

# BAKU DECLARATION ON THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

(43<sup>rd</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee, Baku, 1 July 2019)

We, members of the World Heritage Committee, gathered in Baku today on the occasion of its 43rd session, declare the following:

1. **Recognizing** that the World Heritage Convention since its inception has become the most widely accepted international legal instrument for the protection of cultural and natural heritage;
2. **Recognizing also** the importance to the protection of cultural and natural heritage of upholding the integrity and credibility of the World Heritage Convention;
3. **Highlighting** the critical importance of the world's cultural and natural heritage for the mankind;
4. **Emphasizing** that the cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened with destruction not only by the traditional causes of decay, accidents and natural disasters, but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation with even more formidable phenomena of damage or destruction;
5. **Underlining** that the *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* demonstrates that world's ecosystems and biodiversity are deteriorating faster than at any time in human history, undermining humanity's well-being and future existence;
6. **Mindful** of the fact that deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world;
7. **Stressing** the importance of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2347 (2017) which is its first Resolution that highlights the importance of strengthening the link between the protection of cultural heritage and the maintenance of international peace and security, and welcomes the central role played by UNESCO in protecting cultural heritage and promoting culture as an instrument to bring people together and foster dialogue;
8. **Reaffirming** the relevant United Nations Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions, in particular UNSC resolutions 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015);
9. **Reiterating** the commitments undertaken through the 2002 Budapest Declaration on World Heritage, the 2015 Bonn Declaration on World Heritage in order to strengthen the international protection of cultural and natural heritage and the 2016 Istanbul Declaration on the protection of World Heritage;
10. **Recalling** the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols, Convention on

the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) and the 2015 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 and its Action Plan;

11. **Recalling further** the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands;
12. **Reaffirming** the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, and other development strategies adopted at the regional level;
13. **Distressed** by the continued destruction of natural and cultural heritage in the conflict affected territories such as the increase of illegal excavations at archaeological sites, as well as the looting and illicit trafficking of cultural objects and the illegal exploitation of natural resources, including the poaching of wildlife species, threatening existing natural and cultural World Heritage and potential future sites;
14. **Calling attention** to the concerning outlook for many World Heritage properties posed by climate change;

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15. **Express gratitude** to the Government of Azerbaijan for generous hosting the 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee;
16. **Encourage** countries that have not yet joined the Convention to do so at the earliest opportunity, as well as all UNESCO standard-setting instruments in the field of culture, and other related international heritage protection instruments;
17. **Further encourage** all States Parties to support the effective implementation of the World Heritage Convention and invite the World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies and States Parties to enhance inclusive dialogue and cooperation to this end;
18. **Welcome** the efforts to reform the processes of the World Heritage Committee and strengthen dialogue between States Parties and the Advisory Bodies to reinforce the integrity and credibility of the Convention;
19. **Invite** all States Parties to prioritise the effective protection, conservation and management of World Heritage properties situated on their territories in consistency with the "Policy Document for the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention";
20. **Call on** UNESCO Secretariat to further enhance the synergies among cultural and biodiversity-related Conventions with a view of ensuring comprehensive approach for heritage protection;

21. **Welcome** UNESCO's Revive the spirit of Mosul Initiative and **recall** the obligation of all States Parties to safeguard cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value at national and international levels and to take all appropriate legal and policy measures in that direction, including in times of conflict;
22. **Appreciate** UNESCO's actions and efforts for preservation of natural and cultural heritage during armed conflicts, including the preparation and publication of the Military Manual on Protection of Cultural Property;
23. **Encourage** all States Parties to support World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy, giving emphasis to Priority Africa;
24. **Call on** all stakeholders to integrate the human dimension at the heart of sustainable recovery and reconstruction and to intensify cooperation by the international community as a whole to participate in the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value;
25. **Call upon** States Parties to enhance proactive policies towards the protection and rehabilitation of cultural and natural heritage sites, especially those included on the List of World Heritage in Danger;
26. **Stress** the urgent need to address emerging global challenges and diverse factors such as climate change, natural and human-made disasters and other various pressures on heritage properties.