SECRETARY GENERAL'S TRIENNIAL REPORT

2023 - 2026

22nd ICOMOS General Assembly

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1. Purpose, statutory basis and scope

This report is submitted to the 22nd ICOMOS General Assembly as the outgoing Secretary General's report on the programme and activities of ICOMOS during the previous three years, as required by Article 32(3)(a) of the ICOMOS Rules of Procedure.

It also consolidates two related reporting responsibilities that have formed part of the annual Secretary General's Reports during the 2023–2026 term. First, Article 57(10) of the Rules of Procedure requires the Secretary General to report annually to the Advisory Committee and the General Assembly on the implementation of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and on their results or effects. Second, Article 10(d)(8) of the ICOMOS Statutes requires the Board to report annually to the Advisory Committee and triennially to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Policy on Cultural Diversity and Multilingualism and on the state of cultural diversity and multilingualism within ICOMOS. This section of the report is therefore presented on behalf of the Board.

Article 11(d)(4) of the Statutes further assigns to the Secretary General a verification role in relation to compliance with the Statutes and Rules of Procedure, invitations to statutory meetings, implementation of decisions of statutory bodies, the updating of membership and committee lists, and the establishment and keeping of statutory minutes and records. These matters are addressed in consolidated form in section 3.

The reporting period runs from the close of the 21st General Assembly in Sydney in September 2023 to the 22nd General Assembly in Kuching in October 2026. The substantive monitoring information on General Assembly resolutions is based on the latest September 2026 review supplied by the Board's Task Team on Monitoring and Impact of General Assembly Resolutions.

2. Executive overview of the triennium

The 2023–2026 term benefited from a significant degree of institutional continuity, as President Teresa Patrício continued from the preceding Board term. Therefore, there was neither a need nor an intention to redesign the governance system at the outset. This continuity facilitated the work of the incoming Board and enabled existing working methods and processes to be further developed rather than reconstructed. At the same time, the term consolidated a number of processes initiated in previous General Assemblies and progressively embedded cross-cutting themes — climate action, rights-based and people-centred approaches, Indigenous participation, gender diversity, multilingualism and ethical conduct — in the work of ICOMOS committees and working groups.

The Secretary General's reporting has to distinguish between resolutions that have been formally completed, resolutions whose implementation is now embedded in the ordinary work of an established ICOMOS body, and resolutions that still require focused monitoring or a specific decision by the incoming Board. This distinction is important, because a resolution may remain relevant even when a separate Board Task Team may no longer be the most effective mechanism for monitoring it.

During the current term, the monitoring work was supported in particular by the Board's Task Team on Monitoring and Impact of General Assembly Resolutions. Its monitoring matrix was progressively updated through Board reporting and information from committees, working groups and focal points. By September 2026, the Task Team had identified a group of completed resolutions and a smaller group that it recommended should continue to receive focused monitoring during the 2026–2029 term. It also identified a useful structural lesson for future General Assemblies: where feasible, proposed resolutions should contain clearer objectives, implementation responsibilities and indicators so that their subsequent impact can be assessed more consistently.

The most visible areas of progress include: the further revision of the ICOMOS Ethical Principles in 2025; continued operationalisation of climate action through risk assessment, toolkits, climate literacy and international engagement; the development of Fire Guidelines for presentation to the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching and the Board's approval of an ICOMOS Emergency Response Charter; the progressive incorporation of rights-based and people-centred approaches into World Heritage assessment; the establishment and renewed leadership of the Indigenous Heritage Working Group;

ongoing work on gender and heritage; and substantial work towards a more equitable and sustainable membership fee structure.

The triennium also produced important advances beyond the direct follow-up of General Assembly resolutions. New and developing areas of the ICOMOS network gained momentum, including Aerospace Heritage and Water and Heritage; the University Forum expanded its activities; the Climate Action Working Group remained highly active internationally; and the Emerging Professionals Working Group strengthened its leadership, cooperation and programme. ICOMOS also gave greater and more structured attention to gender and Indigenous perspectives. At organisational level, the launch of PUBLICOMOS and the renewed ICOMOS website and visual identity significantly improved access to ICOMOS knowledge and the visibility of the organisation. The term also strengthened ICOMOS's institutional framework through work on committee governance, the Advisory Committee Governance document and the review of procedures for doctrinal texts. Taken together, these developments demonstrate that, notwithstanding the constraints discussed later in this report, ICOMOS has continued to innovate, broaden its agenda and make substantial progress during the term.

3. Secretary General's statutory and programme responsibilities

3.1 Governance, continuity and statutory compliance

The Statutes and Rules of Procedure assign the Secretary General a range of verification and procedural responsibilities. In practice during this triennium, the Secretary General's involvement centred on participation in Bureau and Board meetings, reviewing minutes and decisions where required, maintaining contact with the President and the Secretariat, and taking up specific matters that needed attention. The formal remit is broad, and the experience of this term has confirmed that not every element can realistically be followed personally and continuously by a Secretary General who carries out the role alongside regular professional responsibilities.

The fact that President Teresa Patrício continued from the 2020–2023 term into the 2023–2026 term was of practical importance. It enabled the new Board to build on established procedures and relationships from the beginning of the term. In the Secretary General's view, this continuity contributed significantly to the work of the Board.

3.2 Board and Bureau work and support to the Secretary General

A particular part of the Secretary General's statutory role concerns the preparation and follow-up of Board and Bureau work. Article 72 of the Rules of Procedure gives the Secretary General a formal role in relation to Board minutes. In practice, however, the volume of agendas, minutes, decisions and follow-up made it necessary to distribute the practical work more widely.

During the course of the triennium, and in consultation with the President, the appointment of a Deputy Secretary General was therefore proposed and Mariana Pereira took up this role alongside her other Board and EPWG activities. She subsequently undertook a substantial share of the preparation of the minutes and, together with the President, of Board agendas. The Secretary General continued to review the minutes before finalisation.

During the second half of the term, President Teresa Patrício and the Secretariat also took on a significant share of the practical workload. This made it possible for the Secretary General to remain engaged in his statutory role while combining it with his regular professional and personal responsibilities. He is very grateful to the President, Mariana Pereira and the Secretariat for this support.

3.3 Executive succession and strengthening of the Secretariat

One of the significant governance tasks of the triennium was the procedure for appointing a new Director General. A small selection team was established from within the Board, with Susan McIntyre-Tamwoy and Nupur Prothi taking an active part alongside the President and Secretary General. Other Board members were also able to participate in the process, and several did so. In the end, the Board made the final decision between the remaining candidates.

Marie-Laure Lavenir concluded more than a decade of service as Director General at the end of 2025. During that period she made a major contribution to the professional development and continuity of the Secretariat. In particular, she built up ICOMOS's capacity for project acquisition and project management, which has become a substantial additional field of activity and an important source of income. The Secretary General thanks her for this work and for the good cooperation during his term as Secretary General.

Céline Noguès-Weber took up the position of Director General at the beginning of 2026. At the same time, Gaia Jungeblodt was promoted to Deputy Director General. Gaia has devoted most of her professional life to ICOMOS and knows its procedures, membership administration and institutional background exceptionally well. Her ability to formulate complex matters precisely and impartially has made her the backbone and a key source of continuity in the Secretariat. Her promotion therefore provides important continuity alongside the new Director General. The Secretary General welcomes Céline Noguès-Weber and looks forward to the further development of ICOMOS under the strengthened management team.

The Secretary General also thanks Gwenaëlle Bourdin, Director of the Evaluation Unit, and Regina Durighello, Director of the Advisory and Monitoring Unit, for their long-standing service and for the expertise, continuity and institutional knowledge they bring to ICOMOS's World Heritage work.

The Secretary General also records his gratitude to Henri Verrier, who retired as Financial Manager in January 2025 after 38 years of service to ICOMOS.

3.4 Monitoring under the General Programme and the role of Board Task Teams

The General Programme for 2023–2026 assigned the Secretary General a monitoring role across a wide range of fields. These included the dissemination of scientific work and open-access resources; the inclusiveness, diversity and activity of National and International Scientific Committees and Working Groups; collaboration across committees; the use and dissemination of ICOMOS best-practice documents; public education and webinars; international membership development; the formation of new National and Transnational Committees; organisational sustainability; and the use of platforms facilitating equitable participation in statutory meetings.

Experience during the triennium showed that this range of monitoring responsibilities is too broad for the Secretary General alone to carry out directly alongside the tasks described above and next to regular professional responsibilities. In practice, much of the substantive monitoring has been undertaken through Board Task Teams and/or designated Board members and the Secretariat, or in some cases the relevant focal point. Their reports have therefore provided much of the practical basis for monitoring at Board level.

This experience is reflected in the new General Programme 2026–2029, which no longer assigns such a wide range of monitoring tasks rigidly to the Secretary General. It allows the Board to decide how individual monitoring responsibilities are best distributed among the Board Members, Secretariat, focal points or other liaisons.

3.5 Committee governance and the framework for doctrinal texts

A further strand of Board work during the triennium concerned the governance framework for ICOMOS bodies. In 2024 the Board approved the Advisory Committee Governance document and agreed that it should be aligned with the governance documents for the Board and Secretariat. Work subsequently advanced on updated frameworks for National Committees and International Scientific Committees, including model statutes and by-laws and related amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

The Board also reviewed the framework for ICOMOS doctrinal texts. It decided to retain the term "doctrinal text" while clarifying definitions, categories and procedures for their preparation and adoption, including proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure that would allow doctrinal texts to be adopted at Annual General Assemblies. This work should provide a clearer and more consistent framework for future scientific standard-setting.

3.6 National and Transnational Committee development

During the triennium, the ICOMOS network was further developed. In November 2024, the Board approved the statutes of and accredited ICOMOS Montenegro and ICOMOS Paraguay as National Committees.

During the last twelve months of the triennium, the Secretary General devoted considerable time to supporting the development of the Caribbean Transnational Committee (CTC). In January 2026 the Board accredited the CTC for the countries Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. The CTC's statutes establish an innovative and flexible model: countries in the Caribbean with ICOMOS members where it is difficult to establish or sustain a National Committee can be accredited by the Board to be included in the CTC, while ICOMOS members belonging to other National Committees who live in the Caribbean can participate as Affiliates. The model may have relevance for comparable situations elsewhere. The CTC's legal registration is still in progress, with the Secretary General continuing to assist the process.

In 2026 the Board withdrew the recognition of the National Committees of Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

3.7 Quantitative governance overview

The scale of statutory governance activity during the triennium has been substantial. From the close of the Sydney General Assembly to the date of this report, the Board has held 16 regular meetings and 9 Extraordinary Board meetings. One further regular Board meeting is scheduled in Kuching, which will bring the total for the triennium to 17 regular Board meetings, in addition to the 9 Extraordinary meetings. Over the same period, the Bureau has held 15 regular meetings and one Extraordinary Bureau meeting, with one further regular Bureau meeting scheduled in Kuching, bringing the projected total to 16 regular Bureau meetings and one Extraordinary Bureau meeting. These figures illustrate the intensity of the governance workload and the significant time commitment required from Board members, as well as from the Secretariat supporting these meetings. The engagement and commitment of the members of the Bureau and Board throughout the term have been considerable, and this sustained involvement has enabled substantial work to be taken forward and completed.

4. Implementation and impact of General Assembly resolutions

The following overview focuses on substantive resolutions from the 20th General Assembly (2020) and the 21st General Assembly (2023) that required continuing implementation during the 2023–2026 term. Procedural resolutions that took immediate effect are not repeated. Resolution numbering and titles for the 20th General Assembly have been checked against the adopted 2020 resolutions.

The Secretary General thanks Gráinne Shaffrey, who led the Board's Task Team on Monitoring and Impact of General Assembly Resolutions, for the sustained work involved in maintaining the monitoring overview and bringing together successive updates from across ICOMOS during the triennium.

Resolution	Main progress during 2023–2026	Status at end of term	Suggested follow-up
20GA/11 – Cultural Diversity and Multilingualism	Translation quality and language diversity remained under review. Retention of the original-language text was promoted as a quality-control principle. A Board initiative surveyed terminology used in cultural heritage; responses are under review, with a follow-up session organised during the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching.	Ongoing	Focused monitoring should continue; see section 5.
20GA/12 – Amendments to the ICOMOS Ethical Principles	The earlier implementation was completed; a further Board review took place in 2025 and revised Ethical Principles were approved at the 2025 Annual General Assembly in Lumbini.	Complete	No separate resolution monitoring required; implementation continues through normal governance and ethics work.

Resolution	Main progress during 2023–2026	Status at end of term	Suggested follow-up
20GA/13 – Triennial Scientific Program Reboot	A new Triennial Scientific Programme was adopted at the 2023 General Assembly.	Complete	No further action under this resolution.
20GA/14 – Venizelos Metro Station, Thessaloniki	The resolution had been treated as complete before the 2023–2026 term.	Complete	No further action under this resolution.
20GA – ICOFORT Charter / Guidelines on Fortifications and Military Heritage	Guidelines were adopted in 2022.	Complete	No further action under this resolution.
20GA/15 – Cultural Heritage and the Climate Emergency	Climate action moved from policy to tools and implementation: risk and vulnerability work, climate-adaptation and climate-justice toolkits, climate-literacy training, collaboration with the Indigenous Heritage Working Group, engagement around MONDIACULT and COP processes, and preparation for COP31.	Ongoing / embedded	Continue through the Climate Action Working Group and related committees; focused resolution monitoring may be unnecessary if routine reporting remains strong.
20GA/16 – Protecting heritage sites in situations of political conflict and civil unrest	The issue moved from limited ownership to active consideration in the Rights-Based Approaches / Our Common Dignity Working Group, including the political use and weaponisation of heritage, ethics, transnational professional cooperation and post-conflict recovery. Relevant 2026 proposed resolutions are being developed.	Ongoing	Focused monitoring should continue, subject to any superseding or complementary resolutions adopted at the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching.
20GA/17 – Protecting Our Built, Landscape and Cultural Heritage from Fires	Fire Guidelines were developed through several committees and approved by the Board for presentation to the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching. The Board also approved the ICOMOS Emergency Response Charter, subject to minor editorial corrections.	Advanced / pending GA action	Conclude the resolution following the General Assembly's decision on the Fire Guidelines and establish implementation arrangements as needed.
20GA/18 – European Quality Principles	Translations and national application were promoted through the Europe Group. Work reviewed the recommendations and their practical use; the principles continue to be referenced in current European projects and debate.	Ongoing	Continue monitoring, with emphasis on practical application and wider transfer beyond Europe where appropriate.
20GA/19 – People-Centred Approaches to Cultural Heritage	People-centred and rights-based approaches became embedded in the current OCD-RBA work plan and related activities, including possible training.	Ongoing / embedded	Continue through OCD-RBA and partner groups; no separate Task Team monitoring is essential if routine reporting is maintained.
20GA/20 – Virtual statutory meetings	The Rules of Procedure were amended at the 2023 General Assembly, completing the principal purpose of the resolution.	Complete	No further action under this resolution.
20GA/21 – Internal Working Methods: Working Groups and Focal Points	Guidelines for Working Groups were adopted.	Complete	No further action under this resolution.
20GA/22 – ICOMOS Emerging Professionals	The formal task was completed; the 2023 EPWG Action Plan continued to be implemented and the Board reviewed the Working Group's future format and integration.	Resolution complete; programme continues	Continue EPWG work through ordinary programme and Advisory Committee mechanisms.

Resolution	Main progress during 2023–2026	Status at end of term	Suggested follow-up
21GA/1 – Review of the Membership Fee Structure	A dedicated Working Group developed a revised structure. The proposal was externally reviewed, including by the ISC on Economics of Conservation, and remained under Board/Working Group consideration in 2026.	Ongoing	Focused monitoring and Board decision-making should continue until a final proposal is submitted to the membership.
21GA/15 – Climate Change and Indigenous Heritage	The Indigenous Heritage and Climate Action Working Groups strengthened cooperation. New Indigenous Heritage Working Group leadership was appointed in 2026.	Ongoing	Continue focused monitoring and ensure sustained cooperation between IHWG and CAWG.
21GA/16 – Cultural Dimensions of the SDGs	The SDG Working Group continued advocacy for culture/cultural heritage in the post-2030 and SDG debate, with active participation in UNESCO regional consultations, MONDIACULT and related initiatives.	Ongoing	Continue focused monitoring and external advocacy.
21GA/17 – Human Rights-Based Approach in Cultural Heritage Management for World Heritage Sites	OCD-RBA and the World Heritage Unit developed a structured desk-review process for nomination dossiers. Thirty-one preliminary assessments had been completed by 2025, a pilot State of Conservation review was undertaken, and reviews continued into the 2026/27 cycle.	Ongoing / embedded	Continue through OCD-RBA and the World Heritage Unit with routine reporting on results and methodological learning.
21GA/18 – Indigenous Peoples' Values and Culture–Nature Interconnections in World Heritage OUV	The Indigenous Heritage Working Group contributed directly to preliminary assessments, participated in a UNESCO workshop with the Advisory Bodies and the Indigenous Peoples Forum for World Heritage, and developed a questionnaire on Indigenous participation. A high-profile WHC side event in Busan continued the work in 2026.	Ongoing	Continue focused monitoring, including follow-up on participation in World Heritage assessment processes.
21GA/20 – Gender Diversity in ICOMOS	The Queer Heritage volume was published; The Routledge Handbook of Heritage and Gender (2025) included an ICOMOS-focused chapter; the Heritage and Gender Task Team became part of OCD-RBA and developed further workshops on gender, leadership, equity, legal frameworks and intersections with Indigenous Peoples and climate action.	Ongoing	Continue focused monitoring, with improved indicators that respect applicable data-protection and legal constraints.
21GA/21 – Indigenous Peoples' Inclusion throughout ICOMOS	The Indigenous Heritage Working Group worked to broaden geographic representation and prepared a questionnaire for National and International Scientific Committees on activities to increase Indigenous participation. New focal-point leadership was appointed in 2026.	Ongoing	Continue focused monitoring with practical, ethically appropriate indicators of participation and inclusion.

4.1 Climate action

Implementation of 20GA/15 developed substantially over the term. The 2024 report recorded risk and vulnerability work through projects including CVI Africa and Preserving Legacies, new methodologies and digital approaches, a best-practice climate-adaptation toolkit translated into six languages, a Climate Justice and Equity toolkit translated into seven languages, and a Climate Change Literacy for Heritage Professionals course. By 2025, the Climate Action Working Group was collaborating more closely with the Indigenous Heritage Working Group and contributing to ICOMOS engagement around MONDIACULT and COP30. In 2026, the Working Group remained active and was preparing for COP31 in Türkiye in cooperation with ICOMOS Türkiye and several International Scientific Committees.

The impact of the resolution is therefore no longer confined to one Working Group. Climate action is increasingly connected to rights-based approaches, Indigenous heritage, sustainable development, World Heritage processes and organisational practice. The continuing challenge is to retain measurable reporting on outcomes rather than activity alone.

4.2 Heritage in conflict, emergencies and fire

Implementation of 20GA/16 gained clearer direction during the triennium. During 2025 and 2026 OCD-RBA increasingly addressed the political use and weaponisation of heritage, the role of professional ethics, transnational cooperation and heritage as an instrument of peace and mutual understanding. Amendments to the Ethical Principles adopted in 2025 are relevant to this area, as is work by the Crisis Monitoring and Response Working Group. OCD-RBA has also been preparing proposed resolutions for consideration by the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching concerning the role of communities, rights-holders and heritage custodians in emergency interventions, rescue operations and post-conflict recovery.

Alongside the implementation of individual General Assembly resolutions, crisis monitoring became a recurring area of Board attention throughout the triennium. The Board's Task Team Crisis Monitoring and Response and operating through ICORP, monitored a succession of conflicts and disasters, including Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, the Türkiye-Syria earthquakes, Myanmar and other crises. Its work has included open-source monitoring and verification, contact with National and Scientific Committees and colleagues on the ground, training and capacity building, missions where circumstances permitted, and cooperation with partner organisations. Much of this work is necessarily conducted with limited public visibility because of the sensitivity and confidentiality of information arising during crises.

By 2026, the Board recognised that this monitoring serves a broader institutional purpose: recording damage, responses, cooperation and gaps, while contributing to ICOMOS's institutional memory and scientific planning. Given the frequency and diversity of crises affecting heritage and heritage professionals, this capacity should continue into the next triennium, while its methodology, structure and links with the wider ICOMOS network are further developed. The Secretary General particularly acknowledges the sustained contribution of Zeynep Gül Ünal, who served as focal point for this work.

20GA/17 on fire has followed a more concrete implementation path. The initial resolution expressly called for research, capacity building and the development of guidelines. During the present term that work matured into Fire Guidelines, approved by the Board and scheduled for consideration by the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching. In parallel, the Board approved the ICOMOS Emergency Response Charter, subject to minor editorial corrections, providing a broader framework for preparedness and response to cultural heritage emergencies. Subject to the General Assembly's decision where required, these outputs should allow the work to move from development to implementation.

4.3 Rights-based and people-centred approaches

The implementation of 20GA/19 and 21GA/17 demonstrates how a General Assembly resolution can become embedded in an established operational process. People-centred and rights-based principles are now incorporated into the OCD-RBA work plan. In World Heritage work, these principles have been translated into a systematic desktop assessment process for nomination dossiers, with thirty-one preliminary assessments completed by 2025, a pilot State of Conservation review, and subsequent review cycles continuing into 2026/27.

For future monitoring, the principal question is whether the approach is producing a demonstrable change in assessment, management and decision-making. Future reports should, where possible, identify examples of recommendations that have been reflected in nomination dossiers, management processes or World Heritage advice.

4.4 Indigenous heritage

The Indigenous Heritage Working Group became a central implementation mechanism for resolutions 21GA/15, 21GA/18 and 21GA/21. During the triennium it moved from establishment and work-plan development to direct engagement with World Heritage processes, including preliminary assessments, participation in a UNESCO workshop with the three Advisory Bodies and the Indigenous Peoples Forum for World Heritage, and a high-profile side event at the World Heritage Committee meeting in Busan. The Working Group also developed a questionnaire intended to identify activities by National and International Scientific Committees to increase Indigenous participation.

The appointment in 2026 of Bekeh Ukelina as Focal Point and Shawnee Gorringe as Deputy Focal Point provides a basis for renewed implementation in the next term. The central issue for monitoring remains how to assess meaningful inclusion without reducing Indigenous participation to a numerical indicator alone.

4.5 Gender diversity

Implementation of 21GA/20 continued through collaboration between the SDG Working Group and OCD-RBA. The publication of the Queer Heritage volume arising from the 2023 General Assembly provided a substantive output. In 2025, The Routledge Handbook of Heritage and Gender was published, including the chapter "Development of Discourse on the Intersection of Heritage and Gender within ICOMOS", prepared by members of the Heritage and Gender Task Team and colleagues. The Heritage and Gender Task Team was integrated into OCD-RBA and developed a further programme of workshops, including themes relating to women in heritage, leadership and equity, legal frameworks, Indigenous Peoples and climate action. The next term should move toward clearer qualitative and quantitative indicators while respecting applicable law, data-protection requirements and the voluntary nature of member participation.

4.6 Membership fee structure

Resolution 21GA/1 has required sustained work because it combines questions of financial sustainability, fairness across countries and the value proposition of international membership. By 2026 the Working Group's proposed structure was nearing completion and had received external review, including peer review involving the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Economics of Conservation. Further Board and Working Group consideration was still required. This is therefore a priority item for continuity into the 2026–2029 term.

5. Cultural Diversity and Multilingualism

Article 10(d)(8) of the Statutes places the reporting obligation on the Board. As in the annual Secretary General's Reports during this term, this section is presented by the Secretary General on behalf of the Board. The obligation is broader than translation alone: it concerns both implementation of the Policy on Cultural Diversity and Multilingualism and the state of cultural diversity and multilingualism in ICOMOS. Article 21 of the Statutes provides the legal framework. English and French are the working languages; the Ethical Principles and doctrinal texts are to be translated into English, French and Spanish at a minimum; and Spanish and other languages may be used in order to encourage multilingualism, subject to the Rules of Procedure. French remains the official language for the Statutes and other administrative and legal documents.

5.1 Progress during the triennium

- Translation quality and traceability received increased attention. A recurring principle in the 2024 and 2025 reports was that the original-language version should remain available alongside a translation, so that readers can refer back to the source text.
- The use of languages beyond English and French increased in a number of substantive outputs. The 2025 report, for example, noted an OCD-RBA publication translated into French, Portuguese, Korean and Spanish. Climate-related toolkits were also made available in multiple languages.
- Scientific Committees were encouraged to consider language diversity in meetings and activities in order to reduce barriers to participation. This advice was taken up by a number of International Scientific Committees, which incorporated greater language diversity into their meetings and activities.
- Board Task Team 3 on Cultural Diversity and Multilingualism, in which Adriana Careaga played a particularly active role throughout the triennium, developed an initiative to examine how key cultural-heritage terms are understood and translated across languages. A questionnaire was circulated to the International Scientific Committees, responses are under review, and a follow-up session has been organised during the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching.
- The broader diversity agenda was reinforced by the Indigenous Heritage Working Group, the Heritage and Gender Task Team and work on rights-based approaches. These initiatives demonstrate that

cultural diversity is not solely a linguistic question, but also concerns whose knowledge, values and perspectives are represented in ICOMOS processes.

5.2 Continuing considerations

Multilingualism remains a continuing process shaped by available capacity and resources. The practical progress of this term — including greater attention to retaining the original-language text, wider use of additional languages in selected outputs and work on cultural-heritage terminology — provides a basis for further development. The scale, priorities and resourcing of that work will be for the incoming Board to determine.

6. Lessons and recommendations

6.1 Lessons from resolution monitoring

The three-year monitoring cycle has shown that the wording of a resolution strongly influences the quality of later implementation reporting. Resolutions that identify an implementing body, a specific output and an expected time horizon are easier to monitor than broad statements of intent. Conversely, cross-cutting resolutions may be highly influential even where it is difficult to attribute a single measurable output to them.

On the basis of the latest September 2026 review by the Board's Task Team on Monitoring and Impact of General Assembly Resolutions, the following resolutions merit continued focused attention: 20GA/11 (Cultural Diversity and Multilingualism); 20GA/16 (heritage in political conflict and civil unrest); 20GA/18 (European Quality Principles); 21GA/1 (membership fee structure); 21GA/15 (Climate Change and Indigenous Heritage); 21GA/16 (Cultural Dimensions of the SDGs); 21GA/18 (Indigenous Peoples' values and culture–nature interconnections in World Heritage OUV); 21GA/20 (Gender Diversity in ICOMOS); and 21GA/21 (Indigenous Peoples' Inclusion throughout ICOMOS). The fire resolution 20GA/17 should be reassessed after the General Assembly's decision on the proposed doctrinal text.

Three practical principles emerge:

1. When feasible, proposed resolutions should state the intended outcome, the body or bodies expected to lead implementation, and a realistic indicator or milestone.
2. A distinction should be made between resolutions requiring a dedicated monitoring mechanism and those whose implementation is adequately embedded in an established Committee or Working Group.
3. Newly adopted resolutions should be incorporated into the monitoring framework early, so that baseline information is not lost.

6.2 Board Task Teams and continuity of working methods

Each incoming Board is free to determine its own organisation and working methods. From the Secretary General's experience, however, the Board Task Team system has produced tangible results by distributing work among Board members, allowing specific issues to be followed over time and drawing in relevant expertise where needed.

In the Secretary General's view, where the mandate of an existing Task Team remains relevant to the new General Programme 2026–2029, it is worth considering continuity before creating a new structure. Retaining useful Task Teams, while reviewing their mandate, composition and reporting arrangements, can preserve institutional knowledge and reduce duplication.

For the present handover, outgoing Board functions and Board Task Teams have been encouraged to leave concise notes on their mandate, current status, relevant decisions, source documents, key contacts and recommended next steps. This should make it easier for the new Board to build on work already undertaken.

6.3 Strategic reflection: A Spot on the Horizon

During the term, the Board also initiated a longer-term strategic reflection through its Task Team "A Spot on the Horizon". Its purpose has been to look beyond the immediate three-year Board cycle and to

explore how ICOMOS should remain relevant, resilient and true to its values in a changing professional and societal environment over a longer-term horizon.

Cyrill von Planta and Celia Martínez Yáñez have been closely involved with the Secretary General in developing this effort, joined more recently by Monica Rhodes. The process has deliberately been consultative rather than prescriptive. A questionnaire was circulated to individual members, followed by a substantial number of conversations with members who had expressly asked to contribute further. The results have been brought together in a short interim report, while a more detailed interim report was prepared for the Board. Both are interim documents: the work remains incomplete and further listening and analysis are required. The findings presented during the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching should therefore be understood as indicative and interim.

Because strategic reflection of this kind extends beyond the mandate of a single Board, the Secretary General recommends that the incoming Board enable the work to continue. The value of the exercise lies not in prescribing a predetermined future for ICOMOS, but in ensuring that the organisation continues to ask the right questions about its role, membership, capacity and relevance.

Further consultation with ICOMOS bodies is intended, in cooperation with the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee has already contributed valuable information through its own questionnaire, bringing forward important evidence about the functioning, expectations and concerns of the wider ICOMOS network. An interactive format is planned during the Triennial General Assembly in Kuching to continue this discussion with members.

The longer-term reflection should also encompass rapidly developing technologies, including artificial intelligence, remote sensing and other digital tools, and the opportunities and risks they create for heritage practice.

7. Personal reflections after three years as Secretary General

The following are my personal reflections after three years in the role. They are offered not as formal conclusions of the Board, but as practical observations that may be useful to the incoming Board and to future Secretaries General.

7.1 The role of the Secretary General, workload and support

In my view, the role of the Secretary General should largely be exercised in the President's shadow. I have understood it especially as being available as a second pair of eyes and as someone who can pick up matters that risk being left aside in the regular course of work. Family circumstances and my regular professional responsibilities limited my ability to travel, particularly outside Europe, far more than I had intended when accepting the role. I greatly appreciated Teresa Patrício's understanding of these constraints, even though they meant that I could not support her in person to the extent I had originally hoped.

The experience of the triennium has also shown that some of the volunteer functions within ICOMOS carry such a heavy workload that this is difficult to combine with a full professional occupation. In some instances Board Task Teams can help distribute work, though not always sufficiently. In my view, future Boards may wish to consider, for particularly demanding functions, whether one or two deputies or co-functionaries with clearly defined responsibilities could provide greater resilience. The appointment of a Deputy Secretary General during this term demonstrated the practical value of additional capacity.

I also have great respect for the Secretariat. It is remarkable that a comparatively small staff is able to support an organisation of the scale, geographical reach and complexity of ICOMOS while responding rapidly to crises and unexpected demands. In my view, however, the Secretariat remains under-resourced for the expectations placed upon it, both in staffing capacity and in the level of remuneration that available resources permit. More staff time for support to the Board, AdCom, International Scientific Committees and Working Groups would make ICOMOS more effective. There is an unavoidable circular challenge: stronger organisational and financial capacity would also help develop projects, partnerships and funding, while additional funding to materialise such is needed in order to build that capacity.

A basis for this work has already been laid during the present term. The Board Task Team on Fundraising and Finance, lead by Cyrill von Planta and with particular active contributions from Dana Firas and Monica Rhodes, in which I myself engaged too, explored a number of useful directions. These included clearer fundraising priorities, closer links between organisational and project funding, engagement with foundations and other private partners, and the need to invest in professional fundraising capacity. The Task Team did not have sufficient time and capacity to develop these ideas as far as had been hoped, but the groundwork should not be lost. I strongly recommend that the incoming Board take this work forward. In my view ICOMOS needs to diversify its sources of income more systematically. Alongside membership fees, income resulting from project delivery and work carried out for the World Heritage Committee, philanthropy and other forms of private support deserve much greater attention. Fundraising of this kind is a professional field in its own right and should be approached strategically, with dedicated professional expertise. Such fundraising must, of course, remain ethically appropriate and consistent with ICOMOS's values, independence and professional credibility. As other organisations in our field are also capable of attracting substantial private funding, for instance through the development of an endowment fund, there should be opportunities for ICOMOS as well. This could help break the cycle between limited financial resources and the resulting limitations on organisational capacity.

After three years, I have learned a great deal about ICOMOS, but the organisation is so extensive that no single person can have a complete view of the work of every National Committee, International Scientific Committee, Working Group and other body within our ICOMOS family. During the term I also came into contact with a number of entities that were barely active or experiencing governance difficulties. I would have liked to follow some of these cases more closely, but time and means did not permit it. This is one reason why better visibility of how the different parts of our organisation function remains vital.

At the same time, I have seen a remarkable amount of high-quality work carried out voluntarily across ICOMOS. Members create programmes, develop scientific work and build cooperation across borders with great commitment. The challenge is not only to address what functions less well, but also to connect more effectively beyond national and regional borders, as well as between ICOMOS-bodies, while supporting and making more visible what already works exceptionally well. From my perspective, enhancing direct communication between individual members and our international network – without NCs necessarily acting as intermediaries – is crucial to strengthening cohesion within our global organisation.

I want in particular to record my respect for Teresa Patrício. She has combined an extraordinary workload, commitment and accessibility with a highly diplomatic style of leadership. As the principal public representative of ICOMOS, she has travelled extensively and maintained direct contact with colleagues throughout the organisation. In difficult and politically sensitive cases, I have seen her seek balance, allow different views to be heard and avoid imposing her personal view through the authority of the Presidency; often she allowed the Board to reach its conclusion before expressing her own assessment. In several online meetings I had the privilege of acting as a second pair of eyes, and I greatly valued our close and trusting working relationship. Her determination to allow Board members to speak fully meant that meetings often ran well beyond their planned duration, but this was also a reflection of her inclusive approach to chairing the Board. I am especially grateful for her understanding and support during the periods when personal circumstances limited what I could do, and also to Mariana Pereira and the Secretariat for the practical support that made it possible for me to continue in my role. I am also very grateful to my wife, Dunya, for the support that made it possible for me to take on and fulfil this role (often till late hours), and to those who nominated me and placed their confidence in me three years ago.

7.2 Organisational capacity, cooperation and global balance

A further concern of mine is the practical equality of Board participation. Board service requires substantial time and, for in-person meetings, financial means. Where members cannot secure reimbursement or external support for travel and related costs, participation can become more difficult. I believe it would be worth exploring, within the financial possibilities of ICOMOS, whether minimum conditions for effective participation can be made more equitable. This is not intended as a criticism, but as a reflection on one of the structural challenges for our global volunteer organisation.

ICOMOS can benefit too from still greater cooperation between its own entities. The organisation contains a remarkable concentration of expertise, and several initiatives during this term show the value of stronger connections: the University Forum, regional cooperation, joint work between International Scientific Committees and Working Groups, and initiatives of the Emerging Professionals Working Group have all helped link parts of the ICOMOS family and strengthen the organisation. Similar thinking applies beyond ICOMOS. In specialised fields, other organisations sometimes have capacities, networks or delivery mechanisms that complement our own. Strategic alliances, shared programmes and durable partnerships can strengthen ICOMOS without requiring every capacity to be duplicated internally.

I also believe that the diversity of professional and cultural perspectives within a genuinely global organisation deserves continued attention. Different historical experiences and professional traditions can shape how issues are understood, and these differences do not fit into a simple Global North - Global South divide. Continued dialogue, with room for different cultural and regional perspectives, will be of key importance for our organisation to remain both geopolitically impartial and cohesive.

In my view, this diversity of context also matters when General Assembly resolutions are implemented. Global resolutions can express shared values while still requiring sensitivity to different legal, political and cultural settings. In some countries, forms of implementation that are straightforward elsewhere may be constrained or politically sensitive. ICOMOS will increasingly need to consider how it can support its members and uphold professional and moral principles in such circumstances.

I am conscious that my own perspective is rooted in Western European and specific Dutch experience and therefore contains its own blind spots. At the same time, that background also brings long-standing professional and personal relationships with many regions of the world. Used with humility, reciprocity and a willingness to listen, such relationships can help build bridges. Existing connections throughout our organisation should similarly be used to create stronger multivocal cooperation between regions.

For my own part, I hope to remain actively engaged with our organisation after Kuching, whether within or outside the Board, and to continue contributing to stronger connections between regions, committees and partner organisations. I am convinced that the diversity of backgrounds within ICOMOS, when used to build reciprocal relationships and mutual understanding, is one of the organisation’s greatest resources.

7.3 One ICOMOS: visibility, connection and confidence

The experience of this term also gives me strong reasons for confidence. ICOMOS has shown that it can enter new fields, renew established structures and translate the expertise of its members into visible international activity. The International Scientific Committee on Aerospace Heritage has rapidly developed the space-heritage agenda; Water and Heritage has strengthened its international profile and connections with climate action and sustainable development; and the University Forum has developed as a platform linking research, education, emerging professionals and the wider ICOMOS network. The Climate Action Working Group has maintained a particularly active international programme, while the Emerging Professionals Working Group has taken important steps forward. Work on gender and Indigenous heritage has likewise moved from general recognition towards more structured participation in ICOMOS activities and processes.

In my eyes the rapidly developing fields of artificial intelligence, remote sensing and related digital technologies deserve similar attention. Their impact extends far beyond documentation: they are already affecting research, assessment, monitoring, interpretation and professional decision-making across heritage practice, and should therefore have a more coherent and visible place within ICOMOS’s scientific work.

The 60th anniversary of ICOMOS in 2025 provided an opportunity to connect six decades of experience with a forward-looking discussion about the organisation. Regional cooperation also gained new momentum. The first Scientific Symposium of the Americas, held jointly in Ensenada and San Diego in November 2025, was an important example of cross-border scientific exchange and established a basis for continuing cooperation across the region. The development of the Caribbean Transnational Committee also carries within it the seed for subregional cooperation, which approach, in time, possibly could be applied successfully in other subregions too.

In Africa, closer links with the International Scientific Committees, webinars and capacity-building activities have strengthened regional exchange, while in Asia-Pacific regional meetings and thematic cooperation are increasingly bringing members together across this very diverse region. Dana Firas has been instrumental in giving renewed structure and momentum to regional cooperation in the Arab States Region, developing a regional strategy and bringing colleagues together around practical initiatives and shared priorities. I particularly want to recognise Riin Alatalu's considerable commitment: she has built a highly active Europe Group, strengthened ICOMOS engagement with EU policies and helped establish a dedicated forum to coordinate work relating to Ukraine.

I also see important progress in communication and access to knowledge. The renewed ICOMOS website and visual identity, together with PUBLICOMOS and the development of the Historica archive platform, provide important instruments for showing the breadth of ICOMOS activity, strengthening institutional memory and making the organisation's knowledge more accessible. I believe these developments should be used more deliberately to tell the ICOMOS story: not as a collection of separate committees and projects, but as one global professional community whose different parts reinforce one another.

I also want to highlight Yuna Mathan, whose work on the renewed website, visual identity and wider communications gave ICOMOS a more coherent external presentation during this term. She has since left the Secretariat, and her contribution deserves particular recognition.

For me, "One ICOMOS" should therefore be more than an organisational description. Members should be able to recognise their own work as part of a shared global endeavour, and the outside world should be able to see and value the collective contribution made by ICOMOS. Better internal exchange, stronger cross-committee cooperation and clearer external communication can increase professional impact, strengthen partnerships, support membership and fundraising, and help ICOMOS maintain its position as a leading global voice for cultural heritage.

8. Conclusion

The 2023–2026 triennium has been demanding, but it has also demonstrated the energy, knowledge and commitment that exist across ICOMOS. Important work has been completed, new areas have developed, and many initiatives now provide a strong basis for the next term.

Finally, I thank the members of the Board and Bureau, the Advisory Committee, the National, Transnational and International Scientific Committees, Working Groups, University Forum and other ICOMOS bodies, the Secretariat, and all members and volunteers who have contributed to ICOMOS during the triennium. Their collaborative work is the substance of our organisation.

Annex 1. Status categories used in this report

Complete – the requested action has been completed; related programme work may continue, but no further monitoring of the resolution itself is required.
Ongoing / embedded – implementation continues through an established ICOMOS body or routine process; separate resolution monitoring may no longer be necessary.
Ongoing – focused monitoring remains appropriate because key outcomes, decisions or implementation steps are still outstanding.
Advanced / pending General Assembly action – implementation has produced a proposed text or decision that still requires General Assembly action.