IF Sustainability Project

SAFEGUARDING
UNESCO NATURAL
WORLD HERITAGE SITES
The world faces significant challenges across a wide spectrum of economic, social and environmental matters. The Olympic Movement has both an opportunity and a duty to actively contribute to the global sustainability debate in line with its vision of “Building a better world through sport”.

With this in mind, and in response to Olympic Agenda 2020, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) launched the International Federation (IF) Sustainability Project in 2016 to obtain an overview of IFs’ sustainability initiatives – identifying common topics, challenges and good practices while also sharing information among the IFs.

One outcome of the project was a series of case studies illustrating how IFs are actively contributing towards a more sustainable world.

As part of the IOC’s objective to “profile the role of the Olympic Movement in sustainability through the aggregation of information and collective reporting”, it was agreed that the identification and sharing of information contributes to the holistic integration of sustainability and should be continued. These case studies, which now also showcase National Olympic Committees’ (NOCs) best practices, form part of a strategic support system given to the Olympic Movement through the IOC Sustainability Strategy.

Each case study is aligned with one or more of the IOC’s five sustainability focus areas: infrastructure & natural sites; sourcing & resource management; mobility; workforce; and climate. They are also aligned with one or more of the United Nations’ (UN) framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a common framework for organisations to explain how they plan to contribute to sustainable development and tackle the key global sustainability challenges.

This framework is pivotal for the Olympic Movement – in September 2015, the UN General Assembly confirmed the important role that sport can play in supporting the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.”

Paragraph 37, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
The World Heritage sites (WHS) are designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for their “outstanding universal value”. They represent unique natural and cultural sources of life, and play a vital role for current and future generations.

WHS are grouped into three categories: cultural sites, natural sites, and mixed sites that combine cultural and natural value. A total of 229 natural and mixed WHS cover around 2.79 million km² and provide both fresh water and jobs to 11 million people. They also store 10.5 billion tonnes of carbon, thus adding to the regulation of our climate both locally and globally.

Around 50 per cent of all natural WHS are threatened by human activities – including the organisation of sporting events. By acknowledging the negative impact that such events can have on certain sites, The World Rowing Federation (FISA) has implemented a policy to protect natural and mixed WHS with the support of the WWF.

World Rowing now assesses any potential impact on the sites of World Rowing-sanctioned events in advance. As part of the bidding process for a World Rowing event, World Rowing and its stakeholders each NOC/IF sustainability project contributes to one or more of the IOC’s sustainability focus areas and one or more of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**OBJECTIVES**

World Rowing has prioritised the protection of UNESCO World Heritage sites in order to:

- Use sport as a means for protecting and highlighting the importance of WHS.
- Implement a planning policy to provide assurances that World Rowing-sanctioned activities will not negatively impact WHS and buffer zones.
- Raise awareness about the importance of WHS and inspire other IFs to join the pledge.

“AS ROWING IS A SPORT THAT IS INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO NATURE, WE RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING NATURAL SITES. WORLD ROWING HOPES THAT OTHER INTERNATIONAL SPORTING ORGANISATIONS WILL FOLLOW IN COMMITTING TO PRESERVE THESE AREAS OF THE WORLD.”

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE ROLLAND, FISA PRESIDENT
implement a due diligence process to determine if a WHS or its associated buffer zone – a tract of land between a WHS and a non-protected area – is located in or near to the potential event location and to what extent it would be affected by the event. If this assessment is not possible for a particular site, World Rowing will refrain from selecting and using it. This procedure applies to both existing and new event locations. Sites that are in the process of being recognised as WHS are subject to investigations with the local government to evaluate if they are compatible with rowing activities.

By recognising both the potential negative impacts of sporting events and the ability of WHS to support sustainable development, World Rowing has taken a leadership position in this area by incorporating a venue selection policy that protects natural and mixed WHS. This will ensure that events and activities under World Rowing’s umbrella will not negatively risk nor impact upon these unique locations and their attached buffer zones.

• Working in partnership with UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) gives legitimacy to such pledges.
• Partnering with an organisation such as the WWF leads to more support in activities related to the pledge.
• Implementing a policy to protect WHS is a small action from an IF that greatly helps to protect these globally important locations.