

## The Dublin Meetings on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2018

### Review

The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Energy, Sustainability + Climate Change (ISCES+CC), led by Peter Cox (ICOMOC Ireland), staunchly believes and advocates for the importance of the SDGs to mitigating Climate Change and to protecting life on earth and our Cultural Heritage. ICOMOS believes that the SDGs are the new driver for protecting the environment, protecting cultural heritage, protecting our health & well-being, protecting society and bringing the community together in the interest of all. In Quito, ICOMOS (global NGO for cultural heritage), IUCN (global QUANGO for natural heritage) and UCLG (global NGO for cities and local governments) held a joint meeting and agreed that the three organisations should work together to promote the SDGs.

Following on from the original launch of the New Urban Agenda in Quito in November 2016 and its ratification by all 193 United Nations member countries, 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 actively participated in the Culture Summit in Jeju 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.

ICOMOS Ireland and the ISCES+CC were concerned that the Irish Government were not taking the SDGs seriously, considering the fact that each country is bound to produce a VNR (Voluntary National Review) once it has expressed to the UN its commitment to do so. Especially since SDG 11 is one of the Goals in focus for this year’s VNR, we collectively felt it would benefit ICOMOS Ireland, ICOMOS International and in particular the ICOMOS International Bureau for the SDGs to hold a series of international-level meetings in Dublin in April 2018. The programme was also drawn up with a wider context in mind and one that ICOMOS National Committees could model and roll out over the next few years to increase the awareness and importance of the SDGs.

The Dublin meetings brought together 60% of the ICOMOS SDG Bureau in one place and the proceedings were shared with 11 other countries in real time via video and telephone conferencing. The members of the bureau had a very successful business meeting on the Sunday evening and a work plan was agreed. Monday’s sessions were dedicated to the main drivers for the SDGs and we concentrated Session One on the **Indicators**. Bureau member Chister Gustafsson (ICOMOS Sweden & vice president of ISCEC) chaired and moderated this session with inputs from a number of Irish and International contributors. The second

session on Monday was on **Localising** and Christophe Rivet (President 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 kindly hosted an official reception in the "Gothic Room" of the State Apartments at Dublin Castle. Well over 100 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 our main driver to 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 constituent 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 the 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 a number of academic institutions, such as TCD, who are monitoring carbon emissions from reclaimed bogs. Our NSCES+CC and Cathy Daly are monitoring the climate impact on a number of World Heritage Sites and a few on the Tentative List.

One of our keynote speakers was the Minister of State in the Department of Agriculture Minister Andrew Doyle who told us of the Government's new initiative on Forestry which is to convert some fallow and less arable land into forests that will act as a carbon sink and will produce an 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 afternoon session was dedicated to a Public Meeting that was well supported by many other interested groups within Ireland 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 conference wrapped up on Wednesday with a closed meeting with Leslie Carberry, a senior person within the Sustainable Development Unit within the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA), who in conjunction with Ms. Sinead Walsh, a senior officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), is the key person charged by the Irish Government to produce and submit the Irish VNR to the United Nations in NYC. This must be done in time for it to be translated into the necessary languages and in turn, for it to be presented at the HLPF Meeting in early July 2018. In this meeting, which I believe was very informative for the ICOMOS Bureau on the SDGs but, by his own admission it was also very valuable to the senior civil servant charged with this job.

## Outcomes

The outcome of this 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 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 ICOMOS International Bureau for the SDGs, through its focal point Dr. Ege Yildirim also made a proposal to the Irish Government to hold an official side event at the HLPF in New York City. Leslie Carberry tried to organise this but unfortunately it was not possible, as the Irish Government has already organised an official side event with the Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO).

As a bureau, we 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 as of today, it does look like we may have an active event at the HLPF.

The outcome for the ICOMOS International forum on SDGs was the official recognition of a bureau and the selection of 12 members to sit on that bureau chaired by Sofia Avgerinou-Kolonias. Dr. Ege Yildirim is the lead focal point, Dr. Rohit Jigyasu is the main board member and the Secretary General of ICOMOS International Mr. Peter Philips 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, focusing on 4, 7, 11, 13 and 17 especially. The other main focus is to engage with all States Parties through the National Committee network to assist and ensure that each state party responds well with their VNRs.

The outcome for ICOMOS Ireland was multi-faceted and in particular exposed ICOMOS Ireland to a number of government departments and departments within our third level education institutions that we would not have had contact with here to fore. This progress has to be seized upon and good relationships must be grown for the benefit of ICOMOS and for the good of cultural and natural heritage, climate action, education and building partnerships. The common and recurring question I was asked during the three days of meetings was *'How did we 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 in Ireland advocating the SDGs to what ICOMOS can do and can contribute so there is a great opportunity to now partner with these groups to give a bigger voice to ICOMOS's 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 by sharing this information through our active NSC's in Ireland and Australia and the working group in Canada – this information, model and format can then be rolled out in individual states and information shared with other ISCs and with all National Committees. It is also timely for the next GA /

Adcom, which has ‘Sustainability’ as its main theme. The ISCES+CC will be putting forward a proposal for a session in Argentina.

### What’s Next

This, I believe was the very first step on a long road for ICOMOS to engage stakeholders for the SDGs at national level, but the opportunity must be taken to put some urgency into the ICOMOS SDG Task Force. Other National Committees and ISCs should now take on the mantle and organise similar meetings.



Members of the SDG Bureau with Minister Andrew Doyle

ICOMOS Ireland’s main sponsors for the event are:



An Roinn  
Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta  
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Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

