

**Committee:** UNESCO

**Issue:** Are Natural World Heritage sites a universal common good?

**Author:** Morocco

As our blessed King Mohammed VI mentioned in a letter in 1999, to the World Heritage committee: *"It has become mandatory for us to coordinate international action to come to the rescue of our cultural heritage wherever it may be, our conviction being that a loss incurred anywhere is a loss to mankind"*. What is being said about cultural heritage is also true for natural World Heritage. The Natural World Heritage sites were created by UNESCO for one purpose: to preserve our planet and the resources it has.

However, natural World Heritage sites can also be strategic battlefields, because of the resources they conceal. Private interests might be more interesting in profits than saving our planet is. Fortunately, governments and international organizations are here to preserve those vital resources and find the happy medium between the monetary advantages we can get, and the assurance of our survival, which is way more valuable than any kind of profit.

Morocco is totally conscient of those issues, and we do not support the ideas promoting private ownership of the Natural World Heritage sites. Indeed, cultural, and natural sites, will be preserved as they should be, if mankind agrees on conservating both the traditional and natural significance and importance behind the Natural World Heritage sites.

Morocco doesn't have any Natural heritage sites yet. However, this in no way calls into doubt our expressed positions. We have 13 sites that are currently being examined to see if the UN approves them as Natural World Heritage sites, and Morocco would be more than happy and reassured to label them as such. Indeed, the management of our nine Cultural Heritage sites, and the protection the UN brings to this heritage, is a strong assurance of its preservation.

The past events of September 2023 made us realize once more that international cooperation and aid is necessary for survival after a disaster. Effectively, during the earthquake that happened a few weeks ago in Morocco, one of our cultural Heritage Site has been hit: the city of Marrakesh. Marrakesh has more than a million inhabitants, and suddenly, all their material goods were being destroyed: no more shelter, no more schools, no more hospitals. The UN cannot avoid those events, as they are natural disasters. However, the UN is here to help us face the consequences of this disaster, both socially and economically, and they do manage it efficiently, as their interest is heritage preservation and not profit, in contrast to any private company.

We are by this, strongly supporting the idea that "our globe is the property of all", as our King declared at the end of the last decade, because alone, we cannot ethically and properly manage those sites.