

**Committee:** UNESCO

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

**Author:** Russia

Without any doubt, Russia owns a vast number of impressive territories full of wild and breathtaking nature. Natural World Heritage sites in Russia are our pride and a great responsibility. Its conservation for the present and future generations must unquestionably be an international priority because they are not only the legacy of our country, but the legacy of the entire planet.

Natural World Heritage sites are perceived by the Russian delegation as a common heritage of humanity. However, Russia believes that the responsibility for their protection lies primarily with the country in which they are located. Russia has accepted the assistance of the UNESCO numerous times, e.g., for the International Baikal seminar on law projects dealing with the Baikal Law hosted by the UNESCO the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2000.

It is true that since the beginning of our special military operation last year in the territory of Ukraine our cooperation with the UNESCO has decreased and we deeply regret our resignation as chair of the World Heritage Committee last November. It was unquestionably a boycott against the delegation of Russia by most members of the Committee and it was therefore no longer possible for us to pursue our mandate. Nevertheless, we still believe that protecting and preserving Natural World Heritage sites is a shared responsibility that transcends national boundaries and political disagreements. Therefore, Russia commits itself to conserve and to protect Natural World Heritage sites. This commitment is made to the international community, not just to our own's citizens.

Even so, we must not lose sight of the reality: UNESCO provides guidelines and support, but it is up to the host country to manage and conserve Natural World Heritage sites for the benefit of present and future generations worldwide. As a federation, we have our own associations and organisations that deal with the preservation of Natural World Heritage sites in our territory, and we do also strongly collaborate with WWF Russia (World Wildlife Fund) that gives us advice and guides our government in the process of making environmental decisions. Recently, they have published information on marine species threatened by global warming, and we are deeply concerned about the future of this vital wildlife.

Furthermore, Russia cherishes the Antarctica continent and sees it as an extremely important region for scientific research and environmental preservation. Not only have we signed the Antarctic Treaty in 1959 to support measures aimed at preserving the environment and preventing any harmful activities in this fragile region, but we also have signed the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Madrid Protocol) in 1991, the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in 1982 and finally the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) in 2004. All this Russian commitment highlights the desire of our nation to preserve the Antarctic environment, sustainable resource management and scientific cooperation in the region.

Nevertheless, we also recognize the potential economic opportunities that Antarctica may offer in terms of natural resources such as minerals, oil, and fish, in the future. However, we must disagree with the Antarctic Treaty in one specific aspect. As a country we believe that, basing ourselves on the sector principle, which divides Antarctica into sectors around the South Pole, we should have our own area of influence in the Antarctica and be allowed to conduct activities accordingly. Our claim covers a sector from the 20° E meridian to the 80° E meridian. Antarctica being a continent primarily covered by ice and devoid of permanent human population, except for research stations, has not been designated as a Natural World Heritage Site. Therefore, our claim is legitimate, and we encourage dialogue between all signatory nations of the Antarctic Treaty so that we find a collective agreement on this matter.

To conclude, we might say that Russia has a large territory full of fascinating flora and fauna and is willing to share his Natural World Heritage Sites with other nations to ensure their preservation. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of our sovereignty and decision-making power over them. Russia is looking forward to being reunited with the rest of the UNESCO committee and hopes that the debates will deliver fruitful agreements.