

POSITION PAPER

Country: Spain

Committee: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Agenda: The Impact of Climate Change on World Heritage Sites

Spain, with its long, complex history and the global character of its territorial and cultural extension, remains marked by a striking diversity of historical influences and regional differences, and it justifiably prides itself on the forty Spanish sites currently inscribed on the World Heritage List. Together, they represent a broad range of categories: religious, military and civic monuments, cities, landscapes, industrial vestiges, prehistoric sites and cultural roads, as well as natural heritage.

Spain is among the countries that have made the most outstanding intellectual and practical contributions to the successful propagation of the World Heritage concept worldwide through a number of remarkable and far-sighted initiatives and a range of generous financial contributions.

The country is, for example, one of the prime contributors to World Heritage through its Funds-in-Trust. The resources donated have helped UNESCO's effort in the promotion and conservation of World Heritage, with a special focus on Latin America and the Caribbean.

Spain's munificent support of the UN Millennium Development Goals also represents generosity on a grand scale. Indeed, the country's energetic and pragmatic approach to World Heritage is everywhere apparent. One of the most original examples of this is the newly formed Association of World Heritage Cities, thanks to which representatives of thirteen cities from various parts of Spain can sit around a table, share their experiences, discuss their common concerns and thus, in close cooperation, find original ways of solving their problems.

Spain's dynamic participation is the support it has managed to mobilize for the promotion and conservation of World Heritage prehistory sites, a still inadequately represented category on the World Heritage List.

CASE STUDY

The Doñana National Park in Spain is subject to potential climate change impact.

The Doñana National Park and World Heritage property, in southern Spain, is the largest and most comprehensive conservation area in Iberia and covers an area of 50,000 hectares.

Dessication of the wetland areas of the Park as a result of increased water use has resulted in the loss of some 100 plant species during the last 80 years. Further dessication of the wetlands can be expected in the region with increased temperatures of between 1.4°C and 3.8°C and reduced annual precipitation of between 5 and 10 per cent by the 2050s.

The Park is home to 365 recorded species of resident and migratory birds. It provides an ideal winter habitat for species such as the greylag goose and the teal that stop at the park on the migration route from western Europe to West Africa. It also provides an important spring nesting ground for African and Mediterranean birds such as the spoonbill. Nearly 20,000 greater flamingos use the area as a feeding zone. The Doñana National Park is the most important site for wintering ducks in Spain.

The winter droughts of the 1990s have already had a severe impact upon the area, a situation that is likely to become considerably more acute in the future as the climate of southern Spain dries. The park exists at an altitude between sea level and 40m. Sea level in the region has risen by about 20cm over the last century and future rises in sea level may further threaten these remaining wetland areas through saltwater inundation which threatens the survival of this important migratory bird habitat. Scenarios suggest further rises in sea level of between 20cm and 110cm by the end of next century.

1. With the Government's ambitious policies, an effective emissions trading system, renewable energies backed up by adequate economic resources and binding energy efficiency targets, Spain would be an efficient and environmental friendly place for living and doing business. Spain can achieve a CO2-free power sector by the middle of this century.
2. The Park has strong collaboration with authorities that address threats originating from outside the property, including conflict over water use with the agricultural sector, but it is not within their control, and therefore requires greater regional and national collaboration to address this issue. Other aspects of park management including replanting of previously degraded areas, tourist management, education and research, are highly effective.
3. The park managers are doing a good job of managing the World Heritage site itself with excellent public awareness and management activities, plus the decision not to dredge the Guadalquivir River and to develop and implement the "Special Management Plan of the Irrigation Zones located to the North of the Forest Crown of Doñana" has been very positive