

ICOMOS response to UN Special Procedures on questions regarding Ngorongoro Conservation Area (Ref: AL OTH 264/2021)

On behalf of the President of ICOMOS, MS Teresa Patricio, I have pleasure in responding to your letter dated 9 February 2022 but received by ourselves on March 2nd 2022. The letter relates to concerns regarding the Tanzanian Government's intention to relocate some 82,000 people, including a large number of the indigenous Maasai community, from their traditional homes in the Ngorongoro World Heritage site.

This reply is written subsequent to the meeting convened by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre which was attended by representatives of the Centre, the Advisory Bodies and of course, yourselves. Being mindful of the positive engagement that took place during the course of this meeting, ICOMOS will limit itself to a few remarks that we feel will be informative and may assist you in understanding the mechanisms and policies that we have in place in terms of human rights and culture.

Since its creation in 1965 and as reaffirmed in the Ethical Principles adopted in 2014, ICOMOS has always placed human rights firmly within its agenda: To this end, on behalf of the Board a dedicated Working Group directly engages with this important question of the rights of stakeholders and rightsholders in the field of cultural heritage (the newly appointed focal point of the OCD/RBA Working Group, Ms Laura Robinson, was present at the meeting). The OCD/RBA Working Group has actively participated in promoting these rights both within the work of the ICOMOS international community and by making significant inputs into a number of frameworks and guideline documents, including the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO, 2021).

We are also pleased to inform you that this Working Group is now engaged with the internal ICOMOS nomination process for cultural World Heritage Sites and will be involved in the review process of new cultural nomination dossiers. The participation of this Working Group to the ICOMOS broad review is intended to more systematically ensure the involvement of both rightsholders and stakeholders in the nomination process from the very beginning of the conceptualisation of the nomination, through to the ongoing management of the site itself.

ICOMOS would be pleased to engage with you more directly on this and would welcome a discussion and exchange of idea with the Special Representatives for Human Rights – Culture, and Indigenous People, in particular.

Please remain assured of our commitment to upholding and promoting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and in working towards a solution that is in the interests of the Maasai people of the Ngorongoro World Heritage site and the sustainable conservation of this important property into the future.

ENDS