

The Dublin Meetings on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8th – 11th of April 2018

ICOMOS International

In late 2013, ICOMOS formed a working group to contribute to the formation of the UN New Urban Agenda, which delivered the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Andrew Potts acted as the ICOMOS International Focal Point and it was under this initiative that the idiom *Cultural Heritage* was included in a number of the 169 Targets within the 17 SDGs. This initial working group was expanded into a “Task Force” and the initial members of this Task Force attended the launch of the SDGs in Quito, Ecuador in November 2016. The Task Force and the ICOMOS Secretariat in Paris approved the subsequent Dublin Meeting held in April 2018.

Review

The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Energy, Sustainability + Climate Change (ISCES+CC), led by Peter Cox (ICOMOS Ireland), staunchly advocates for the importance of the SDGs to mitigating Climate Change and believes that the SDGs are the new driver for protecting the environment, protecting cultural heritage, protecting our health and well-being, protecting society and bringing local and global communities together in the interest of all. During the launch of the SDGs in Quito, ICOMOS (the global NGO for tangible and intangible cultural heritage), IUCN (the global UN Pillar for natural heritage) and UCLG (the global NGO for cities and local governments) held a joint meeting and agreed that the three organisations should work together to promote the SDGs as a driver of national climate mitigation agendas.

Following on from the ratification of the New Urban Agenda by all 193 United Nations member countries in Quito in November 2016, ICOMOS held a coordination and awareness-raising event in Istanbul in February 2017. ICOMOS Ireland has 2 active members on the ICOMOS International Bureau for “Localising the SDGs”. Members of the bureau also actively participated in the Culture Summit in Jeju, South Korea in June 2017 (hosted by UCLG) and a number of sessions were dedicated to the SDGs at the ICOMOS International General Assembly in Delhi in December 2017.

Once each country has expressed its commitment to the UN, it is obliged to produce a Voluntary National Review (VNR) to track its progress toward meeting the SDGs. ICOMOS Ireland and the ISCES+CC were concerned that the Irish Government were not taking the SDGs seriously, considering the fact that as of February 2018, no governmental department had been charged with producing Ireland’s VNR for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

2018¹, which was held at UN Headquarters in New York City from 9-18 July 2018. Since SDG 11 is one of the Goals in focus for this year's (2018) VNR, we collectively felt a series of international-level meetings should be held in Dublin in early 2018 as it would benefit ICOMOS Ireland, ICOMOS International and in particular the ICOMOS International Bureau for the SDGs. The programme was drawn up with the wider ICOMOS National Committee network in mind and was organised in a way that could be expanded upon and rolled out over the next few years to increase the awareness and importance of the SDGs within other national contexts.

The Dublin Meeting brought together 60% of the ICOMOS SDG Task Force in one place and the proceedings were shared with 11 other countries in real time via video and telephone conferencing. The members of the ICOMOS International Bureau for the SDGs had a very successful business meeting on the Sunday evening and a work plan was agreed (attached as an addendum).

Monday's sessions were dedicated to the main drivers for the SDGs and Session One concentrated on the **Indicators**. Bureau member Chister Gustafsson (ICOMOS Sweden & Vice President of the ISC on Economics of Conservation) chaired and moderated Session One with inputs from a number of Irish and International contributors. Session Two on Monday afternoon focused on **Localising** the SDGs and Christophe Rivet (President of ICOMOS Canada) chaired and moderated this session with contributions from Irish participants. Both sessions were well prepared, complimented each other and stimulated a very lively general discussion.

On Monday evening, the State Architect Mr. Ciaran O'Connor, Office of Public Works (OPW) kindly hosted an official reception in the "Gothic Room" of the State Apartments at Dublin Castle. Well over 120 people attended the event and Ciaran gave a very informative, relative and poignant speech. The wide-ranging audience appreciated the event and many have now engaged with the idea of using the SDGs as a framework for an all-encompassing approach to sustainable development in the widest possible terms.

The Tuesday morning session was dedicated to **Mitigation, Monitoring & Implementation**, the first two of which are perhaps the most important components as this information will give us the hard evidence we need to prove the worth of implementing the 17 goals. Claus-Peter Echter (ICOMOS Germany & Secretary General of CIVVIH - the ISC on Historic Towns & Villages) chaired and moderated this session with a number of specific presentations on actual live monitoring projects. Again, there was an interesting mix of Irish presentations on this subject with several academic institutions, such as Trinity College Dublin, who are monitoring carbon emissions from reclaimed bogs. Similarly, our NSCES+CC and Cathy Daly (Lincoln University) are currently monitoring the climate impact on a number of World Heritage Sites and a few on the Tentative List.

Tuesday's keynote speaker, Minister of State in the Department of Agriculture, Minister Andrew Doyle TD, told us of the Government's new initiative on Forestry to convert some fallow and less arable land into forests that will act as a carbon sink and will produce an

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018>

income for land owners. There is a good opportunity for ICOMOS Ireland and in particular the ISCES+CC to work with the Department of Agriculture on this and other initiatives that are carbon neutral.

The Tuesday afternoon session was dedicated to a Public Meeting that was well supported by a number of interested groups such as Coalition 2030, Liberties Heritage Society, Royal Institute of Architects Ireland (RIAI), and Engineers Ireland, (EI) who have made the SDGs their main subject going forward. This event not only exceeded its aim to involve the wider interested groups but generated a great debate and discussion on how we should all work together to promote and localise the 17 SDGs.

The 2-day conference was also streamed live through the ICOMOS International network and ICOMOS members joined in from the USA, Canada, Greece, India, Australia, New Zealand, Paris and Belgium.

The conference wrapped up on Wednesday with a closed meeting with Mr Leslie Carberry, who holds a senior position within the Sustainable Development Unit of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE). In conjunction with Ms. Sinead Walsh, a senior officer, and now a European Ambassador, from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Mr Carberry was the key person charged by the Irish Government to produce and submit the Irish VNR to the United Nations in NYC in July 2018. This closed meeting was very informative for the ICOMOS Bureau on the SDGs, and by his own admission, it was also a very valuable knowledge exchange opportunity for Mr. Carberry.

Outcomes of the Dublin Meeting

One major outcome of the Dublin Meeting was to inform the DCCAE and the DFA that ICOMOS is an important consultee on the SDGs and that we can assist in many facets of the 17 Goals. In detailed discussions with Mr. Carberry we realised that the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht (DCHG) had not responded or contributed to 11.4 in the proposed Irish VNR. This allowed the Presidents of ICOMOS Ireland and the ISCES+CC to meet with the Built Heritage Unit of the DCHG and to prompt them to contribute. We hope this will happen and that SDG 11.4 will be included in the Irish VNR.

The outcome for the ICOMOS International forum on SDGs was the official recognition of a Bureau and the selection of its 12 members chaired by Ms. Sofia Avgerinou-Kolonias (ICOMOS Greece). Dr. Ege Yildirim (Ms.) is the lead focal point, Dr. Rohit Jigyasu (ICOMOS India) is the main board member and the Secretary General of ICOMOS International Mr. Peter Philips (ICOMOS Australia) has also taken an active interest in this group. The Bureau met in Dublin and we will communicate via email and regular virtual meetings to move forward the aims of the bureau, which is to engage with and localise all the SDGs but focusing on 4, 7, 11, 13 and 17 especially. The other main focus is to engage with all States Parties through the ICOMOS National Committee network to assist and ensure that each state party responds well with their individual countries VNRs and in turn the individual countries engage with the ICOMOS National Committee.

The ICOMOS International Bureau for the SDGs, through its focal point Dr. Ege Yildirim (ICOMOS Turkey) also made a proposal to the Irish Government to hold an official side event at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York City between the 9th and 18th of July 2018. Leslie Carberry tried to organise this but unfortunately it was not possible, as the Irish Government had already organised an official side event with the Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO). The Bureau decided to follow a number of tracks to be involved in or to host an official or unofficial event at the HLPF. Ege has been incredibly active and successful in following multiple leads and in fact we did successfully hold an active side event on the SDGs and Heritage at the HLPF.

The outcomes for ICOMOS Ireland were multi-faceted and in particular exposed ICOMOS Ireland to a number of different governmental departments, departments within our third level education institutions and to the more socially focused Coalition 2030 that we had not had much contact with beforehand. This progress must be seized upon and good relationships must be built for the benefit of ICOMOS Ireland, the localising of the SDGs and for the protection of our cultural and natural heritage and the advancement of climate mitigation activities, knowledge sharing and partnership building. The common and recurring question I was asked during the three days of meetings was *'How did we, the attendees, not know about the SDGs before this meeting?'* So, it does appear we have ticked the 'localising' box. The public event has now also exposed many other groups and professional bodies in Ireland such as the RIAI, EI, IPI and the SCSi advocating the SDGs and there is a great opportunity for ICOMOS to now partner with these groups to have a greater impact and to give a bigger voice to ICOMOS' main interests. We have also encouraged a number of people to apply for ICOMOS Ireland membership as a result of these meetings.

The most beneficial outcome for the ISCES+CC will be the sharing of this information through our National Committee network, our ISCES+CC and our active NSC's in Ireland and Australia and the working group in Canada. This information, the conference model and engagement format can then be rolled out in individual states and the accumulating information can be shared in return with other ISCs and with all National Committees. The Dublin Meeting was also timely for the next ICOMOS International General Assembly / Advisory Committee to be held in Argentina in December 2018, which has 'Sustainability' as its main theme. The ISCES+CC has put forward a proposal for a session on this subject and we have just learned that this proposal has been accepted.

What Next

This, I believe, was the very first step on a long road for ICOMOS International and all National Committees and International Scientific Committees to engage stakeholders for the SDGs at local, national and international level, but the momentum gained must be used to apply some urgency for the Irish government and private sector to engage with the SDGs. The ICOMOS SDG Task Force, ISCs and National Committees should now carry the mantle and organise similar meetings around the world.

In Ireland, we, ICOMOS Ireland, would like to convene a joint meeting / workshop with the DCCA, DCHG, DFA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Sustainable Energy

Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) to facilitate the development of a joint work plan for the rest of 2018 through to 2020.



Members of the SDG Bureau with Minister Andrew Doyle



Professor Mike Jones TCD



The Panel Discussion

ICOMOS Ireland's main sponsors for the event are:



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