



Organisatie van de  
Verenigde Naties  
voor Onderwijs,  
Wetenschap en Cultuur

United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organisation  
der Vereinten Nationen  
für Bildung, Wissenschaft  
und Kultur

Vlaamse  
UNESCO  
Commissie

Flemish  
Commission  
for UNESCO  
in Belgium

Commission  
flamande  
pour l'UNESCO  
en Belgique

Flämische  
UNESCO-  
Kommission  
in Belgien

# Flanders at UNESCO

A long-term partnership making a difference  
in heritage and science for sustainable development



Over  
**20**  
years  
of cooperation  
agreement Flanders-UNESCO

A long-term  
**Top 25**  
donor to UNESCO

Over  
**29**  
million USD  
in voluntary contributions in 2010-2020

● Science 20,9 mio USD  
● Heritage 6,5 mio USD  
● Additional 1,8 mio USD

2 Flanders Trust Funds



Heritage



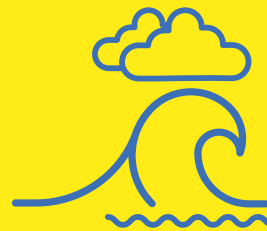
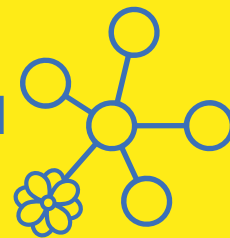
Science

Over  
**100**  
Flemish interns at UNESCO  
in 2011-2020

Focus on Sustainable Development Goals



Supporting science-based  
sustainable management of natural resources



Ocean  
Teacher  
Global  
Academy



150 training sessions  
delivered worldwide  
16 regional and specialised  
training centres

Supporting cultural and natural heritage



African natural  
World Heritage  
sites



Marine World  
Heritage Programme  
and its 50 sites



Collaboration on  
intangible heritage  
in 7 African Countries



Cross-cutting  
issues and  
emergencies

# Introduction

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation aiming to build peace in the human mind.

As the competences for education, science and culture in Belgium are devolved, the regional Government of Flanders acts as a responsible international partner in matters relating to its competences and signed a cooperation agreement with UNESCO in 1998.

Ever since, Flanders has been a loyal partner and donor to UNESCO, supporting UNESCO's policies through specific projects and flagship initiatives, particularly for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the World Heritage Centre.

In this publication, we offer a general overview of the various UNESCO-projects supported by the Government of Flanders between 2010 and 2020, displaying Flanders involvement and highlighting the major achievements worldwide.

The Flemish Commission for UNESCO in Belgium is committed to informing and advising on UNESCO matters and fostering close cooperation between the Flemish Community and the UN organisation, supporting quality education, safeguarding heritage and promoting scientific collaboration.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to invite you to discover UNESCO's activities and success stories, that have been made possible by Flanders' support.



**Marc Vervenne**

President Flemish Commission  
for UNESCO in Belgium  
Honorary Rector KU Leuven,  
President Great Beguinage Leuven  
(World Heritage property)

# Flanders and UNESCO



Ever since its establishment in 1946, Belgium has been a member state of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. When Belgium became a federal state in the 1990s, the competences on education, science and culture were devolved to the Regions and Communities, including Flanders. This devolution of competences also entailed responsibilities for international aspects, and so, the Government of Flanders signed a cooperation agreement with UNESCO in 1998 to foster interaction and collaboration.

The strong and longstanding partnership between Flanders and UNESCO is underpinned by the distinct presence of a Flemish diplomatic delegation accredited to UNESCO in Paris, by the participation of Flemish ministers, civil servants and experts in UNESCO meetings, by several secondments and by many internships through the Flanders Trainee Programme, as well as by two Funds-in-Trust, supporting UNESCO's policies through specific projects over the last two decades.



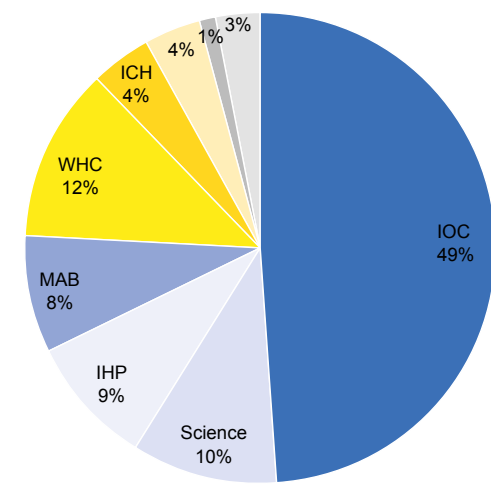
Minister-President of Flanders, Mr Jan Jambon, at UNESCO's General Conference in November 2019  
Every other General Conference of UNESCO a Flemish minister speaks on behalf of Belgium.

## Funds-in-Trust

The Flanders-UNESCO cooperation agreement of 1998 offered the framework for setting up additional agreements for Funds-in-Trust. In 1999 the 'Flanders UNESCO Science Trust Fund' (FUST) was established, supporting the natural science programmes and projects of UNESCO. FUST funded many projects on water security, sustainable management of natural resources and climate action. However, marine research promoted by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) received most of FUST's support. Between 2010 and 2020 FUST contributed about 20.9 million USD to UNESCO's scientific programmes.

In 2001 a general 'Flanders UNESCO Trust Fund' (FUT) was set up in addition to FUST. Initially, this fund provided financing to all kinds of 'non-scientific' projects. In 2010 however, the FUT was reoriented to specific support for heritage projects, with a geographical focus on Africa, as a UNESCO global priority. In the last decade over 40 large and small scale projects were funded in order to protect, safeguard and promote natural, cultural, intangible, underwater and marine heritage, for a total amount of 6.5 million USD. Furthermore, in 2020 Flanders approved an additional contribution of 1.5 million EUR for a major climate adaptation project by UNESCO in South Africa, as part of the bilateral development cooperation between Flanders and South Africa.

Flanders voluntary contributions to UNESCO 2010-2020: thematic break-up



- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
- Science sector
- Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme
- Man and the Biosphere Programme
- World Heritage
- Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Culture sector
- Education sector
- Secondments

## Flanders Trainee Programme

Most multilateral organisations offer internships for students or young professionals. Since most of these traineeships are unpaid, the Government of Flanders set up the Flanders Trainee Programme, covering travel and accommodation expenses for interns. All young people who studied at a Flemish school or university can therefore more easily gain relevant international experience. From 2011 to 2020 a total of 116 internships at UNESCO were granted funding. This strengthened UNESCO's capacities with high quality trainees and offered many Flemish young professionals an insight into UNESCO's operations.

*"An eye-opener to the professional and social dynamics in a multicultural environment"*  
Stef de Béthune – intern at UNESCO's headquarters in 2019



## Donor Profile

Flanders' continuous support through both of its Funds-in-Trust provided UNESCO with a rather unique, reliable subnational donor, representing on average 92% of all Belgian voluntary contributions. Reporting by UNESCO shows Belgium - including Flanders - as a steady top 20-25 voluntary donor over the period of 2012-2020, and a top 15-20 donor among governmental donors, with over 19 million USD in instalments in the period 2012-2018 and almost 11 million USD in signed agreements from 2018 to 2020.

*“Over the last twenty years, Flanders has proved one of UNESCO's most constant and reliable donors. It has also been at the vanguard of innovative, subnational forms of partnership. It has provided major support to flagship initiatives such as the IOC's Ocean Teacher Global Academy and the World Heritage Marine Programme. Through the provision of targeted seed funding, Flanders has also created multiple opportunities for UNESCO to leverage additional resources from other partners to bring programmes to scale and achieve sustainable outcomes and impact”.*

Jean-Yves Le Saux – UNESCO Director  
Bureau of Strategic Planning

UNESCO donor ranking 2020, based on signed agreements (in million USD)		
1	European Union	62.5
2	Norway	38.4
3	World Bank / IBRD / GPE	36.1
4	Italy	33.6
5	Saudi Arabia	25.1
6	UNDP	16.6
7	France	16.0
8	UNICEF	16.0
9	Republic of Korea	14.9
10	Germany	14.5
11	Japan	12.8
12	Brazil	10.9
13	Education Above All Foundation	9.9
14	Canada	8.1
15	LVMH	7.6
16	United Arab Emirates	7.5
17	Mexico	7.2
18	Belgium (including Flanders for 97%)	5.5
19	Finland	5.5
20	Sweden	5.3

IOC donor ranking 2020 (in million USD)		
1	Belgium (Flanders)	3,03
2	Norway	2,35
3	Canada	0.80
4	Australia	0.69
5	Sweden	0.64

## Overview projects (map on page 14-15)

	Project	Sector	Location	Amount
①	Ocean Teacher Global Academy	IOC - Oceans	Worldwide	\$4.998.579,20
②	DIPS - Development of Information Products and Services	IOC - Oceans	Worldwide	\$449.900,00
③	Ocean InfoHub	IOC - Oceans	Worldwide with focus on Africa, Latin America and SIDS	\$1.191.915,00
④	ODIN-AFRICA Integrated data and information products and services for Ocean Management	IOC - Oceans	Africa	\$3.309.438,60
⑤	SPINCAM – Southeast Pacific Data and Information Network	IOC - Oceans	Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama	\$2.436.818,10
⑥	Caribbean Marine Atlas	IOC - Oceans	Caribbean sea area	\$1.222.967,50
⑦	PacMAN - Pacific islands Marine bioinvasions Alert Network	IOC - Oceans	Pacific small island development states	\$856.822,00
⑧	SUMAMAD Sustainable Management of Marginal Drylands	MAB - Ecology	Bolivia, Burkina Faso, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Jordan, Pakistan, Syria, Tunisia, Uzbekistan	\$1.381.671,20
⑨	BRESEP – Biosphere reserves as a tool for coastal and island management in the South-East Pacific region	MAB - Ecology	Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama	\$1.034.290,00
⑩	ENHANS - Enhancing Natural Hazards Resilience in South America	Science sector	Pacific Latin America and the Caribbean	\$500.000,00
⑪	Be-Resilient – Biosphere Reserves as Observatories for Climate Change Adaptation in Southern Africa	MAB - Ecology IHP - Hydrology	Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe	\$590.000,00
⑫	Climate adaptation in Biosphere Reserves for sustainable water and ecosystem management	MAB - Ecology IHP - Hydrology	South Africa	\$1.800.000,00
⑬	MWAR-LAC – Managing Water Resources in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions of Latin-America and Caribbean	IHP - Hydrology	Latin America and the Caribbean	\$765.408,00
⑭	Andean Glaciers	IHP - Hydrology	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru	\$440.000,00
⑮	Water Security	IHP - Hydrology	Worldwide	\$661.895,04
⑯	CLIMWAR - Enhancing Climate Services for Improved Water Resources Management	IHP - Hydrology	Worldwide with focus on Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean	\$641.296,00
⑰	Strengthening cooperation and capacities in Southern Africa for Intangible Cultural Heritage	Intangible Cultural Heritage	Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Eswatini, Zambia and Zimbabwe	\$1.223.605,04
⑱	Projects in support of (natural) World Heritage in Africa	World Heritage	Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe	\$1.308.892,88
⑲	Projects in support of the World Heritage Marine Programme	World Heritage	Worldwide	\$1.199.038,64
⑳	Projects in support of cross-cutting issues for World Heritage (climate, digitisation, private sector)	World Heritage	Worldwide	\$739.256,92
㉑	Small scale activities and contributions to World Heritage	World Heritage	Worldwide (incl. Cambodia, Cuba)	\$245.093,35
㉒	Projects in support of heritage and emergency situations	Heritage emergencies	Syria, Iraq, Nepal	\$483.426,98
㉓	Projects in support of Underwater Cultural Heritage	Underwater Cultural Heritage	Worldwide (incl. Mozambique)	\$335.467,30
㉔	Contributions to the Culture sector (standard-setting work, #Unite4Heritage campaign)	Culture sector	Worldwide	\$313.462,95
㉕	HR4DEV – Human and Children's rights for Development	Education sector	Worldwide	\$200.000,00
㉖	Secondments	Secondments	Worldwide	\$908.960,70
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$29.238.205,40</b>





# World Heritage

Okavango Delta – a World Heritage site in which several projects were implemented

© Rainer von Brunn

## Flanders and World Heritage

UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention provides the framework for designating and protecting exceptional cultural and natural sites of outstanding universal value as World Heritage. Over the last decade, Flanders offered various voluntary contributions for a total amount of 3.5 million USD to the World Heritage Centre to the benefit of sites, State Parties and the Convention, in line with UNESCO's priorities.

Flanders focused especially on heritage projects in Africa as the continent is a UNESCO global priority, and on the development of the Marine Programme. In addition, the FUT also offers financial assistance for urgent needs such as heritage in emergency situations. Last but not least, the fund also provides support for cross-cutting issues for World Heritage such as climate change, digitisation and corporate social responsibility.

*“Flanders has been a long-term trusted partner of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and has provided significant financial support through its Flemish Funds in Trust for our activities. This support has notably been crucial for the development of the World Heritage marine programme. It also helped to develop the online State of Conservation database, providing easy access to all past Committee decisions on the World Heritage sites and which has become one of the most important working tools for the World Heritage Convention stakeholders. It has allowed conservation activities for natural sites in Africa and is now helping us to develop an innovative programme in response to the impact of climate change on natural World Heritage sites. The support provided from Flanders is a very good example on how the objective of international solidarity for the conservation of World Heritage sites can be implemented in a concrete way.”*

Dr Mechtild Rössler – Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre

## Natural World Heritage in Africa

Africa is home to an incredible amount of natural beauty and biodiversity, from the impressive jagged mountain peaks of the Ethiopian highlands to the seasonally flooded plains of the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Many of these globally significant sites are already included on the World Heritage List. However managing these large sites remains a challenge. Many are also threatened. Africa has the largest number of natural sites included in the List of World Heritage in Danger. Flanders is doing its part by supporting various projects for the capacity building of the management of natural World Heritage sites in Africa. Moreover, Flanders is also supporting initiatives for new African nominations and for the expansion of current World Heritage sites. <sup>(18)</sup>



## World Heritage Marine Programme

There are no less than 50 marine World Heritage sites, the most famous being the Galapagos Islands and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. All these fantastic sites with coral reefs, fjords, archipelagos or mangrove forests are feeling the pressure of climate change, pollution, fishing and industrial developments.

The World Heritage Committee has therefore launched a specific programme to improve monitoring of marine sites, enhance sustainable protection and establish a network of site managers, to facilitate the exchange of good practices. Flanders supported the programme by funding various projects from 2010 to 2020, for a total of about 1.2 million USD. The programme grew into a success story that convinced many other public and private donors. <sup>(19)</sup>



*“Thanks to the World Heritage Marine Programme and its partners, including the Government of Flanders, we’ve benefitted from regular exchanges with colleagues and renowned experts since 2010. These exchanges of what does and what does not work for conservation and management, both virtual and during landmark conferences, help us to embrace new concepts for our work and more importantly to engage in addressing one of the most severe threats our World Heritage sites have ever been faced with, climate change. The support of Flanders has contributed tremendously to us becoming a strong community of World Heritage managers that will be able to sustain the work and efforts required to protect our World Heritage site for future generations.”*

Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, CEO of the Seychelles Island Foundation

## Heritage emergencies

Flanders has supported various projects to protect heritage in acute situations, such as crisis response in Nepal following the 2015 earthquake. Flanders has also funded damage assessments on the Syrian World Heritage site of Palmyra and on religious heritage in Iraq of Sunni, Shiite and Christian communities. <sup>(22)</sup>

In recent years, several conflicts unfortunately resulted in the deliberate destruction of heritage, both to affect the identity of local communities and to offend the global community. Flanders therefore supported UNESCO’s flagship campaign #Unite4Heritage, by the organisation of a high-level event, a technical conference and advocacy materials. In addition, the Flemish Commission for UNESCO has launched the photo exhibitions ‘Culture under Attack’ (2014) and ‘Culture in Armed Conflict’ (2019) in close collaboration with the Dutch Commission for UNESCO. <sup>(24)</sup>

## Cross-cutting issues

Flanders provides support to the World Heritage Centre on important themes such as digitisation, corporate social responsibility and climate action. Flanders co-funded the setting-up of the State of Conservation (SOC) Information System, as well as the current endeavours to launch a climate action programme, including a worldwide fundraising campaign and funding scheme for natural World Heritage. Flanders also supports the efforts of the World Heritage Centre to raise awareness among the private sector for respecting and protecting World Heritage sites, through the promotion of the ‘No Go Commitment’. The International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), representing 27 of the largest mining companies in the world as well as major oil companies like Shell, Total and bp have already signed up to it. More recently, major banks and insurance companies have also integrated the commitment into their Corporate Social Responsibility policies. <sup>(20)</sup>



Palmyra, Syria



## Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southern Africa

Heritage is not only about exceptional buildings or outstanding natural beauty, but also about traditions, craftsmanship, festivals and rituals. UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage sets the international standard for the proper safeguarding of this 'living' heritage.

***“Even young people are getting interested in ICH.”***

Tokelo Mapena – former Culture Officer, UNESCO National Commission, Lesotho

Flanders has built up considerable expertise on the 2003 Convention and on the safeguarding of intangible heritage in general. This expertise has been mobilised for successive UNESCO projects to raise awareness, build capacities, and set up committees and inventories on intangible cultural heritage in Southern Africa. Between 2010 and 2020, Flanders supported several projects for a total of 1.2 million USD. As a result of these initiatives, seven countries in Southern Africa (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe) are working closely together within a platform for the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage ([www.saich.co.zw](http://www.saich.co.zw)). The projects also led to an increase in international assistance requests, as well as UNESCO nomination files from Southern Africa. <sup>(17)</sup>

***“We realize now that we have something quite unique.”***

Professor Herbert Chimhundu – Chinhoyi University of Technology – Zimbabwe



## Underwater Cultural Heritage

In addition to UNESCO's Conventions on World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2001 Convention protects Underwater Cultural Heritage, preserving shipwrecks over 100 years old. On the occasion of the centenary of the First World War – signalling the start of legal protection under the convention for shipwrecks sank during that period – Flanders funded several projects, including a conference, a commemorative event, educational initiatives and an exhibition on African and Asian underwater cultural heritage related to the First World War. <sup>(23)</sup>

More recently an introductory training programme was supported on the World Heritage site 'Mozambique Island'. The site is a hotspot for underwater cultural heritage with clear waters that are an ideal location for trainees from various African countries to learn how to protect and investigate underwater heritage in a practical way. With such training sessions, a contribution is made to the development of underwater archaeology in Africa and the protection of the continent's rich maritime past. <sup>(23)</sup>

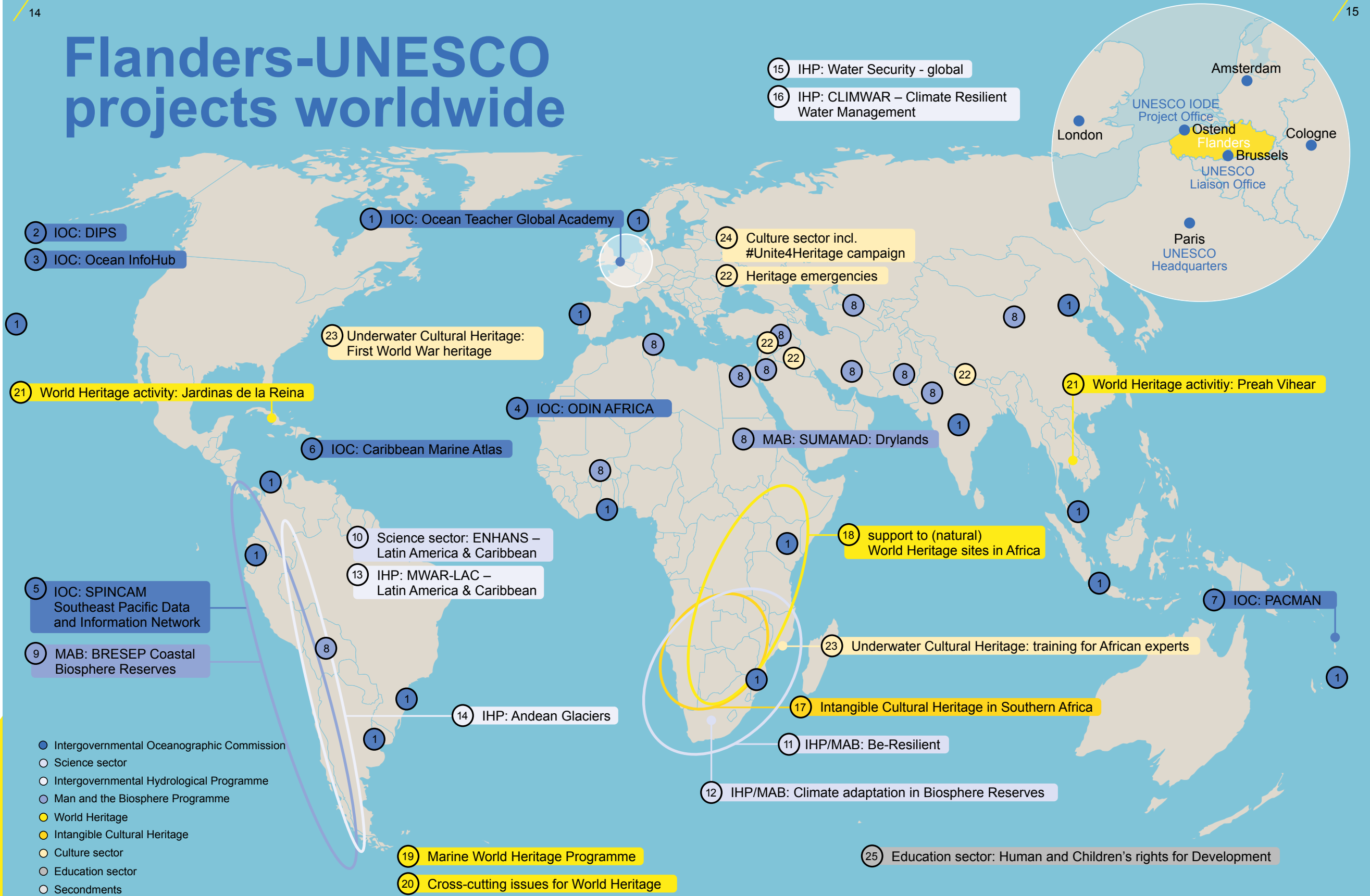


Underwater Cultural Heritage training in Mozambique

***“It was incredible to see, how much the Flemish support meant to the local scientists. To get international support not only financially, but also from experts, raised morale and motivation incredibly. They were immensely grateful.”***

Dr Ulrike Guérin - UNESCO Project Manager

# Flanders-UNESCO projects worldwide





# Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

UNESCO

## Flanders and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) is the UN mechanism responsible for global collaboration on ocean science. Its functions include fostering research on the ocean's role in climate change, the global ocean observing system, tsunami early warning systems and capacity development. Ultimately all these functions serve to enable a better understanding of the role of the ocean for society. Flanders is an active partner in the international ocean science community, including as a participant in IOC programmes and as a key donor for current, global IOC projects, such as the IOC Ocean InfoHub and the Ocean Teacher Global Academy.

*“I believe that the generous support by Flanders to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO is a demonstration of the deeply-rooted culture of cooperation, and the sense of responsibility, of this maritime nation for the future of the ocean. With this unfailing support we are becoming stronger in developing the capacity of ocean science and move towards sustainable integrated ocean management based on observations, data, and knowledge.”*

Dr Vladimir Ryabinin – Executive Secretary IOC and Assistant Director General UNESCO

## International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange

The IOC's Project Office for 'International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange' (IODE) is a worldwide reference for ocean data and information management and a cornerstone in the implementation of IOC programmes. Shortly after the devastating tsunami in South East Asia in 2004, Flanders decided to offer hosting of and support to the IODE Project Office. Since April 2005, the office is hosted at the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) in Ostend. Flanders supports its running costs for approximately 0.5 million EUR annually.

The Project Office supports the 'Ocean Data and Information Networks' (ODIN) as well as the IODE process for accreditation of national ocean data centres. It develops and hosts the 'World Ocean Database' and the 'Ocean Biodiversity Information System' (OBIS) – an online atlas holding distribution of documented marine fauna and flora. These global data systems are crucial resources in addressing the effects of climate change, protecting ocean biodiversity and supporting global ocean assessments. <sup>4</sup>

*“With structural support from Flanders, the IOC was able to develop ODIN-AFRICA as its first uniform 'Ocean Data and Information Network' at continental level, and create the African Marine Atlas”*

Mr Mika Odido - IOC Coordinator in Africa



## Ocean Science Capacity Building

For Flanders the human dimension of marine science is fundamental. Much of our support buttresses the IOC's capacity development strategy, such as through the 'Ocean Teacher Global Academy' (OTGA) and the 'Ocean InfoHub' (OIH) projects. Both initiatives focus on supporting early career scientists and young professionals as well as on remedying gender disparity by increasing equal access to information, technologies and opportunities, in line with the Agenda2030.

***“The OTGA regional implementation strategy makes training programmes self-driven, validating local expertise and connecting to regional and local priorities and needs related to ocean science, observation and data/information management.”***

Captain Francisco Arias Isaza,  
OTGA Regional Training Centre for  
Latin America and the Caribbean

With support from Flanders since 2002, the IODE Project Office has been able to help set up and operate regional and specialised training centres, forming a global network for capacity development and operating in various major languages. The 'Ocean Teacher Global Academy' supports training programmes related to ocean research, observations and services in all IOC Member States. In their regional setting, they can respond to regional needs and strengthen local expertise. <sup>1</sup>

The 'Ocean InfoHub' matches providers of marine technology and know-how with those in need of such capacities by linking networks and improving the interoperability of existing information systems of various organisations. 'Ocean InfoHub' enables a digital ecosystem where users can discover content and services, while also becoming content creators themselves. Though global in scope, its initial focus is on Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Pacific Small Island Developing States. <sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, 'Ocean InfoHub' also assists IOC Member States to report on ocean science capacities through the Global Ocean Science Report. The second edition (2020) was prepared under co-chairmanship of the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) and the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI).

***“With the production of Global Ocean Science Report 2020, the global ocean research community shows that it stands ready to deliver on the Ocean Decade's mission and goals. The Report provides the baseline that will allow us to measure progress in ocean science funding, research capacity, transfer of technology, scientific output and much more.”***

Ms Jacqueline Uku - Kenya Marine  
and Fisheries Research Institute



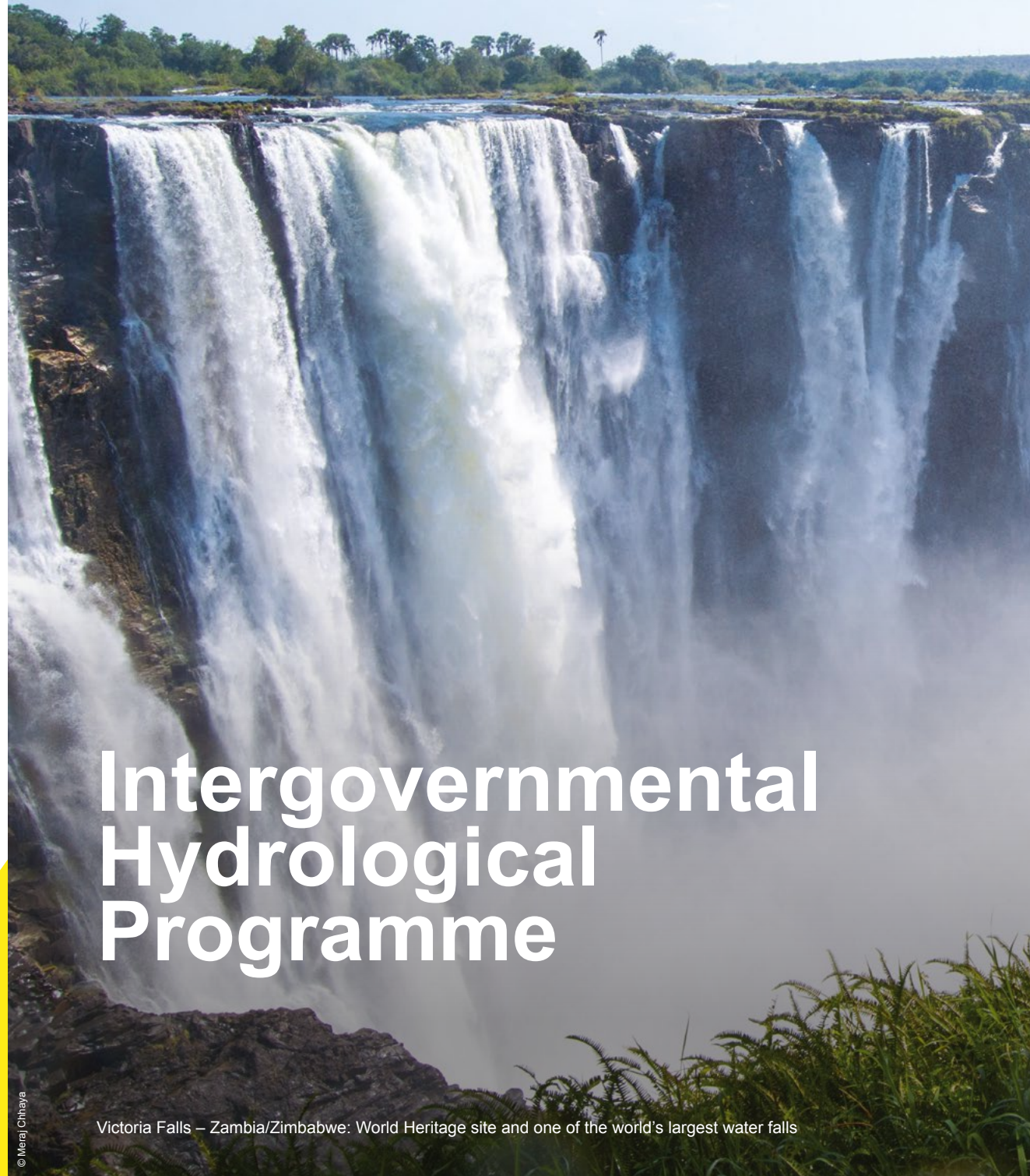
## Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Resources

Ocean science is a key ingredient for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 on 'Life Below Water', and arguably many other SDGs. Only when marine knowledge is taken into account in decision-making can ocean resources be used sustainably. This requires multi-stakeholder partnerships related to ocean and coastal matters. Flanders has facilitated such sustained partnerships in several regions with financial support and expertise. Milestones were achieved with the development of tools such as the 'African Marine Atlas', <sup>4</sup> 'the 'Caribbean Marine Atlas', <sup>6</sup> and the 'Southeast Pacific Coastal and Marine Atlas and Assessments'. <sup>5</sup> Ideally, the legacy of such projects equips coastal states to better address their national and regional marine environmental challenges. Furthermore, IOC data repositories were harnessed for global assessments of marine biodiversity or harmful algal blooms through the DIPS project. <sup>2</sup>

## UN Decade for Ocean Science

The United Nations has proclaimed a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) to gather ocean stakeholders worldwide behind a common framework, connecting ocean science with societal needs. The IOC plays a key role as coordinator of the UN Ocean Decade and can rely on Flanders as a loyal partner. Flanders' broad ocean science community, including representatives from public and private bodies, and young scientists voiced their readiness to contribute to the UN Ocean Decade and identified key action areas. Flanders' tradition in open science, sharing data and infrastructures, and working in a multidisciplinary environment, as well as its commitment to support capacity development through IOC for more equitable access to ocean science will be guiding principles in its contribution to the Ocean Decade.





# Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme

Victoria Falls – Zambia/Zimbabwe: World Heritage site and one of the world's largest water falls

## Flanders and the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme

Although our 'Blue Planet' contains enormous amounts of water, only a small fraction is freshwater, which sustains humans and life on land most directly. Climate change is expected to have a large impact on the availability of and demand for water resources, which makes integrated water management a necessity.

The main objective of UNESCO's 'Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme' (IHP) is to put science into action required for water security. Flanders has supported various IHP projects focusing on water security and on three IHP thematic areas: 'water-related disasters and hydrological changes', 'addressing water scarcity and quality' and 'water education'. Each of the IHP projects supported recently by FUST featured a strong element of preparation for climate change adaptation and capacity development.

In addition, projects often included hydrological expertise from Flanders, in particular through the Belgian Committee for IHP and from relevant university departments where doctoral and post-doctoral researchers joined forces with those of other project partners.

***“Achieving and maintaining water security is increasingly challenging under current climatic variability, especially in vulnerable regions. Therefore, UNESCO’s IHP initiated several international projects and activities to build capacity and integrate the science-based understanding of climate impacts on water security into mitigation and adaptation policies with the funding support from Flanders.”***

Mr. Abou Amani, Director of the Water Sciences Division and Secretary of Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP)



The Andes mountain range counts many glaciers: 'the water towers' of South America



## Water Resources Management

In 2002-2009 Flanders supported the establishment of the CAZALAC Regional Centre (IHP Category II centre) in Chile. In the period 2012-2016, the project 'Managing Water Resources in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions of Latin America and Caribbean' (MWAR-LAC) built on the CAZALAC network of interested organisations and achieved several important milestones for water stakeholders in targeted areas. These achievements include the showcasing of effective pathways for integrated drought management and the implementation of regional solutions, such as the 'Latin American and Caribbean Drought Atlas', as well as the 'Latin American and Caribbean Flood and Drought Monitor', that provides early warning capacities for all countries in the region. The project also strengthened the capacities of local stakeholders to address the multi-faceted aspects of water management in

drylands, with training for 300 participants from 26 countries in the region.<sup>(13)</sup>

The CLIMWAR project ('Enhancing Climate Services for Improved Water Resources Management in Vulnerable Regions to Climate Change'), supported by Flanders since 2016, provides a framework for addressing the various challenges at the national and at the local watershed level related to climate risks to water resources. The project includes strengthening climate services, building the capacities of national hydrometeorological agencies, and providing outreach to stakeholders to improve resilience to climate variability and change. Furthermore, integrated climate services are implemented in/by Member States (particularly in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean), in support of proactive drought and flood management strategies and policies.<sup>(16)</sup>



Cracked earth and Licancabur volcano at the Atacama Desert, Chile



Publications 'Climate Risk Informed Decision Analysis' (CRIDA) and 'Andean Glacier and Water Atlas'

## Water Security

When conceived in 2014, the 'Water Security' project set out to develop adaptation strategies for water security impacted by climate change, with particular attention for vulnerable areas such as mountains, arid and semi-arid regions.<sup>(15)</sup>

During the project, more than 850 stakeholders from 80 countries were involved through training workshops, outreach, communication and other activities. In total, 25 events were organised to enable and raise awareness of the issues of sustainable water management, water harvesting and remote sensing. More than 50 partners across the world, representing UNESCO Category II centres, chairs and experts from IHP networks as well as academic and scientific institutions, were mobilised in the implementation of the project.

Among the greatest accomplishments of the project is the development of the 'Climate Risk Informed Decision Analysis' (CRIDA), which provides a collaborative process for risk-informed decision making.

This methodology received an A+ rating from the World Bank Resilience Rating System in 2021. Moreover, the 'Midsummer Drought Atlas for Central America and the Caribbean' was released, improving the understanding of the drought phenomenon in the region. In addition, a comprehensive nine-step methodology to construct a drought vulnerability atlas at the national level was developed and applied to Chile. Finally, the project contributed to strengthening drought monitoring and early warning capacities by establishing and maintaining the drought observatories in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The role of water stored in glaciers - the 'mountain water towers' of the world - was addressed in the context of climate change in the project 'The Impact of Glacier Retreat in the Andes, International Multidisciplinary Network for Adaptation Strategies'. It intensified scientific collaboration between the glaciologists working in the Andes region. One of its outputs was the widely publicised 'Andean Glacier and Water Atlas' published jointly with GRID Arendal.<sup>(14)</sup>



# Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks

Galapago Biosphere Reserve (Ecuador), took part in the SPINCAM and BRESEP projects

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## Man and the Biosphere Programme

UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda for enhancing economic development that is socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable. The programme's biosphere reserves are living labs for such sustainable development. Flanders support to MAB in the last decade had strong links with water management (IHP) and integrated coastal area management (IOC).

## Drylands and Desertification

In relation to drylands and desertification, the SUMAMAD project that ended in 2013, studied and promoted the sustainable management and conservation of marginal drylands across the globe, including sites in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Jordan, Pakistan, Syria, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan. Drylands are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Yet, it is possible to combat desertification by pursuing sustainable management, rehabilitating degraded areas, and educating youth. SUMAMAD promoted on-site studies, education and conservation, with the objective of improving both local productivity and the circumstances for local populations.<sup>8</sup>

## Coastal and Island Management

With regard to coastal biosphere reserves, the BRESEP project ('Biosphere Reserves as a Tool for Coastal and Island Management in the South East Pacific Region') was funded by Flanders to create and strengthen biosphere reserves in coastal zones in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Peru. Interacting with an IOC project in the same region (SPINCAM), jointly executed with the regional commission CPPS, the BRESEP community built capacities on themes such as biodiversity, marine and coastal management, and sustainable socio-economic activities for the local populations.<sup>9</sup>



Juan Fernandez Biosphere Reserve, Chile

*"The SPINCAM and BRESEP projects have largely benefited from their joint work on data and information products, the development of concrete indicators to support the characterization of coastal areas, the collaboration on the development of marine spatial planning and management plans for protected areas, and joint training courses."*

Maria Rosa Cardenas Tomažič,  
UNESCO Programme Specialist MAB



## Synergies on Water and Ecosystem Management

Recently, interesting cross-overs between the IHP and MAB programmes were established in ongoing projects in Southern Africa. The FUST-funded 'Be-Resilient' project addresses information needs of biosphere reserve managers, allowing them to monitor and address the effects of climate change on these important ecosystems across nine different countries.<sup>(11)</sup> In addition, Flanders approved financial support in 2020 to a major project by UNESCO in South Africa, addressing climate risks and building adaptive capacity in five of the country's biosphere reserves. This should improve both sustainable water and ecosystem management.<sup>(12)</sup>

***“With the support of Flanders, UNESCO has been able to promote the concept of Geoparks and provide training in Latin America. As a result, the number of sites in that region has strongly increased over the last years. We hope to replicate this success in other regions with strong potential: Africa in the first place. We appreciate the sustained efforts of Flanders to support UNESCO in this important strategy.”***

Kristof Vandenberghe – UNESCO  
Chief of the Earth Sciences and  
Geo-hazards Risk Reduction Section

## International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme

The Global Geoparks became a UNESCO programme in 2015, demonstrating their capacity of preserving geological heritage of international value, through a bottom-up approach with the local communities. While there are many geoparks located in Asia and Europe, the concept is less established elsewhere. With interest in geoparks blossoming in its own country, Flanders decided to open FUST funding to the UNESCO's International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP). Small-scale funding was already provided for the promotion, a better understanding, capacity building and the submission of candidates for geoparks in Latin America and Africa. These continents are extremely rich in geological features with enormous potential for creating societal value through geoparks.



Geopark Kütralkura, Chile

## Offices



**Flanders**  
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### Flanders Department of Economy, Science & Innovation

The department provides the financial support to the 'Flanders UNESCO Science Trust Fund' (FUST) and is responsible for the project selection and monitoring with UNESCO, on behalf of the Flemish Minister for Science. FUST does not have a specific geographical scope, but focuses on support for UNESCO's natural science programmes, including the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). The department also funds the IOC-IODE Project Office in Ostend (Flanders, Belgium).

[www.ewi-vlaanderen.be/en](http://www.ewi-vlaanderen.be/en)



**Flanders**  
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### Flanders Department of Chancellery & Foreign Affairs

On behalf of the Flemish Minister for Foreign Affairs, the department provides the financial support to the 'Flanders UNESCO Trust Fund' (FUT) and is responsible for the project selection and monitoring with UNESCO. At first, the FUT funded various projects (excluding scientific project funded through FUST), but since 2010 it has maintained a strategic focus on heritage with a geographical preference for Africa. The department is also responsible for the Delegation of Flanders to UNESCO in Paris.

[www.fdfa.be/unesco](http://www.fdfa.be/unesco)



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### Delegation of Flanders in Paris

Flanders has two diplomatic delegations in Paris: a bilateral one to France and a multilateral one to UNESCO, the OECD and the Council of Europe. The latter's fully fledged diplomatic staff is formally accredited to UNESCO and the OECD within the Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of Belgium to the OECD and UNESCO.

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[www.flandersinfrance.be](http://www.flandersinfrance.be)



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**Flemish  
Commission  
for UNESCO  
in Belgium**

### Flemish Commission for UNESCO in Belgium

As a national commission for UNESCO, the Flemish Commission for UNESCO in Belgium links the Flemish Community (public authorities, civil society, experts, etc.) to UNESCO's priorities, programmes and networks. It is the official point of contact for any advice or information on UNESCO in Flanders. The commission is strongly committed to communicating on Flanders' cooperation with UNESCO, which is why it publishes this brochure.

[www.unesco.be](http://www.unesco.be)





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**Flämische  
UNESCO-  
Kommission  
in Belgien**

The Government of Flanders (Belgium) and UNESCO signed a cooperation agreement in 1998. Ever since, Flanders has been a loyal partner to UNESCO and a **consistent top 25 donor** to the organisation. Between 2010 and 2020 Flanders voluntarily contributed 29 million USD to various specific projects and flagship initiatives on **heritage** and on **sciences** – and UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in particular. Over the last decade, there has been a consistent focus on capacity building, on science-based management of natural resources for sustainable development, and on marine perspectives, with **Africa and Latin America** as main geographical scope.

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