



**Permanent Mission of the Republic
of Albania to the United Nations - New York**



**Permanent Mission
of the Republic of Poland
to the United Nations
in New York**

CONCEPT NOTE

United Nations Security Council Arria – formula meeting

“The Destruction of cultural heritage as a consequence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine”

Organized by: The Permanent Missions of the Republic of Albania and of Poland, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations.

Co-sponsored by: List of countries (open for co-sponsorship)

Date: 15 July 2022

Time: 3:00 pm

Location : ECOSOC Chamber

Participation : The Arria-meeting open to all UN member states, Permanent observers, non-governmental Organizations, and the press.

The meeting will be conducted in English and participants are requested to observe the current COVID-19 regulations by limiting their physical presence in the room to 1+1.

Program of the meeting:

Welcoming remarks and moderation: **Mr. Ferit Hoxha**- Permanent Representative of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations

Keynote speakers/briefers: **Mr. Ernesto Ottone**, Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO (TBC)

Ms. Kateryna Chueva, Deputy Minister of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine

Ms. Teresa Patricio- President of International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (TBC)

Ms Katarzyna Zalasińska-Director of National Institute of Cultural Heritage / Support Center for Culture in Ukraine

Interventions from organizers,

SC Members and UN Members: (List to be completed)

The list of speakers will be open until the start of the meeting.

Closing remarks:

Mr. Krzysztof Szczerski- Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations

Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya-Permanent Representative of Ukraine

Introduction :

The unprovoked and unjustified attack of the Russian Federation against Ukraine brings not only casualties for the population, but also destruction of the cultural heritage. Religious sites, historic buildings, monuments, Holocaust memorials and artefacts are being damaged; cultural property from historical sites, museums, libraries, archives, and other sites in Ukraine are being looted and smuggled.

As of 4 July 2022, UNESCO has verified damage to 157 sites since the beginning of the war – 71 religious' sites, 12 museums, 30 historic buildings, 21 buildings dedicated to cultural activities, 16 monuments, 7 libraries. Severe damage has been registered in the city of Kharkiv, UNESCO Creative City for Music, and the historic centre of Chernihiv, on Ukraine's World Heritage Tentative List. According to reports of the Ministry of Culture and Policy of Information of Ukraine, the scale of damage and destruction may be far greater. What's more, there have been reported cases of looting by Russian forces of Ukrainian cultural goods and artefacts. Damages have also affected cultural institutions resulting in severe loss of livelihoods for culture professionals as well as suspension of cultural life and disruption of intangible cultural heritage that are essentials for the resilience, cohesion and well-being of local communities.

Those deliberate actions cause irreversible damage and heavy losses but most importantly they aim to undermine Ukrainian cultural identity and nationhood.

With its attack against Ukraine Russia violates principles enshrined in the UN Charter, UN Security Council resolution 2347 (2017) and all basic international laws, including also the ones related to the protection of cultural heritage. As the Russian aggression against Ukraine continues, we see consistent evidence of the possible violations of international law, including the 1954 Hague Convention, 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property as well as provisions related to protection of Documentary Heritage. The Security Council Resolution 2347 (2017)

has recognized that deliberate destruction or appropriation of cultural property may constitute a war crime under certain circumstances.

Destruction of cultural heritage of Ukraine has become an integral element of the war of choice of Russia. With growing number of cases of unlawful, deliberate, and widespread destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine, there is a necessity and obligation for adequate reporting and documentation of those crimes. Ensuring accountability for those actions is our moral and legal obligation.

We need to make sure that the aggressor bears the costs of the massive destruction of the Ukrainian cultural heritage and do everything possible to protect Ukrainian unique culture from further devastation and damage. Based on first interventions coordinated by UNESCO, concrete, timely, and well-structured assistance to Ukrainian cultural institutions seems indispensable in order to ensure that Ukrainian cultural, historical and religious sites are effectively protected in this difficult time of war.

In parallel, international institutions need to work together with Ukrainian counterparts with an aim to identify, report and document the damages and prepare a plan for restoration of destroyed monuments and sites, so that Ukrainian cultural heritage can be rebuild after the end of war.

Objective :

This meeting shall offer an opportunity for UN Member States to hear first-hand accounts and expert assessments on the scale of damage to cultural properties in Ukraine, both movables and immovables, caused by the Russian invasion on a sovereign neighbour. It will also be an occasion to discuss how the international community, including the UN Security Council, as well as specialised UN bodies and agencies in cooperation with international organizations and civil society, can provide assistance in the process of documentation of crimes against Ukrainian culture in order to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of those responsible. Well-prepared documentation and information gathering is key for the evidence to be admitted in the court of law. In its capacity, UNESCO will document and assess damages affecting cultural properties and institutions, which could provide information and data to relevant stakeholders.

This meeting is also a call on the international community to continue financial assistance and provide adequate coordination of international efforts to protect Ukrainian heritage in cooperation and with the leading role of Ukraine. During a UNESCO mission to Kyiv (7-9 July 2022), Ukrainian authorities and UNESCO agreed to cooperate on a monitoring, assessment and documentation of damages framework with a view to coordinate efforts in support of reconstruction and recovery measures.

The participants are encouraged to discuss inter alia the following questions:

- What are the possibilities within the international legal framework to address the intentional destruction of cultural heritage as an element of tactics of war?
- What are the main challenges in the process of documentation of damage done to cultural properties in Ukraine? What are the best international practices that could be applied in this process? What can be done to hold the ones who violate the rules of warfare accountable?

- What additional steps could the UN Member States take in order to strengthen accountability for the crimes committed in this context in Ukraine?
- How can we better coordinate the current efforts of the international community that aim to assist Ukraine to protect its cultural heritage? What are the best practices already introduced by the Member States?
- How can we address the challenges related to the recovery and reparations in the context of the destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine?