

## CONCEPT NOTE

### UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING

#### “PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ARMED CONFLICTS”

Tuesday, 2 May 2023, 3pm  
Conference Room 7

##### 1. Introduction

The Permanent Missions to the United Nations of France and the United Arab Emirates, with the co-sponsorship of the Permanent Missions of Cyprus and Italy to the United Nations, will hold an Arria-formula meeting on the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts.

The main objective of the event is to discuss the implementation of UNSC resolution 2347 (2017) as well as key strategies and policies related to the protection of culture in all its dimensions, movable and immovable, tangible and intangible, in situations of armed conflicts.

UNSC resolution 2347 (2017) is the first UNSC resolution entirely dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict. It will also explore progress made and challenges related to the efforts of giving a better place to culture in the discussions on peace, security and humanitarian norms and processes. The event will showcase some success stories related to the implementation of UNSCR 2347 (2017) and the body of UN instruments.

##### 2. Background

The protection of cultural heritage is an issue of global concern, as it has a direct impact on people and communities. The protection of heritage is necessary for the resilience of populations during conflicts, but above all, for recovery and reconciliation afterwards. Moreover, a holistic approach to protection of cultural heritage and the rehabilitation and restoration of cultural heritage destroyed or damaged in conflict, can play an important role in post-conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Over the years, protecting culture in conflict situations has proved increasingly important as:

- The deliberate destruction of cultural heritage – tangible and intangible – as well as disruptions to the diversity of cultural expressions by armed groups has increased, given their intrinsic social, cultural and economic value for the communities, and has adverse consequences on the fulfilment of their human rights;
- The illicit trafficking of cultural property has been highlighted as a key source of financing for terrorism and organized crime, which constitutes a threat to international peace and security;
- Restrictions on the enjoyment of cultural rights, including in conflict situations, have been increasingly reported;
- A growing number of artists and cultural professionals have been impacted or targeted in conflict situations; hence, protecting and promoting artistic freedom and freedom of expression becomes a priority.

Both the UN General Assembly and Security Council have addressed the protection of culture in conflict situations and highlighted the connection between the destruction of cultural heritage, trafficking in cultural property, and the financing of terrorism, including in UNSC Resolutions 2199 (2015), and 2253 (2015).

In March 2017, upon the initiative of France and Italy, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2347 on “The Maintenance of International peace and security: destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict” the first ever Security Council resolution to focus on the protection of cultural heritage and to recognize the importance of heritage protection for peace and security.

More recently, these concepts have been highlighted at the MONDIACULT 2022 Conference that took place in Mexico, in September 2022. Adopted by 150 countries, the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration reaffirms that culture is a "global public good" and welcomes the new impetus given to the role of culture for peace and stability.

Co-founded by the UAE and France, ALIPH (International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas) was established in 2017 in Geneva, following the 2016 Abu Dhabi Conference on “Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage in Conflict Areas”. Since then, the Foundation has financed about 180 concrete projects to protect cultural heritage in conflict and post-conflict areas.

In terms of accountability, for the first time, on 27 September 2016, the International Criminal Court (ICC) declared that a person was guilty of the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against historic and religious buildings in Timbuktu, Mali, sentencing him to nine years’ imprisonment and the payment of individual and collective reparations. On 6 November 2017, a letter of intent was signed by ICC and UNESCO underlining the importance of protecting cultural heritage from attack in times of conflict and to enhance cooperation. Through Resolution 2347, the UN Security Council echoed the importance of prosecuting those responsible for war crimes against cultural heritage.

Against this backdrop, UNESCO has stepped up its efforts, working closely with Member States and the agencies and other relevant international organizations concerned (e.g., UNODC, INTERPOL, WCO, CTED, ALIPH) in the protection and safeguarding of culture in armed conflicts, including the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property.

### 3. Questions for Discussion:

1. What are the good practices and lessons learnt for the implementation of the UN instruments, including the UNSC Resolution 2347? How can the implementation of the existing international and regional legal instruments be strengthened?
2. What role can cultural heritage play in promoting resilience, dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence between and within communities including in post-conflict situations and between displaced populations and host communities? How to better include communities in the decision-making process and empower them, especially youth and women?
3. What role should the protection of tangible and intangible heritage play in international security and humanitarian action, and transition to development?
4. What measures can be taken to prevent and combat illicit trafficking of cultural objects originating from the context of armed conflict?

5. What can be done to address the harmful effects of climate change and extreme weather patterns that could threaten cultural heritage in conflict and post-conflict situations?

The debate will aim to explore the gaps and opportunities considering these parameters and share some of the relevant experiences and good practices. A special focus will be placed on the most recent initiatives to advocate for the protection of culture in conflict situations.

#### 4. Briefers:

- Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- General Vincenzo Molinese, Commander of Carabinieri for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Italy)
- Mr. Omar Al Taweel, UNESCO Site Coordinator for the “Revive the Spirit of Mosul” initiative (virtual from Iraq)

#### 6. Format:

The meeting will be held on on 2 May 2023, from 03:00pm to 06:00pm at the United Nations Headquarters in Conference Room 7. Interpretation will be provided in the six UN official languages.

Member States, or Observer Offices speaking on behalf of groups of two or more delegations, will be invited to deliver statements after the briefers and the UN Security Council Members. We ask delegations to speak for no more than 3 minutes to allow more time to hear from the briefers and to let the briefers respond to comments from Member States. Please note that due to time constraints, we may not make it through the entire speakers list.

All Member States of the United Nations are invited to attend.

To subscribe to the list of speakers, please email Anne Freudenreich (Permanent Mission of France to the UN) [anne.freudenreich@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:anne.freudenreich@diplomatie.gouv.fr) no later than Monday May 1st at 12:00 p.m.

Statements should be sent to the Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN : [sec.italyun@esteri.it](mailto:sec.italyun@esteri.it)