

Declaration
of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict
of the Second Protocol to The Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural
Property in the Event of Armed Conflict – ensuring cultural property protection in and
around Nagorno-Karabakh and setting-up an independent technical mission

I. Background

The 9 November tripartite statement/agreement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation, enacted a complete ceasefire and cessation of all hostilities in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh.

However, while damage to cultural property in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh has been reported during the conflict, it is highly difficult, under current circumstances, to assess the whole situation regarding the state of protection of cultural property in all its forms.

On 20 November 2020, invoking its mandate under the 1954 Hague Convention, and in particular its Article 23, the UNESCO Director-General has expressed readiness to set up an independent technical mission in order to assess the status of the most significant cultural property.

II. Declaration

The Committee:

1. Noting the damages to cultural property in all its forms that have been reported during the conflict,
2. Reaffirming the universal dimension of cultural heritage, as a testimony of history inseparable from peoples' identity, which the international community has the duty to protect and preserve for future generations, beyond the conflicts of the moment,
3. Recalling the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999), to both of which Armenia and Azerbaijan are Parties, and which are based on the conviction of the States Parties "that damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world",
4. Recalling also Security Council resolution 2347 (2017), which emphasizes that "the illegal destruction of cultural heritage, looting and smuggling of cultural property in the event of armed conflicts, including by terrorist groups, and attempts to deny historical roots and cultural diversity in this context, can fuel and exacerbate conflicts and impede post-conflict national reconciliation, thus undermining the security, stability, governance and social, economic and cultural development of affected States",

5. Calls for the protection of cultural heritage in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh and for the prevention of future damage;
6. Appeals to all Parties involved to undertake all the immediate and necessary measures to prevent looting and protect cultural property in all its forms located in and around Nagorno-Karabakh;
7. Welcomes the UNESCO's initiative, taken in conformity with Article 23 of the 1954 Hague Convention, to carry out as soon as possible an independent technical mission, with the agreement of all concerned Parties, with the aim of assessing the status of the cultural property in all its forms as a prerequisite for the effective protection of heritage;
8. Considers that such an assessment of status of the cultural property will contribute to establish a basis for progressive and comprehensive future rehabilitation and development actions to promote the return to civilian life in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in the field of cultural heritage;
9. Encourages UNESCO to continue its work with States Parties and other interested partners creating conditions for such an independent technical mission.