

# UNESCO COURIER: FUTURE BUILDING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE HABITAT

The UNESCO Courier Magazine has dedicated a large space in its January-March 2024 issue to a fundamental topic for sustainable development such as architecture for tomorrow, with articles that present promising and inspiring initiatives that are carried out with creativity in different countries. The construction sector today represents 39% of global CO2 emissions. This reality illustrates the need to carry out a "green revolution" in the field of architecture. To achieve this, several possibilities are open: the adaptation to the particularities of the climate, the transformation of existing buildings and their uses, or the use of sustainable and non-polluting materials. The UNESCO Courier invites its readers to discover some of these initiatives that flourish in various parts of the world. Through the editorial of the Magazine, Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO, calls on the international community to urgently invest in creating a more sustainable and inclusive model of architecture on a global scale that makes it possible to confront climate change.

## Editorial

Architecture is an expression of the way we want to live and engages our future. It is thus at the heart of contemporary issues – in particular sustainable development. One figure sums up the scale of the challenge: the building sector – including construction and energy consumption – represents 39% of global CO2 emissions. This illustrates the urgent need to lead a "green revolution" in architecture, not only to preserve our planet, but also to make it a more pleasant place to live. There is not just one way to achieve this: adapting to the specificities of climate, transforming existing buildings and their uses, or choosing sustainable and non-polluting materials are all options for architects, urban planners, engineers and decision makers. In this new and exciting issue of The UNESCO Courier, you will find inspiring and promising initiatives which have been boldly and creatively explored. The idea of an alternative to "all-concrete" is certainly not new. Certain techniques, like the skills involved in the conservation of wooden architecture in Japan, inscribed as humanity's intangible cultural heritage, are still practiced today. Through initiatives such as the World Heritage earthen architecture programme, UNESCO is promoting and preserving other traditional knowledge, particularly in Africa. In the 1950s, visionary architects already practiced what was not yet called "sustainable architecture", such as Hassan Fathy and his New Gurna village at Luxor, designed with local materials. In 1960s India, Laurie Baker invented low-cost, environmentally-friendly construction. Since then, the innovations are multiplying: a wooden tower in Norway, Rio de Janeiro's museum of



tomorrow with its systems of solar energy control and water recycling systems, and even a modular building accessible to everyone in Canada, to name but a few. But the climate emergency urges us to go further and faster, to create a global architecture model that is more sustainable and inclusive. Architecture is not limited to designing structures in wood, stone or glass; it is the reflection of our societies as well as our aspirations to build a better world. In an interview with the Courier, German-Burkinabé architect Diébédo Francis Kéré, winner of the Pritzker Architecture Prize and entrusted by UNESCO with the design of its future Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Property, says he wants to “work with nature and not against it”. What if this were to become the watchword of the profession? Audrey Azoulay Director-General of UNESCO

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