

UN weighs Great Barrier Reef reprieve for Australia

July 31 2023



Australia hopes to avoid the Reef's inclusion on UNESCO's 'in danger' list.

The UN's cultural agency UNESCO said Monday its experts recommended giving Australia more time to boost protection of the Great Barrier Reef which the organization's World Heritage Committee has threatened to declare "in danger".

On the basis of progress made by Australia, the [experts](#) said the natural wonder's current state should not be discussed at this year's World Heritage Committee meeting in September in Riyadh, but instead be revisited in 2024.

However the experts, whose advice still needs to be approved by the Committee, said surveillance of the Reef would be strengthened and Australia needed to submit a progress report on the implementation of UNESCO's recommendations by February.

Climate change is threatening the Great Barrier Reef's ecosystem, causing severe bleaching and damaging its corals.

Since 2016, the Great Barrier Reef has been hit by three mass bleaching events, during which heat-stressed corals expel algae living in their tissues, draining them of their vibrant colors.

UNESCO said last month it welcomed Australia's commitments to protect the Reef, with the [government](#) pledging 4.4 billion Australian dollars (\$2.9 billion).

The fate of the [reef](#) has been a recurrent source of tension between UNESCO and Australian authorities, with the World Heritage Committee threatening to put the world's largest coral system on a list of "in danger" global heritage sites.



Climate change is damaging the Great Barrier Reef's corals.

Behind-the-scenes diplomacy and lobbying from Australia have avoided such a move and commitments from the Labor government of Anthony Albanese have drawn praise from the Paris-based organization.

Albanese's center-left government, which ended nearly a decade of conservative rule in May last year, has also blocked a planned coal mine because it would endanger the reef and has scrapped funding for two dams in Queensland.

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the country's premier tourist drawcards and any inclusion on the in-danger list was seen as risking putting off

international visitors.

UNESCO began a monitoring mission on the reef in March 2022 to assess whether the site was being adequately protected.

On Monday, UNESCO again stressed the Great Barrier Reef's "urgent conservation needs" which it said required "broad mobilization".

It still remained "possible" to inscribe the Reef on the list of world heritage sites in danger, it warned.

© 2023 AFP

Citation: UN weighs Great Barrier Reef reprieve for Australia (2023, July 31) retrieved 24 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-07-great-barrier-reef-reprieve-australia.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.