

The 21 May 2015 meeting of the Bureau of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict ("the Committee") – summary record

On 21 May 2015, the Bureau of the Committee held its meeting with a view to preparing the tenth Meeting of the Committee (UNESCO Headquarters, 10 - 11 December 2015). In addition to Ms Artemis Papathanasiou (Greece), Chairperson of the Committee; Ms Rosa Moreira de Lemoine (El Salvador), Rapporteur of the Committee, and the other four members of the Bureau (Armenia, Cambodia, Egypt, and Mali), several observers such as Belgium, Georgia, and Palestine attended the meeting.

In accordance with the provisional agenda, the Bureau discussed the following issues:

- Requests for the granting of enhanced protection (Thebes and its Necropolis) submitted by Egypt;
- Strengthening synergies between the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention and 1972 World Heritage Convention;
- Distinctive emblem for cultural property under enhanced protection; and,
- The Committee's role in protecting cultural property in Iraq and Syria.

The main points of the discussion may be summarized as follows:

Opening of the meeting:

The meeting was opened by Ms Mechtild Rössler, the Deputy Director of the Division for Heritage, who provided an update on Secretariat's activities since the December 2014 meeting of the Committee and presented a brief overview of requests for the granting of enhanced protection for World Heritage sites Thebes and its Necropolis submitted by Egypt and Tomb of Askia submitted by Mali. Afterwards she turned to the issue of strengthening synergies between the 1999 Second Protocol and the 1972 World Heritage Convention, and the creation of a distinctive emblem for cultural property under enhanced protection. Furthermore, Ms Rössler presented the document "*Mémento sur la protection des biens culturels en cas de conflit armé*" prepared by France which referred among other things, to the protection of cultural property in Mali and Kosovo. Finally, she mentioned the situation in Palmyra and suggested that the role of the Committee in the conflict situations in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen be reinforced.

Requests for the granting of enhanced protection (Thebes and its Necropolis) submitted by Egypt:

The representative of Egypt, Mr Ali Ahmed Ali, General Director of Repatriation Department of Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, provided an update on the Egyptian request for the granting of enhanced protection to Thebes and its Necropolis, the World Heritage cultural site. He went on to say that the Egyptian government is very interested in this issue and will therefore try to submit all the required documents by the deadline provided by the Secretariat (30 May 2015).

Strengthening Synergies between the 1999 Second Protocol and 1972 World Heritage Convention:

Ms Rössler provided an update on strengthening synergies between the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention by recalling Decision 9. COM 7 of the ninth meeting of the Committee inviting the Director-General to organize, at least once a year, a consultation meetings of the Chairpersons of the Statutory Bodies established by the Culture Conventions. She stated that there is a preliminary agreement on holding the meeting of the Chairpersons of different committees established by Culture Conventions within the framework of the 39th

session of the World Heritage Committee (Bonn, 28 June - 8 July 2015). Concerning the Belgian proposal to amend the Nomination Format for the World Heritage List and subsequently the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention ("the Operational Guidelines") by introducing elements related to the granting of enhanced protection, she informed that the documents have been prepared by the World Heritage Centre and were available on-line (Working document WHC-2015 39COM/11). She then stated that the Secretariat and the Advisory bodies presented their considerations in this working document and noted that for a number of reasons the best way of ensuring synergies between enhanced protection under the Second Protocol and listing under the 1972 Convention would be through the format for Periodic Reporting. Following her explanation, Mr Goes, the former Chairperson of the Committee, preferred the option to allow Parties to submit cultural property for both lists by amending the Operational Guidelines. He informed that he would be present at the 39th session of the World heritage Committee.

Distinctive emblem for cultural property under enhanced protection

The Chairperson recalled the Decision 9.COM 4 of the Committee recommending to the Sixth Meeting of the Parties to examine proposal N°3 contained in Annex 1 to document CLT-14/9.COM/CONF.203/4/REV2, including its graphic charter, and the modalities for its use, with a view, if appropriate, to approving them and amending the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Second Protocol accordingly. The Chairperson also mentioned the Austrian point of view, namely that opposing the new distinctive emblem should be adopted by amending the Second Protocol. Armenian Delegation supported the Austrian position and stated that the adoption of the distinctive emblem through the adoption of amendments to the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Second Protocol may result in legal problems. Furthermore, Armenia suggested undertaking a legal evaluation of the issue. The Secretariat responded that, due to financial constraints, it would be unable to carry out such a study unless additional financial contributions were provided.

The Committee's role in protecting cultural property in Iraq and Syria

The Chairperson proceeded to this item whose significance was highlighted by a number of delegations. She referred to Article 32 of the Second Protocol, and stressed that it may be possible to provide financial support to countries party to armed conflict, even if they are not party to the Second Protocol. Following the discussion, the Chairperson issued a Statement on behalf of the Committee which, among others, invited "States Parties to the Second Protocol which are parties to an armed conflict, as well as States Parties to a conflict which are not Parties to the Second Protocol to request international assistance under Article 32 of the Second Protocol, at their earliest convenience".

Closing:

The Chairperson proposed to meet informally on 27 September 2015 before the third Meeting of the Subsidiary Committee to the Meeting of States Parties to the 1970 Convention on 27 September 2015. The Bureau also decided to hold its next meeting before the tenth Meeting of the Committee on 10 December 2015.