

Committee: UNESCO

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

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The internationalization issue is debated controversially nowadays. UNESCO members are starting to care increasingly about the Natural World Heritage sites. Considering them as a universal common good may initiate new problems to settle. We must think about all the aspects of internationalization, so common interests are shared while protecting the site. We take part in this debate as a developing country to claim the universalization of the Natural World Heritage sites fairly, considering the climate impact and a well-reflected legal approach.

A common good is supposed to provide the same profit for all. Nevertheless, access is obviously nearly impossible for the developing countries, due to a lack of resources. For example, developing countries cannot afford a scientific research team. The lack of access to profit increases the gap between rich and poor countries. That is why the delegation of Rwanda is protesting about the rules of 1982 in the Law of the Sea. As a landlocked country, we cannot profit from an EEZ, and high seas are unreachable because it is too expensive to cross neighboring states. So, the universalization system curdles. We must give the opportunity to the countries who need those resources, for example by reinforcing the “development plans,” as our country does (Vision 2020, Vision 2050), or by promoting their access to club property. Rwanda’s economy depends on our resources, but it should rely on international resources, too. Therefore, it is vital to balance financial profit, scientific profit, and the protection of the site. Universal does not mean free: rights must be shared.

Moreover, let us not forget the environmental implication of Rwanda, for ourselves, and for others on an international scale. We also actively took part at the COP 27, and we are seen as a precursor in national responses against the effects of climate change, with investment mechanisms in the battle for the climate. So, as an international example for uniting in the same fight (taking our local example of fundraising), we decide to point out the importance of considering the climatic impact of any exploitation of the common good. The internationalization of a site may have a disconcerting climatic impact. Our country is one of the most affected by these climatic consequences. An example is Amazonia, where countries own many resources that should be divided and where exploitation must be regulated, in time and space, to avoid facing forest fires as in 2019 and 2020 again. If the laws against overexploitation are financially disadvantageous, it is vital to look at the future of the Earth, because the consequences are irreversible. Every country must consider this situation and reinforce measures against climate change, and we must immerse ourselves in a state of mind where it is clear that we need to discuss the exploitation of common goods.

Finally, ruling a universalized area well is necessary so that each member of UNESCO has a say on the laws. Internationalization is not only defined by its results (territory, exploitation...), it is also important to think about what it relies on. Therefore, judicial power must be divided. The United Nations already legislates and judges. The laws should then be applied by each country, in addition to some countries being responsible for enforcing these rules. This is why discussions are important. Before any National World Heritage site becomes a universal common good, we must ensure that power and rights are appropriately distributed. Otherwise, it will fail.

Rwanda promotes the well-discussed universalization of the National World Heritage, that is considering all the challenges that may make the system curdle. We agree with the idea of universal common goods if the profit is genuinely equitable.