

Committee: UNESCO

Issue: Are Natural World Heritage sites a common good?

Author: Nigeria

Nigeria is a country that takes great pride in both its cultural and natural heritage sites, and protecting all these important areas not only preserves large aspects of Nigeria's ecological and economic wealth but also big parts of Nigeria's cultural identity, as this identity is also strongly tied to these heritage sites, for example the Osun-Osogbo sacred grove which is a very important site in the Nigerian Yoruba culture and is a perfect example to demonstrate how Nigeria's natural and cultural identity is inseparably linked.

Seven out of eleven of Nigeria's UNESCO world heritage sites are natural, and ever since its ascension to the UN and the UNESCO program in 1960 shortly after its independence, Nigeria is committed not only to preserving the sites already listed but also expanding them as to cover more areas that are of natural and cultural significance to the Nigerian people. Like all other countries represented in UNESCO, and in accordance with article vii of the UNESCO constitution, Nigeria has had a permanent National Commission to UNESCO in Paris which ensures Nigeria is fully committed to all aspects of UNESCO and that all cooperation can happen smoothly.

While many of Nigeria's economic interests may lie in carbon intensive fields, such as oil drilling or natural gas extraction, Nigeria would like to affirm its position in protecting the natural heritage sites that are of such value to our country, while it must also be understood that this is a task often underestimated and misunderstood by other, more developed countries, whose economies may not rely so heavily on the extraction of fossil fuels.

Nigeria is home to some of the most biodiverse natural habitats and ecosystems on the planet, being home to lots of culturally significant African wild animals such as gorillas, lions or chimpanzees, and a plethora of other wild animal and plant species, many of which are unique to our beautiful country. Nigerians deeply value the beautiful and diverse wildlife species their country is home to, which makes dealing with terrible issues such as poaching or the illegal destruction of wildlife all the more heartbreaking. Expanding Nigeria's list of Natural World Heritage Sites and protecting more areas, both on land and sea, would help Nigeria and its people tackle the devastating issue its wildlife unfortunately face on a regular basis.

Situated in western Africa, Nigeria is also home to a large variety of landscapes, ranging from tropical rainforests in the south to savannah/ arid desert in the north of the country, and this diversity of climate and landscape also plays a big impact on the the various economic activities present in the country. For example our dry, northern most regions are mainly rural based communities whereas the south is more urban and industrial. What is common throughout all of Nigeria though, is the dependence on our rich ecosystems and the wildlife that lives inside, for example pangolins, a species which is unfortunately endangered, consume more than 70 million insects every year and contribute greatly to our crop growth proving Nigeria's heavy dependence on its rich ecosystems and the animals that live inside of them.

In conclusion, being a country host to a huge variety of wildlife and ecosystems, Nigeria cannot stress enough the importance of protecting and preserving Natural Heritage Sites, which as many of our sites demonstrate, are not solely significant on an ecological level, but also contribute greatly to Nigerian economic activities and our identity as a proud African country.