

UNITE4HERITAGE

**CULTURAL
DIVERSITY
UNDER
ATTACK:
PROTECTING
HERITAGE
FOR PEACE**

**UNESCO'S ACTION
FOR CULTURE IN
CRISES**



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Who does not remember the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan? The explosion of the bridge in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which destroyed a 16th-century masterpiece and cut the last lifeline for tens of thousands of people? The destruction of the mausoleums of Timbuktu in Mali, and the trial in front of the International Criminal Court that followed? How the slashing of age-old statues in Nimrud and Nineveh in Iraq and the destruction of emblematic features in Palmyra in Syria made headlines? Cultural heritage, and the diversity that it stands for, is at risk, and its

protection and rehabilitation are essential for restoring peace.

To initiate a broader debate on the role culture can play in recovery and reconciliation, UNESCO organized a conference “#Unite4Heritage. Cultural Diversity under Attack: Protecting Heritage for Peace”. The event, supported by the Government of Flanders, was an opportunity to emphasize the human dimension of cultural preservation, highlighting the vital importance of heritage and diversity in addressing humanitarian, human rights and security challenges across the world.



NEVEH PLAINS, IRAQ, 2008 - PHOTO: ICOMOS-US/SUZANNE E. BOTT

CULTURAL DIVERSITY UNDER ATTACK



“ Those who destroy monuments do not just seek to demolish buildings. They want to weaken the social fabric of societies and abolish their sense of freedom.”

UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova

Culture is increasingly at the frontline of conflicts. Over the past years, attacks against culture have become more systematic and large-scale. Beyond the physical destruction of heritage, this has a tremendous human impact, with protection and human rights implications. What we are witnessing highlights the close interlinkage between the protection of diversity and heritage on the one hand, and security and

stabilization imperatives on the other. That is why an increasingly large number of organizations, from the humanitarian and human rights to security sectors, are now considering culture in their planning and actions. Protecting diversity in the face of conflict requires the safeguarding and transmission of cultural heritage in all its forms and expressions, including the traditions, practices and expressions that define a community.

PROTECTING HERITAGE FOR PEACE

Faced with increasingly complex challenges, culture should be integrated into peacebuilding efforts. A key challenge is to recognize culture as a positive force and to promote cultural pluralism as essential components for building peaceful societies. Respect for diversity is essential for reconciliation, national dialogue and reconstruction. The rehabilitation of heritage, the practicing

of traditions and an inclusive social fabric can contribute to resilience and the restoration of security and peace. How can this strengthen transition and recovery approaches and policies? Answering this question must focus both on the field of culture (heritage, cultural institutions, industry capacity) and on the impact of culture on the social, economic and political infrastructure of the affected countries.

CULTURE UNDER ATTACK – HOW TO RESPOND?

UNESCO's actions are articulated around three interconnected stages: Prevention, Mitigation and Rapid Response, and Recovery. For each of these, a comprehensive approach is applied, combining UNESCO's standard-setting expertise with its experience in implementing concrete actions through its extensive field network.

STEP 1 PREVENTION

Taking appropriate measures in advance is essential to preventing the impact of conflict on culture.

ACTIONS:

Inventories, risk assessment and emergency plans

Establishment of crisis-response capacities for culture

Capacity-building and training, including for emergency response

Communication and educational campaigns for the promotion of cultural pluralism

Policy development

Research on critical gaps

Development of innovative models and approaches

STEP 2 MITIGATION AND RAPID RESPONSE

During crisis, efforts are made to mitigate damage. In case damage does affect culture and heritage, UNESCO's rapid response mechanism allows the deployment of a small team of experts within a short time frame. Teams can assess needs and advise on critical actions, and provide first-aid technical assistance.

ACTIONS:

Cultural diplomacy and dialogue

Prevention of imminent risks of looting, illicit trafficking or destruction

Deployment of rapid assessment and advisory missions

Planning and implementation of urgent safeguarding measures

Distance monitoring of sites, for example through satellite imagery

Short, emergency, training activities

Coordination of response initiatives

STEP 3 RECOVERY

In the aftermath of conflict, the recovery and reconstruction of the culture sector become possible, and should be an integral part of peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

ACTIONS:

Heritage rehabilitation

Restitution and restoration of artefacts

Rehabilitation of cultural institutions

Dialogue through culture and arts

High-level intercultural and inter-religious dialogue

Planning of medium to long-term rehabilitation interventions

Long-term capacity enhancement for Member States and institutions

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

AFGHANISTAN, CULTURE FOR RECOVERY

A testimony to the strong political commitment to culture in the aftermath of conflict, the Government of Afghanistan and UNESCO jointly established a Multi-Partner Trust-Fund in 2016 that puts culture at the heart of the country's recovery.

MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE

In June 2016, the conference “#Unite4Heritage. Cultural Diversity under Attack: Protecting Heritage for Peace”, held in Brussels, Belgium, brought together 312 professionals and policy makers from the culture, human rights, humanitarian, judicial and security sectors. For two days, they discussed how culture can play a more concrete, effective and active role in recovery and reconciliation. The recommendations from the conference, key messages and highlights from the panel debates have been formulated around **eight areas of action**.

UNESCO CONSERVATION PROJECT AT SHAHR-I GHULGHULAH, BAMIYAN, AFGHANISTAN
2013, PHOTO UNESCO/MUJTABAH MIRZAI

DIALOGUE

Intercultural dialogue offers a way of valorizing cultural diversity and thus of overcoming one of the main hurdles for peace.

WHY

- * Dialogue built around cultural practices can be an effective way of bringing communities together.
- * Intercultural dialogue acknowledges diversity and is vital for long-term social cohesion and tolerance.
- * Arts and artistic expressions are an easy means to get to know the other through a common language.

CULTURAL RIGHTS

Cultural rights are human rights, fundamental to human dignity and foundational for co-existence. Their respect is essential for recovery.

WHY

- * Reconciliation, co-existence and peace are not possible if cultural rights that allow for an understanding of the past are not guaranteed.
- * Artists, often being among the outspoken in society, should be protected and their freedom of expression ensured.
- * Local experts, professionals and ordinary people who protect culture during conflict are human rights defenders, and should be recognized and protected as such.

DIPLOMACY

Attacks against culture destabilize societies, support a parallel economy and organized crime and hamper efforts for recovery, making the protection of cultural diversity a major foreign policy concern.

WHY

- * Cultural diplomacy is a fundamental component of international relations, a soft power allowing to open communication between States and fostering mutual understanding and recognition among communities.
- * Pluralism, based on knowledge and respect for diversity and heritage, is the basis for a renewed concept of cultural diplomacy, away from self-interest and the promotion of one's own culture abroad.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Culture and creativity help support greater inclusion during displacement, including as a source of livelihood, by focusing on the value of diversity and the right to cultural participation.

WHY

- * Culture allows displaced persons to express their individual identity.
- * Cultural expressions provide displaced persons with an opportunity to be acknowledged by the host community for one's skills, rather than for their residential status.
- * When historical and cultural links are lost, many aspects of living heritage are lost, which complicates the return of displaced persons.

Did you know?

98,5%

of the ancient manuscripts of Timbuktu, Mali, were saved by local communities.



14 World Heritage listed mausoleums were destroyed in Timbuktu.

In 2016, the reconstructed mausoleums were inaugurated.

Did you know?

The **1954 The Hague Convention** is part of customary international humanitarian law.

UNESCO has a partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (**ICRC**) for the implementation of the 1954 Convention.

2004: The shelling of Dubrovnik, Croatia, is tried as a war-crime at the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

2016: The ICC sees the first-ever trial exclusively on deliberate destruction of heritage, in the case of Mali.

JUSTICE

Attacks intentionally directed against cultural heritage can qualify as war crimes. Their prosecution helps restore justice and the dignity of affected communities.

WHY

- * Intentionally directing an attack against cultural heritage may be a war-crime, has a long-term impact on communities and should be prosecuted.
- * Technology can document, present and analyze evidence of crimes against heritage, and protect investigators by offering the possibility of distance research.

CULTURAL CLEANSING

The intentional targeting and destruction of cultural heritage can be identified as an early-warning sign of the intent to commit ethnic cleansing or genocide.

WHY

- * Cultural heritage is targeted to destroy traces of a past that no longer suits the unilateral narrative that certain parties of a conflict wish to impose.
- * Targeting heritage with the intent to destroy existing values and identities of communities is an early-warning sign of the intent to commit ethnic cleansing or genocide.
- * Pluralistic narratives and the protection of diversity are essential for long-term reconciliation.

COMMEMORATION

Integrating the cultural dimension in commemoration provides the long historical and pluralistic perspective required to address deeply-rooted divisions.

WHY

- * Integrating the cultural dimension in commemoration provides for the historic and pluralist perspective required to address deeply rooted divisions.
- * Cultural institutions play an important role in making a plural narrative accessible and open for discussion.
- * The inventorying and documentation of cultural resources, in which local communities play an important role, and the preservation and use of this documentary heritage, are fundamental to peace.

ILLCIT TRADE

Looting and illicit trafficking of cultural objects support a parallel economy and organized crime, including terrorism, thereby posing a serious threat to national and international security.

WHY

- * The looting and trafficking of artefacts that occurs during conflicts creates a parallel economy and supports organized crime, undermining effective governance.
- * The illicit trade in antiquities is considered an important source of income for terrorism.

Did you know?



26%

In the Arab States region, **21 out of 81** World Heritage properties are listed as 'in Danger'.



50%

of World Heritage properties in Iraq were severely damaged in the past 3 years.



100%

of Syria's 6 World Heritage properties are directly affected by fighting.

2 out of 3 cultural World Heritage properties in Yemen have been repeatedly damaged in airstrikes.

NEXT STEPS

1. UNESCO – YOUR PARTNER IN ACTION

The international conventions managed by UNESCO form the normative framework for the protection of heritage and cultural diversity. Combined with operational experience gained through the rehabilitation, restitution, and use of cultural heritage, these provide the basis for action.

3. UNESCO STRATEGY

UNESCO's 38th General Conference (November 2015) adopted the first "Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict". The Strategy is formulated to guide efforts in the face of challenges encountered regarding the protection of cultural heritage. It has two objectives: 1/ to strengthen Member States' ability to prevent, mitigate, and recover the loss of cultural heritage and diversity; and 2/ to incorporate protection of culture into humanitarian action, security strategies and peacebuilding processes.

<http://en.unesco.org/heritage-at-risk/strategy-culture-armed-conflict>

2. GLOBAL COALITION UNITE FOR HERITAGE

In June 2015, UNESCO's Director-General called to form a Global Coalition to unite a wide range of actors from different fields of competence for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage.

www.unite4heritage.org

4. HERITAGE EMERGENCY FUND

A multi-donor fund for the protection of heritage in emergency situations was created in 2015. The Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF) is a pooled, non-earmarked funding mechanism that provides a flexible modality for UNESCO to respond more quickly, efficiently and effectively to crises. Member States, International Organizations and private citizens can contribute. The Fund is one of the key mechanisms to implement the UNESCO Strategy.

<http://www.unesco.org/donate/hef/>





ALEPPO, SYRIA, 2011 - PHOTO: UNESCO



TIMBUKTU, MALI, 2013 – PHOTO : MINUSMA/MARCO DORMINO

HERITAGE UNDER ATTACK

Sri Lanka, Attack on the Temple of Tooth, Kandy **1998**

Iraq, Looting of the Bagdad Museum **2003**

Mali, Destruction of Timbuktu Mausoleums and Libraries **2012**

Libya, Destruction of sites in Old town of Tripoli **2014**

Syria, Destruction of Citadel of Aleppo

Syria, Damage to the Old town of Damascus

Yemen, several sites on the World Heritage Tentative List destroyed **2016**

Nigeria, Destruction of Interpretation Centre, Sukur

Syria, Destruction of the Tetrapylon and Roman Theatre, Palmyra **2017**

1991 *Croatia*, Shelling of Dubrovnik

1992 *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Burning of the Sarajevo Library

1993 *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Bombing of the Mostar Bridge

Afghanistan, Shelling of the Kabul Museum

2001 *Afghanistan*, Destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas

2004 *Kosovo**, Burning of Churches in Prizren

2013 *Syria*, Destruction of the Great Mosque of Aleppo

Syria, First reports of damage to Crac des Chevaliers

2015 *Iraq*, Attacks on Hatra and Ashur

Iraq, Destruction of Nimrud and Niniveh

Iraq, Destruction of Mosul Museum

Libya, Destruction of Sufi Shrines near Tripoli

Syria, Destruction of major monuments in Palmyra

Syria, Destruction of the Citadel of Bosra

Tunisia, Attack on the Bardo Museum, Tunis

Yemen, Bombing of the old town of Sana'a

* References to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, adopted in 1999

Disclaimer: this timeline provides an illustrative, broad overview of conflicts affecting World Heritage sites and national-level cultural institutions over the past 25 years. This is not a comprehensive, detailed account.



YPRES, BELGIUM, 1917
PHOTO : FLANDERS HERITAGE AGENCY/EUGÈNE DHUICQUE



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