO University Twinning and Networking (UNITWIN) programme for maritime archaeology, while the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) ratified the UCH Convention in March 2018 to become the first state party from the Pacific. FSM government organised a national workshop to strengthen its capacity for the implementation of the UCH Convention at the country level in Chuuk in March 2018. One of the outputs of this workshop is a video showcasing diverse UCH and its contribution to livelihoods, well-being and cultural identity of the people in FSM.

Moreover, the dive tourism at the Chuuk lagoon in FSM continues to attract numerous divers, while the wreck of SS President Coolidge off the Espiritu Santo Island of Vanuatu has become one of the popular attractions for cruising tourists. There are numerous submerged caves and sites that are the key attractions of the marine eco-tourism in Pacific islands. The indigenous double-hull canoe “Drua” is not only put on display at the Fiji Museum, but also is used to provide tourists with a trip on board crewed by traditional wayfinders, showcasing the intangible aspect of UCH and generating employment opportunities for the Blue Economy.

In Africa, three regional meetings (Kenya in 2015, Mozambique in 2016, Cote d’Ivoire, in 2017) to which African SIDS attended to obtain a better understanding of the UCH Convention and enhance their capacity for the UCH protection.

In the Caribbean region, UNESCO Steering Committee for the region met in Bahamas in 2014. The Spanish version of the UCH training manual is under preparation

### Description

A Side Event “From SIDS to BOSS: Safeguarding UCH for Sustainable Development” will be held from **13:00 – 14:00 on 1 November 2018** during the SAMOA Pathway Mid-term Review Meeting.

Dr William Jeffery, a renowned underwater archaeologists, UNESCO Chair holder at the University of Guam, will provide information on the recent developments in the UCH safeguarding both at the international level; the cooperation with the UCH management in the Marine Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), and the linkage to the UN Decade for Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), as well as at the regional level; research on the fish weir in Yap as an important UCH belonging to the indigenous community in Pacific SIDS, the educational and capacity building activities through UNESCO’s University Network (UNITWIN) for maritime archaeology to advance climate knowledge.

FSM delegate is invited to share its experience in joining the UCH Convention to become the first state party in the Pacific in 2018, presenting the rich and diverse maritime heritage in the country, and its connection to support the livelihood of community.

The presentation of the Pacific Community (SPC) will highlight progress in the regional cultural cooperation to advocate for the importance of culture, in particular, local and indigenous knowledge systems, its contribution to community-based heritage management, as well as a formal sector of the economy in relation to paragraphs 80 and 81 of the SAMOA Pathway.

South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) is invited to provide information on its new initiative on Marine Eco-Tourism in the Pacific for inclusive economic development in partnership with dive operators and through citizen scientists and divers.

## Objectives and Outcomes

<b>Objectives:</b>	
(i)	To provide updates on the implementation of the UCH safeguarding in Pacific SIDS within the framework of the SAMOA Pathway in order to further enhance awareness of the contribution of UCH safeguarding for sustainable development
<b>Outcomes:</b>	
(i)	At least 30 high-level delegates will have the enhanced understanding of the importance of UCH safeguarding and the UCH Convention for sustainable development.

## Description

### Tentative Programme

Time	Session	Presentations
10 minutes	Opening remarks	Government of Samoa Ms NISHA, Director, UNESCO Office for the Pacific States
20 minutes	Keynote presentation	Dr William Jeffery, Assistant Professor in Anthropology at the University of Guam, Associate Member of the UNITWIN for Maritime Archaeology
15 minutes	Presentations	H.E. Jane Chigiyal, FSM Ambassador to the UN in NY

		<p>Ms Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago-Elisara, Director, Social Development Programme (Gender, Culture &amp; Youth), The Pacific Community (SPC)</p> <p>Ms Christina Leala-Gale, Sustainable Tourism Manager, South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)</p>
15 minutes	Q and A	<p>Questions and Answers</p> <p>Wrap up</p>

### Target Groups

The Side Event will be open to all delegates who will be attending the Inter-regional Mid-term Evaluation Meeting in Samoa.

### Partners

- Pacific Community (SPC)
- South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)

### Contact

Akatsuki Takahashi  
 Advisor for Culture  
 UNESCO Office for the Pacific States  
[a.takahashi@Unesco.org](mailto:a.takahashi@Unesco.org)