

STATEMENT delivered during the 3rd EXTRAORDINARY MEETING of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, under item 3.

Thank you Madame Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of 44 countries.

We deeply deplore Russian Federation's unprovoked and illegal war of aggression, which has resulted in lives lost and lives threatened, and further affected the status of cultural property in Ukraine through wide scale damage and destruction. As of 30 August 2023, UNESCO had verified damage to 285 sites, including, 120 religious sites, 27 museums, 105 buildings of historical artistic interest, 19 monuments, 13 libraries, and 1 Archive.

This includes destructive attacks, which the Russian Federation launched in July and August against sites in the L'viv World Heritage buffer zone and the Historic Centre of Odesa, another World Heritage Site. Several museums, cathedrals, architectural monuments, and other historical buildings were severely damaged in the process, including Odesa's Archaeological Museum, Maritime Museum, and Literature Museum, all of which were marked with the distinctive Blue Shield emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention. These attacks undermine the spirit of the 1954 Hague Convention, and have damaged Outstanding Universal Value protected under the World Heritage Convention in Ukraine.

We welcome today's extraordinary meeting of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and we call on committee members to condemn systematic attacks against cultural heritage of Ukraine committed by the Russian Federation.

We recall the declaration adopted during the 2nd extraordinary meeting of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (C54/22/2.EXT.COM/3) and urge the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations according to Article 4 of the 1954 Hague Convention and its First Protocol. In particular, we urge the Russian Federation to refrain from the use of cultural property and its immediate surroundings for purposes which are likely to expose it to destruction or damage in the event of armed conflict; and to refrain from any act of hostility directed against such property within the territory of Ukraine.

We call on the Russian Federation to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against cultural property in accordance with Article 4 paragraph 3 of the 1954 Hague Convention and articles 1-5 of its First Protocol.

We support UNESCO's ongoing actions in supporting Ukraine and its people, including the work of UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund. We condemn in the strongest terms Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine and call on the Russian Federation to withdraw all its military forces immediately, completely, and unconditionally from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The statement was given on behalf of the following countries:

Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.