



### **30.05.2016 - How can you call this planet earth, when it is quite clearly water?**

Underwater Cultural Heritage encompasses all traces of human existence that lie or have lain underwater and have a cultural or historical character. The richness of the world's underwater cultural heritage is often underestimated. While over the last century, archaeological sites on land have yielded an abundance of information on the development of civilisations, the oceans, which cover the larger part of our planet, still retain many of their secrets. Though the sites contain a unique testament to the spirit of our ancestors for exploration, many shipwrecks and ruins of cities remain lost to the waves, where they are much better preserved than similar sites found on land.

Nonetheless, looting of underwater cultural heritage and the destruction of its context are increasing rapidly and threaten to deprive humanity of this heritage. The waves have protected shipwrecks and ruins for centuries, but improvements in diving technology have made them more accessible and therefore increasingly vulnerable. The pillaging and dispersion of archaeological heritage is no longer restricted to land-based sites with treasure hunting now taking place under water. Nevertheless, while many States have heightened the preservation of

their heritage on land, most of their underwater cultural heritage remains unprotected.

The [#UnderWaterHeritage](#) campaign by [UNESCO](#) highlights the urgent need to preserve and protect such heritage, a priority set by the 2001 Convention on the [Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage](#)

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A UNESCO Regional Meeting for Northern European States will take place on 8 June 2016 in Copenhagen, open to State representatives only. The regional meeting aims to promote the 2001 Convention and its scientific standards among UNESCO Member States. It will be followed by a scientific colloquium on 9 June 2016, open to all interested scientists, to discuss experience with rendering underwater cultural heritage accessible.

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