

**Statement of the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee for the Protection of
Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict established by the Second
Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention**

The Chairperson of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, acting in accordance with Decision 9.COM 3 adopted by the Committee at its ninth Meeting (UNESCO Headquarters, 18 – 19 December 2014), issues the following Statement on behalf of the Committee:

STATEMENT

The Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (“the Committee”) condemns in the strongest possible terms the deliberate destruction of the ancient temples of Baalshamin and Bel, iconic parts of the Syrian site of Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built nearly 2,000 years ago, the temples of Baalshamin and Bel represented the richness of the Syrian history and culture.

The Committee considers the systematic destruction of the Syrian cultural heritage a blunt violation of international law, which may be qualified as a war crime and, for once more, urges the international community to unite and intensify its efforts to confront this unprecedented situation, caused by terrorist groups, such as ISIS.

The Committee reiterates emphatically the critical importance of strengthening safeguarding of and respect for cultural property under any circumstances. In particular, the Committee stresses the importance of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols, and calls upon all the parties to the conflict to comply with provisions of its Article 4, applicable equally to non-international armed conflicts.

4 September 2015