

**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 issues the following Statement on behalf of the Committee:

The decision of the International Criminal Court's Trial Chamber VIII to declare Mr Al Mahdi guilty of the war crime of attacking, in 2012, nine mausoleums and the secret gate of the Sidi Yahia mosque in UNESCO's World Heritage property of Timbuktu (Mali), followed by a sentence to nine years' imprisonment, constitutes a landmark decision of the international criminal justice.

The Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict recognizes that this is a historic judgement under the Rome Statute that sets a precedent, as it represents a crucial step towards the universal recognition of the importance of cultural heritage for humanity as a whole. This Judgment is a first step towards ending impunity perpetrators of serious crimes against cultural heritage and underlines the determination of the international community not to leave crimes against cultural heritage to go unpunished.¹

Let me conclude by expressing our hope that this judgment will contribute to the strengthening of individual criminal responsibility for crimes against cultural heritage and to the raising of awareness on the importance of the protection of cultural heritage during hostilities.

27 September 2016

¹ Please also see the UNESCO Director General's statement available at
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/timbuktu_trial_a_major_step_towards_peace_and_reconciliati/#.V_OC2ckXfdQ>