

## International Geneva: harnessing support for the humanity's cultural heritage



International Colloquium “*Combating Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage, Restitution and Preservation*” at the Ethnographic Museum of Geneva; ©UNESCO GLO/Bobir Tukhtabayev

UNESCO is taking measures to mobilize the international community in support of its work to safeguard the common cultural heritage of humanity. There is a growing expression of support in Geneva to the global action to protect culture as a security and development imperative.

This was clearly highlighted when the Director-General made a powerful appeal in support of cultural heritage and diversity, especially in conflict zones, at the High-level Panel on “*Human Rights and the Protection of Cultural Diversity*” at the University of Geneva on 31 March 2015.

“What unites us is stronger than our differences. We must be all united for safeguarding cultural treasures from destruction. We must do it every day, everywhere”, said Ms Bokova. Her words were echoed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Zaid Al Hussein, and other personalities at this event, which gathered over 500 participants from the diplomatic community, international organizations and civil society.

The International Colloquium on the theme “*Combating Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage, Restitution and Preservation*” at the Ethnographic Museum of Geneva, on 29 April 2015, offered an excellent platform to highlight the proactive role of UNESCO in the fight against looting and trafficking of cultural treasures in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 2199..

UNESCO’s objectives and activities for the protection of Syria’s cultural heritage under international humanitarian law was discussed and appreciated at the UNOG Library Talks on “*Salient Victims of War: Cultural Heritage in Conflicts and Crises*” that took place in the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 5 February 2015.

At the opening of the exhibition “*Manuscripts of Timbuktu: Protecting Treasures*” during the Human Rights Council on 5 March 2015, Mr Ridha Bouadib, Ambassador of the Organization of la Francophonie, expressed admiration for UNESCO’s exemplary work in Mali, while Ambassador Aya Thiam Diallo, Permanent Delegate of Mali to the UN in Geneva, paid tribute to UNESCO’s work in rebuilding 14 mausoleums that were destroyed in Timbuktu and

in safeguarding irreplaceable manuscripts. She said that *“our response to barbarism is to develop culture through the sharing of knowledge as a force of dialogue”*.

When a group of students from the Netherlands’ International Law Associations visited the UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva on 6 May 2015 for an information session, they all expressed their firm commitment to the protection of humanity’s cultural heritage and pledged full support for the Global Campaign *#Unite4heritage*.

Further commitments to the protection of the cultural heritage were expressed at the meeting on *“Protection of cultural heritage and humanitarian action: opportunities, difficulties and complementarities”*, that was organized at the Permanent Mission of France in Geneva on 22 May 2015.

UNESCO continues galvanizing further support in International Geneva to the Organization’s efforts to harness the power of culture to reconcile people and bring them together, because *“culture is much more than monuments and books – culture is who we are”*.

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