



## THE HOLY SEE

### PERIODIC REPORT 2009

#### MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY IN THE EVENT OF ARMED CONFLICT (THE HAGUE 1954)

The measures taken to implement the Convention are to be interpreted within the legal framework defined by Article 24 of the Lateran Agreement of 11 February 1929, which provides as follows: "In regard to the sovereignty appertaining to it also in international matters, the Holy See declares that it desires to take, and shall take, no part in any temporal rivalries between other States, nor in any international congresses called to settle such matters, save and except in the event of such parties making a mutual appeal to the pacific mission of the Holy See, the latter reserving in any event the right of exercising its moral and spiritual power. The Vatican City shall, therefore, be invariably and in every event considered as neutral and inviolable territory."

Since 18 January 1960, the territory of the State of the Vatican City in its entirety has been classified in the International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection as a "centre containing monuments", in accordance with paragraph 6 of Article 8 of the Convention and Articles 12 and 13 of the Regulations for the Execution of the Convention. Listed among the "principal cultural properties" are the "Vatican Palaces and Museums", together with St Peter's Basilica, the Vatican Library and the Secret Archive.

In 2001, the Holy See adopted a new legal instrument when it enacted the *Law on the Protection of Cultural Property*, No. CCCLV, and the corresponding Regulations for its execution, No. CCCLVI. The new law provided *inter alia* for the establishment of the Central Catalogue of the Holy See's cultural property, entrusting coordination and technical matters to the Vatican Museums and to the Vatican Apostolic Library, according to their respective areas of expertise. The law also lays down procedures for monitoring the import and export of cultural property, for which responsibility has been given to the Goods Transit Service and the Gendarme Corps.

Finally, as the measures to be adopted in the event of war are much the same nature as those required in the event of natural disasters or civil disorder, the Holy See has introduced measures designed to safeguard cultural property against the foreseeable consequences of such events.

This report updates and incorporates the data already provided in the 1999 Periodic Report.

## **1. THE SAFEGUARDING OF CULTURAL PROPERTY (Article 3)**

### **(a) St Peter's Basilica**

Security measures have been upgraded to ensure the safety of visitors and the security of the architectural heritage.

- A system of surveillance is permanently in operation and is the responsibility of the staff of St Peter's Factory and the Gendarme Corps; there are plans to increase its capacity. The security service, too, has been improved by the addition of modern communication systems, allowing anything untoward to be reported without delay.
- Smoke detection equipment has been installed in the premises housing the Vatican Archives and in some parts of the Basilica. It is linked up to the Fire-Service incident room.
- The Basilica wall structures are monitored by instruments that check statics in the building and register any micro-stresses.
- In compliance with the law on the protection of cultural property, an inventory of movable property of historical and artistic interest is being drawn up.

### **(b) The Vatican Museums**

- Owing to the universal fame of the heritage housed by the Vatican Museums and the very high number of visitors received every year (4,441,000 in 2008), they are potential targets for subversive acts of protest. The number of security staff has been increased considerably and now stands at 348, compared with the 160 noted in the previous report. Training for security staff is given a high priority, with ample provision for in-service training and the updating of skills (observing and shadowing individuals, fire prevention and control, theft prevention and first aid).
- All technical equipment has been modernized and complies with the most recent standards. The new entrance to the Vatican Museums, a building opened by Pope John Paul II in March 2000, is equipped with state-of-the-art technology that permits both visitors and objects to be closely monitored (cameras, screens, X-ray machines and walk-through metal detectors). All exhibition areas and most storage areas are under surveillance; in addition, security staff are provided with transmitter-receivers, thus ensuring an effective internal communications network. As a fire precaution, smoke detectors have been installed in all areas used as storage or office space and in some exhibition areas.
- The maintenance and updating of inventories and archives, both absolutely vital, are key to affording protection. The inventory of the Vatican Museums is given particular attention: it is carefully and continually updated, and a dedicated database has been established, which can be accessed through the internal computer network. The photographic archives, the historical archive and the archives of the restoration laboratories have also been updated and extended on a regular basis.

### **(c) The Vatican Secret Archive**

- The Secret Archive has an impressive underground storage area, built between 1977 and 1980 and constructed entirely of solid, reinforced concrete, covering an area of 69 metres by 70 metres and with a capacity of 43,000 cubic metres. In addition, the fire detection and prevention system has recently been modernized and linked up to the Vatican Fire Service and to a local fire station.

- A secure storage area for parchments has been built and is equipped with air conditioning and fire detection and extinguishing systems.

**(d) The Vatican Apostolic Library**

- Several book protection facilities have been improved through the introduction of new fire prevention systems and the installation of new alarm and surveillance devices for, among other things, tracking a book's whereabouts through the *Radio Frequency Identification System* (RFID). Major restructuring works, which also include the underground storage facilities, are under way.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of digital reproductions of manuscripts: the data bank now contains more than 400,000 pages, which is the minimum requirement for ensuring that good-quality copies remain available in the event of the originals being lost. The data bank itself contains a series of procedures that copy data systematically and periodically, which ensures data stability and the permanence over time of this data (disaster recovery).

**2. MILITARY MEASURES AND DISSEMINATION OF THE CONVENTION  
(Articles 7 and 25)**

The pontifical military units consist of the Swiss Guard and the Gendarme Corps.

**(a) The Swiss Guard**

- The Swiss Guard is responsible for surveillance and security at entrances to the State and throughout the Pontifical Palace. This objective is pursued further through remote-control technology and guard posts located at strategic points within the palace. The surveillance machinery is complemented by guards patrolling areas around the clock, using modern observation and communication technology. A reserve unit of the Guard is always on standby, should it be needed.
- The training received by the Swiss Guards includes familiarization with the Convention and with the measures to be adopted to protect cultural property in order to minimize the impact of any serious incident.
- The Swiss Guard works in close cooperation with the Gendarme Corps and the Vatican Fire Service.

**(b) The Gendarme Corps**

- The Gendarme Corps was recently reorganized after a new regulation was introduced in September 2008. The duties of the Corps include law enforcement, security, public order and border control at entrances to the State. The Gendarme Corps is also responsible for protecting and monitoring the State's territory and persons and property in the territory, in close liaison with the Swiss Guard and, whenever necessary, with the equivalent Italian or other State bodies.
- The Gendarme Corps carries out its territorial prevention and monitoring activities from an Incident Centre, established at the beginning of the new millennium and equipped with the latest generation of alarm and video-surveillance systems: in operation 24 hours a day, the Centre provides continuous uninterrupted protection. It is in a constant state of readiness to take appropriate steps to respond to and prevent emergency situations from arising, or to handle situations posing specific risks, on the basis of requests for assistance or reports received from any part of the territory. For the supervision and

protection of the State's historical, artistic and cultural heritage, in addition to its surveillance role, the Centre controls all alarm systems designed to combat intrusion, fire and theft, coordinating any operation that might be necessary.

- In addition to its normal police activities, the Gendarme Corps also performs rigorous checks on all persons and goods entering the State in order to prevent and avert potential terrorist threats.
- The Commander of the Gendarme Corps also supervises the Fire Service. The official role of this department is to protect human life and to safeguard property as well as the environment from damage and danger caused not only by fires but also by accident or criminal acts, by offering the instant response that such situations demand. In collaboration with the Gendarme Corps, the Firemen carry out daily, targeted searches throughout the territory, including the Museums and the Apostolic Palace, and make precise technical checks of fire-prevention equipment and facilities.
- In addition to induction training, staff constantly update their skills through courses that provide both theory and practice, and also include knowledge of international agreements and treaties.

### **3. THE EMBLEM OF THE CONVENTION (Articles 16 and 17)**

As the territory of the Vatican City State in its entirety has been classified in the International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection as a "centre containing monuments", all of the State's territory, and not only its movable and immovable property must be identified by the emblem of the Convention.

Such a measure is not required in peacetime, but must be taken in the circumstances referred to by the Convention.

### **4. SANCTIONS (Article 28)**

The legislation of the Vatican City State makes no provision for penal or administrative sanctions to be imposed on those persons who are in breach of the Convention.

The Vatican, 6 August 2009

Translated from the French.