

SESSION - 3. UNIVERSALISM AND DIVERSITY: REREADING THE
DOCTRINAL DOCUMENTS FROM DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES - A
DISCUSSION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VENICE CHARTER (AND
OTHER RELATED DOCTRINAL DOCUMENTS) THROUGH DIVERSE
EPISTEMOLOGIES AND PERSPECTIVES, ACKNOWLEDGING THE
CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF HERITAGE AND EXPLORING CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH.

**HERITAGE CONSERVATION STANDARDS FOR GLOBAL SOUTH: IS THE
VENICE CHARTER STILL RELEVANT?**

Clara Arokiasamy (clara.kalai@outlook.com)

Title: Shaping Heritage Conservation Standards for Global South: Is the Venice Charter Still Relevant?

The Venice Charter (VC) adopted in 1964 was a response to the long-standing call among architectural heritage experts in the Global North (GS), in particular western Europe, for an internationally accepted framework for defining ancient monuments and sites and the provision of guiding principles for their preservation and restoration. In the following year, Piero Gazzola et al, who were part of Western Europe's architectural movement, founded ICOMOS to promote the VC. Both, the Charter and ICOMOS were framed within Western ideology about cultural heritage to undertake conservation in post-world war Europe. This framing inevitably resulted in Eurocentric policies, structures and processes and consequently lacked relevance for the conservation of heritage

in the Global South (GS) with diverse cultural, social and spiritual values and expressions relating to place and nature, rather than just monuments. The creation of regional instruments such as the Nara Document and the Burra Charter to reflect differing social, cultural and spiritual values in conservation, while responding in small part to the complexities of GS' needs, have had limited impact. ICOMOS's ad hoc efforts to draw attention to Indigenous rights and rights-based approaches through dedicated working groups and the occasional capacity building efforts are still in the main led by "experts" from the GN, who try to 'empower' GS, but from an external view point.

Additionally, the VC has provided a strong platform for the GN to project a confident and seemingly co-ordinated collective voice on heritage and conservation. The GS's voice on heritage conservation, in contrast, is diverse, multiple, disparate and incohesive, and sometimes overshadowed by a colonial past and political realities. Professionals in the GS have not had a similar opportunity as their counterparts in the GN to undertake a collective and systematic interrogation of the relevance of VC to their diverse heritages in the GS. This is in part due to the extensive geographical areas the GS covers globally and the lack of data/resource and repositories and infrastructures to facilitate transversal working/collaboration in the GS.

GSEN is a collective of individual ICOMOS members from the GS and members of the GS living in the GN who came together in November 2023 to promote institutional and structural equalities in the development and delivery of international standards for heritage conservation and their relevance for the GS. This session is underpinned by the Board's advice in response to GSEN's proposal to the Board in March 2024 for the establishment of a GS transversal network: "Advisory Committee and AGA in Ouro Preto, will also be an excellent venue to continue this (GSEN's) discussion with the participation of the entire ICOMOS family."

GSEN will deliver this proposal through a hybrid panel session. It will comprise six presentations and focus on the following four key areas which formed critical components of GSEN's proposal to ICOMOS Board.

- i. A scrutiny of existing conservation principles and construct a new conservation theory for ICOMOS's multicultural and international profile
- ii. The need for a collective voice and self-representation by the GS

- iii. The creation of research, training and development resources and repositories in the GS
- iv. The Promotion of South-to South Co-operation for cultural heritage sustainable development as defined by the United Nations

The 90 minutes session will be divided into two parts. Each part will comprise three 10 minutes presentations from three panellists exploring some of the above topics and a 15 minutes discussion with the audience. The session will be moderated by a chair who will introduce and conclude the session and glean for actions on a way forward.

Panel Chair/Moderator

- Clara Arokiasamy OBE, President ICOMOS-UK, Founder and Chair Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee at ICOMOS-UK, Independent Consultant

Speakers/Panellists

- Kian Boon Tiong, Convenor of Triennial General Assembly 2026 in Malaysia, Immediate Past President, ICOMOS Malaysia
- Dr Aurelio Sanchez Suárez, Coordinador de la Unidad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Autonoma de Yucatan,
- Dr Bijan Rouhani, Vice President ICORP, Senior Researcher, Oxford University
- Dr Ishanlosen Odiaua, President, ADCOM, Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank
- Dr Hossam Mahdy, Vice President CIAV, Independent Consultant
- Alyssa Barry, Co-ordinator for Emerging Professionals in the Africa Region, Architect-urbanist, African Cultural Heritage Specialist

GSEN's terms GN and GS, framed within the UN's definition, are not a reference to geographical groupings of countries in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. For the purpose of this session, GS refers to countries in: Africa, Asia and Pacific, Arab and Latin America and the Caribbean regions.

Palavras-chave: global south exchange network (gsen); global north and global south; structural and institutional equalities; transversal collaboration in global south.