



Security Council

Seventy-second year

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Provisional

President: Mr. Cardi (Italy)

Members:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Egypt	Mr. Awad
Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
France	Mr. Delattre
Japan	Mr. Hoshino
Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Senegal	Mr. Seck
Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni
Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Ms. Sison
Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli Frieri

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2347 (2017) (S/2017/969)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2347 (2017) (S/2017/969)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism; Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Mr. Jürgen Stock, Secretary General of INTERPOL; and Mr. Alessandro Bianchi, Project Leader for Cultural Heritage Protection of the Italian Ministry of Culture.

Mr. Fedotov and Mr. Stock are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Vienna and Lyon, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/969, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2347 (2017).

I now give the floor to Mr. Voronkov.

Mr. Voronkov: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on this important topic. I would also like very warmly to welcome the presence of Ms. Azoulay at this meeting, the new Director-General of UNESCO.

In particular in situations of armed conflict, terrorists today are not only destroying lives and property, but also historical sites and objects. The goal is obvious: to undermine national identity and international law. Because heritage constitutes a source of identity and cohesion not only for particular

communities but for the world community as a whole, when terrorist groups target world heritage sites it is an attack on our common historical roots and cultural diversity. Additionally, the looting and illicit trafficking of cultural objects lead to the financing of terrorism and criminal networks.

The protection of cultural heritage has therefore become a vitally important task for the international community. Awareness of this matter has grown considerably over the past several years. Resolutions 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015) established the link between the illicit trafficking of cultural objects and the financing of terrorism. Importantly, these resolutions have put in place a worldwide moratorium on the trade in cultural objects originating from Iraq, as of 6 August 1990, and from Syria, as of 15 March 2011.

The Security Council, in resolution 2347 (2017), adopted in March, focused specifically on cultural heritage, highlighting the protection of cultural heritage as an issue of peace and security. Similarly, the General Assembly in its resolution 70/291, on the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, expressed concern that terrorists may benefit from transnational organized crime in some regions, including from the trafficking of cultural property, and condemned the destruction of cultural heritage by terrorist groups. In resolution 70/109, the General Assembly deplored attacks

“on religious places and shrines and cultural sites in violation of international law, in particular human rights and humanitarian law, including any deliberate destruction of relics and monuments” (*General Assembly resolution 70/109, para. 3*).

There is already a strong international legal and normative framework to address these crimes. Resolution 2347 encourages Member States to ratify the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its two Protocols, both of which are key instruments for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, as well as in peacetime, through the implementation of administrative, legal, military and technical measures.

Other important international legal frameworks include the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the United Nations

Convention against Corruption; the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism; and the International Guidelines for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses with Respect to Trafficking in Cultural Property and Other Related Offences.

Protecting our cultural heritage requires us to make every effort to implement the international legal and normative framework by strengthening international cooperation. The all-of-United Nations approach is key to effective action. There is a need to put a stronger focus on investigation, cross-border cooperation and the exchange of information, and on bringing in private- and public-sector partners, including collectors, art dealers, auction houses and the tourism sector, to promote supply-chain integrity and stop the illicit trade in and sale of cultural property.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, through the Inter-Agency Working Group on Countering the Financing of Terrorism of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, is supporting Member States' efforts to curb illicit trafficking through advocacy and capacity-building assistance. For example, UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are already working together, along with INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and other partners, to assist Member States in protecting cultural heritage and countering trafficking in cultural property. We have also asked United Nations entities to propose new projects and would welcome new proposals by Member States and regional organizations on how best we can support them in protecting their cultural heritage.

With the assistance of United Nations entities, Member States are strengthening their legal frameworks and criminal justice systems and enhancing their collaboration to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks on their cultural heritage. We can and must do more. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism stands ready to do its part.

The President: I thank Mr. Voronkov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Azoulay. I congratulate her on her appointment at UNESCO and wish her every success in her new duties.

Ms. Azoulay: I am honoured to address the Security Council today. I wish thank Secretary-General Guterres for his report on the implementation

of resolution 2347 (2017), and the Italian presidency for organizing this meeting.

UNESCO is proud to have supported the Secretary-General in drafting his report, in close collaboration with all partners. I wish to thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the sanctions Monitoring Team, as well as the World Customs Organization (WCO), INTERPOL, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law and the International Council of Museums for their cooperation.

The adoption of resolution 2347 (2017) represents a major breakthrough and testifies to a new awareness of the importance of culture not only to respond to conflicts but also to prevent radicalization and fight violent extremism. It represents a paradigm shift in the way the international community approaches cultural heritage protection. The report shows that resolution 2347 (2017) has already resulted in the adoption of strong regulations and growing efforts to document, preserve and safeguard cultural heritage at risk. In a very short span of time, since April, 29 Member States have already shared information on new actions taken to protect cultural heritage, strengthen tools, train specialized personnel, reinforce international cooperation and share information.

Eight out of 15 members of the Council are among these Member States, which demonstrates the importance of protecting cultural heritage also as a security imperative. Italy has launched the Unite4heritage Task Force and developed a database of illegally removed cultural heritage that is the largest of its kind. France, the United Arab Emirates and their partners are implementing the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas fund initiative. Japan, France, Slovakia and the Russian Federation have reported new improvements in their own records of stolen objects, with national customs officers in Canada and Russia receiving training on the import/export control aspects of cultural property. Uruguay reported on the creation of an international committee against illicit trafficking within the Southern Common Market in April, and Sweden established a wildlife and cultural heritage crime unit within its national police. These are positive signals of deep change, but we need to do more.

Out of the 82 UNESCO World Heritage sites in the Arab region, 17 are on the List of World Heritage in Danger owing to armed conflict. More than 100 cultural

heritage sites across Iraq have been damaged. All six Syrian World Heritage sites have been severely affected, including Palmyra and the fabled city of Aleppo, one of the oldest cities in the world, now reduced to rubble. To respond, we must step up efforts in several key areas, outlined in the implementation report.

First, we must raise awareness about the resolution to strengthen its implementation by all Member States. Secondly, we need to facilitate data collection and information-sharing on trafficking routes and damage assessment. That is why, in recent months, UNESCO has sent rapid-assessment missions to Palmyra, Nimrud, Ashur and, most recently, Mosul to define emergency protection measures and evaluate possible restorations. Thirdly, we must train peacekeepers in the protection of cultural heritage and integrate this issue into peacekeeping mandates and missions. The successful example of the cooperation between UNESCO and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali is a very encouraging step forward and can be taken as an example. In all this, I pledge today once again UNESCO's determination to support Member States with the necessary tools and policy advice.

(spoke in French)

The implementation of resolution 2347 (2017) provides UNESCO with some basic guidelines. The first, which we must not forget, is respect for the fundamental link between cultural diversity and human rights. The two are linked. Recent history shows us that the enemies of human rights are the enemies of diversity, and this truth must guide our action. The second guideline, which is highlighted in the report, is to take a holistic approach to heritage protection issues. Illicit trafficking, the destruction of sites, extremist propaganda and the denial of history are parts of a comprehensive strategy that the community of nations must respond to in a holistic way.

We must do that, first, by stepping up the fight against the trafficking that finances terrorism and criminal activities. That is the meaning behind our work with UNODC, the WCO and INTERPOL, and also in cooperation with the private sector, auction houses and antiquities dealers.

Secondly, we must ensure the protection of sites, which represent physical and historical landmarks that are important to the cohesion and identity of peoples and therefore to their ability to live in peace.

Thirdly — and this is fundamental — stronger action should be taken to promote education, the raising of awareness and the dissemination of values that are rooted in the history of these heritages, and which are levers of dialogue and prevention. When extremist propaganda claims that Palmyra must be destroyed because it is a symbol of Roman occupation, which would be alien to the Syrian identity, everyone must be able to denounce these lies and to understand the history of the Palmyrene identity and the role of Palmyra as a crossroads of cultures. That is the role of museums, stakeholders in education, publishers, historians and scientists, who play a central role in this sharing of knowledge and are at the forefront of the struggle against hate propaganda and for the prevention of extremism. That is why UNESCO's heritage-protection work is part of a broader effort to educate people about citizenship and respect for others. We need to speak to young people through education, culture, media literacy and inclusive access to science. That is how we will succeed. That role is highly topical in the educational and cultural battle against hatred, and I want to convey to States the complete determination of UNESCO to fully play its role in the United Nations system.

The results of recent months are encouraging; that includes the ruling of the International Criminal Court condemning the destruction of the mausoleums of Timbuktu, which UNESCO helped to rebuild in part with the Malian people. I also welcome the recent ratification by France and the United Kingdom of the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, as well as the ratification by the United Arab Emirates of the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. We must extend the scope of these normative instruments even further.

We also have the opportunity, through new digital technologies, to access new potential for knowledge, heritage documentation and damage assessment.

Finally, this global awareness has led to the creation of several financial and political initiatives on the protection of heritage, and UNESCO aims to provide the expertise in that area with its major partners, and to be the main agent for the implementation of these initiatives. We have the capacity to do so, we have the tools, as well as the international legitimacy, thanks

to the United Nations, with further reinforcement by resolution 2347 (2017). I believe that by integrating heritage protection into security considerations, particularly through the mandate of peacekeeping operations, the Security Council is investing in a global approach that is based on heritage but that goes well beyond that to promote social cohesion, a sense of belonging, as well as the possibility — once peace is restored — for economic development. I believe that is useful work that we can do for those hit hard by conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Azoulay for her important briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fedotov.

Mr. Fedotov: I thank you, Sir, for inviting me to participate in this very important meeting of the Council. I would like to thank the Security Council, under the presidency of Italy, for its continued vigilance and attention to the need to stop the destruction, looting, trafficking and sale of cultural heritage by terrorists and organized criminals.

As the Security Council and General Assembly have recognized, we have a strong international framework in place. I take this opportunity to urge the international community to maintain focus on strengthening the effective implementation of almost universally agreed instruments, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has worked closely with UNESCO, INTERPOL, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law and other international partners to assist Member States in promoting comprehensive responses and stopping looted or stolen cultural property from being trafficked from the affected countries.

Looking ahead, we need to do more to support countries to detect stolen cultural property with a view to dismantling criminal networks. We must build up international cooperation in investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating cases related to trafficking in cultural property. We must also work to further promote the exchange of information on measures taken at the national level, including relevant criminal cases. That includes sharing such information with international organizations engaged in this fight. The art market and museums should pay special attention to the

provenance of cultural items that they are considering for acquisition, or with which they otherwise come into contact. Governments can help them to ensure that this care is diligently exercised.

UNODC remains fully engaged in working with our partners to support countries to build capacities and provide technical assistance. The UNODC-World Customs Organization Container Control Programme has developed advanced training to better position port control units to detect and interdict illicitly trafficked cultural heritage. That includes specialized knowledge for region-specific types of cultural property and methods to detect shipments containing such goods, as well as criminal intelligence training and support. We also continue to support anti-corruption and anti-money laundering action and to provide technical assistance to prevent and counter terrorism financing, including through the illicit sale of antiquities.

The International Guidelines for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses with Respect to Trafficking in Cultural Property and Other Related Offences, adopted by the General Assembly in 2014, represent a comprehensive reference for implementing the needed crime prevention and criminal justice responses. UNODC has developed an assistance tool to help put the guidelines into practice. The list of key actions outlined in the brochure entitled *Protecting Cultural Heritage — An Imperative for Humanity*, which was developed by the Governments of Italy and Jordan with UNODC, UNESCO and INTERPOL, also remains highly relevant. I urge all Member States to use these expert resources.

Even as we welcome news that groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant are losing control over territories, we must take the opportunity to further strengthen efforts to better safeguard vulnerable cultural property in various areas of conflict, as well as pursue longer-term measures to prevent terrorists and criminals from profiting from trafficking. Only in that way can we protect precious cultural heritage from being lost forever. UNODC's research and technical assistance capacities, reinforced by our network of field offices, remains at your entire disposal, Sir, to support such action.

The President: I thank Mr. Fedotov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Stock.

Mr. Stock: Allow me to also congratulate the new Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Audrey Azoulay.

I would like to begin my statement by thanking the Italian presidency not only for convening this briefing during an exceptionally full programme of work, but also for its long-standing leadership on the protection of cultural heritage. I am grateful for Italy's strong support for and recognition of INTERPOL's work in this field, and for the opportunity to address the Security Council today with such distinguished fellow briefers.

Let me unequivocally state INTERPOL's view on this threat. The destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage in armed conflicts are serious and transnational crimes, affecting international peace and security, first, through the financing of terrorist groups, as recognized by resolution 2199 (2015), which pointed to the use of funds raised by selling antiquities pillaged and looted from armed conflict zones; secondly, by hindering the processes of reconciliation and return to democratic governance in attempting to erase and desecrate social, cultural and economic assets; and thirdly, in causing loss to the global community. As the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict states,

“damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all humankind”.

INTERPOL has been fighting those crimes on behalf of law enforcement worldwide since 1946. In that endeavour, we cooperate closely with partners such as UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Customs Organization, the Monitoring Team of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, and the International Council of Museums.

Our efforts in protecting cultural heritage focus on the core of the INTERPOL mandate — the collection and exchange of vital, operational information across borders, including with law enforcement in conflict and post-conflict zones. In that endeavour we face unique challenges; essential criminal information on foreign terrorist fighters, travel and identity documents, weapons, tradecraft and trafficked property are often dispersed across actors in those areas.

Consolidating that information into a single operational flow is INTERPOL's primary goal. National central bureaus in each of our 192 member countries, including those in conflict situations, act as gateways for criminal data exchange with the international community. Coordinating the gathering and sharing of information into one centralized hub avoids intelligence gaps, prevents silos and promotes national sovereignty and the ownership of data by the host country. That is how the information that is shared by law enforcement on stolen cultural artefacts is given the visibility requested by national authorities, which is either brought to the attention of the general public or private entities, such as auction houses and dealers, or entered into our global database of over 50,000 records.

Recently, INTERPOL collected information from our national central bureaus in Baghdad and Damascus, identifying objects of invaluable cultural value stolen from Raqqa and Palmyra, in Syria, and Mosul, in Iraq. At the request of the two countries, that was immediately disseminated to law enforcement and other stakeholders to alert them to the thefts and facilitate the recovery of the items. In parallel, intelligence that is received through national gateways is used to identify trafficking routes and the methods used. That analysis is shared with member countries, along with best practices and training, as part of our international operational meetings and experts forum.

Finally, we are working to enhance real-time access to that intelligence, including through an upgrade to our database that would enable the storage of three-dimensional images of objects. A mobile application is being developed to allow police officers in the field, including in conflict zones, to take, store, upload and immediately check pictures of suspicious items against our records.

As we discuss today how to continue the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017), I would like to offer two action items for the Council's consideration.

First, it is imperative to exchange information on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects on routes, modus operandi and suspected traffickers. That data must be shared as widely and as rapidly as possible, while respecting the fundamental principle of non-duplication of channels.

Secondly, we must create specialized police units and national databases that are dedicated to the protection of cultural property and the investigation of

heritage-trafficking cases. Italy was the first country to establish one of those structures within the Carabinieri corps, as early as 1969. It is a model for the international community to adopt in front-line jurisdictions. It ensures coordination through a single national point of contact, opportunities to seize stolen objects and specialized investigative abilities in complex cases.

In closing, I wish to reiterate INTERPOL's commitment to working closely with our long-standing partner organizations and the newly established Office of Counter-Terrorism in the fight to protect cultural heritage and prevent terrorist financing worldwide.

The President: I thank Mr. Stock for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Bianchi.

Mr. Bianchi: I would like to thank the Security Council and the Italian presidency for the possibility of sharing some reflections on the present tendencies and conditions in the protection of cultural heritage under threat by terrorist groups or in armed conflict.

During the past 25 years, in my capacity as Project Leader on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Culture, I have taken part in a number of initiatives in crisis areas, from Bosnia and Kosovo in the early 1990s and post-crisis Algeria, in collaboration with UNESCO, to Iraq after the 2003 war. Some of our interventions also require the promotion and supervision of technical collaboration among the administrations of different States. Given those long years of experience in the field, we attach great importance to resolution 2347 (2017), since it updates the framework of international action in defense of heritage at risk, on the basis of changes that have occurred in conflict situations in recent decades.

Today, monuments in conflict areas are in the crosshairs of the enemy, considered to be symbols of identity and therefore deserving of desecration and destruction. Looting and illegal excavations are sources of income for criminal gangs and terrorist groups. Countless destruction has occurred over the past 25 years; churches, mosques and archaeological sites have been violated, while looted items have helped to feed a flourishing illegal market.

It is important to reiterate that terrorists are not pursuing financial gains alone. They want much more. They want to destroy the identities of peoples and to dismantle legitimate systems with violence. We could consider, for example, the destruction perpetrated by

the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the centre of Mosul, where soon after the June 2014 occupation 36 of 80 notable buildings were completely demolished. Why? Because they were legacies of the Shia community.

Given those experiences, resolution 2347 (2017) outlines the growing importance of three fields of action.

The first is the collection and circulation of technical data on monuments and archaeological sites and the increased use of modern technology, such as satellite remote control of the territory, for the systematic and rational assessment of possible damages. One example is the enquiry into the heritage of the Nineveh governorate under occupation in Iraq that was carried out not only through satellite photos, but also on the basis of a valuable archaeological atlas that was drafted by the Iraqi Administration in the 1970s.

The second is the improvement of coordination between law enforcement and judicial bodies dedicated to fighting international crime, preventing illegal excavations, coordinating customs procedures and inspecting the trade in artifacts.

The third is support for the administrations of affected territories by facilitating the rapid recovery of their pre-crisis capacities. More importantly, there must be a constant and careful respect for sensitivities and identities. Every country has its own laws and administrative structures that are tailored to their respective traditions. In fact, resolution 2347 (2017) properly calls on the international community to provide assistance to Member States in implementing the protection of cultural heritage, while respecting the sovereignty of all States.

The President: I thank Mr. Bianchi for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I express appreciation to the Italian presidency for convening this important briefing, and thank Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov and Under-Secretary-General Yuri Fedotov. I also thank the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Audrey Azoulay and congratulate her on assuming her responsible new position, the Secretary-General of INTERPOL, Mr. Jürgen Stock, and Mr. Alessandro Bianchi, Project Leader of Cultural Heritage Protection of the Italian Ministry of Culture, for their insightful

briefings. We commend all of their efforts to protect and restore the common cultural heritage of humankind.

We therefore welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/969) on the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017), as it enables us to comprehensively examine the problem and assess its gravity and scale. In order to execute global action, it is necessary that all States realize the importance of preserving and regenerating the cultural and historical heritage of individual countries and for the world as a whole. Heritage bears in itself the cultural and civilizational codes of a nation. The destruction of heritage inevitably leads to a society losing its very psyche, ethos and roots, and thereby its very identity and integrity. We therefore believe that protecting cultural heritage and fostering pluralism is essential to fostering peace, security and sustainable development.

Kazakhstan commends the outstanding role of UNESCO in the protection and recovery of cultural heritage worldwide. We strongly endorse the implementation of UNESCO's action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict. Likewise, we fully support other commendable initiatives, such as the Unite4Heritage campaign, and call for greater contributions to UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund. In that regard, we specially acknowledge the appeal to protect culture and promote cultural pluralism as the key to lasting peace, which was initiated by Italy and for which all Member States should jointly cooperate.

In order for our global measures to be strong and effective, we propose that all multilateral legal instruments related to cultural heritage be ratified and harmonized by all States parties, as the smuggling of artifacts is transnational. All Member States also need to accede to the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Likewise, they should also accede to the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

We agree with the briefers that in order to ensure effective implementation, each country must strengthen its institutions and mechanisms with specialized units and adequate tools and training for customs, border control, law enforcement and judicial authorities. In addition, sanctions regimes should be rigorously enforced with the stringent criminalization of illicit

trafficking in cultural property. We cannot but agree with the briefers that we need to work closely with business associations, antiquities markets and private dealers, and to have an inventory and documentation of artifacts and heritage sites. Our efforts will yield results only if we also have community awareness, education and wider public support to end the scourge.

We thank UNESCO for the assistance to Member States in implementing resolution 2347 (2017) at the national, regional and subregional levels. We express gratitude in particular for the organization, in Almaty in June, the subregional conference on the improvement of measures on the protection of cultural heritage in Central Asia. That conference helped to develop better mechanisms and cooperation at the subregional level to address related challenges in implementing existing international legal standards.

We would like to note the indispensable work of INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in facilitating international cooperation to prevent the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage and ensure accountability for such crimes. Our country shares the opinion of the Secretary-General that the main challenge facing law enforcement is the lack of priority given to the crime by Member States — an opinion that we must heed. We support INTERPOL's efforts, as described by Mr. Jürgen Stock, to create specialized units and dedicated national databases to combat the illicit trafficking of cultural property, as well as the publication of brochures with statistics on crimes against them. That will allow INTERPOL to enhance its operations at the regional level and share sensitive information about the channels used for the illicit export of stolen objects. We also support the recommendations of the Analytical Support and Monitoring Team to Member States to actively exchange information on seized antiquities via INTERPOL's database on stolen works of art and information on seizures and investigations via the ARCHEO platform of the World Customs Organization.

As a member of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the aforementioned Conventions of 1954 and 1970, Kazakhstan will continue to support the efforts of the international community aimed at protecting and preserving cultural and natural heritage, which is the rich legacy of all humankind.

Mr. Hoshino (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank the briefers for their passion and important insights.

Cultural heritage represents the history and identity of a nation or State. At the same time, it embodies the values of our common humanity. Yet, as demonstrated in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Mali and many other places in the world, we are facing a cruel reality in which cultural heritage is targeted for destruction, looting and smuggling by terrorist groups as a tactic of war. Japan strongly condemns such heinous acts.

For that reason, protecting cultural heritage is more than just a cultural issue. It is an issue of peace and security. We must not neglect the cultural aspect when talking about peace and security. Japan therefore commends the Italian presidency for bringing this important topic to the Security Council again.

Japan has long attached special emphasis to international cooperation for the protection of cultural heritage, as demonstrated by our public, private and academic partnership to restore Angkor Wat in Cambodia and to safeguard the Bamiyan site in Afghanistan, among other projects. Through those efforts, we have come to realize that protecting cultural heritage is a form of peacebuilding of hearts and minds. It undoubtedly contributes to the reconstruction and sustaining of peace in a nation or State. Based on our own experiences, I would like to present several insights that Japan wants to share with the Council's members.

First, Japan reaffirms its full commitment to promoting the deepening, universalization and implementation of international norms. In that regard, Japan welcomes the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017), as it is a significant step forward in the normative aspect. Japan is resolved to steadily implement the obligations that derive from the resolution. Japan is a State party to the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and other related conventions. Under those legal frameworks, various domestic measures have been introduced. I would like to encourage other States that are not yet parties to those conventions to join us in our efforts.

Secondly, we need to put into practice a global criminal justice response that focuses on holding perpetrators accountable. Coordination among the United Nations system and other international organizations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL, to assist Member States is critical to accomplishing that objective. In that respect, Japan has carefully followed the judicial case of Mali, in which the International Criminal Court sentenced an individual responsible for attacking religious buildings in Timbuktu to nine years in prison and issued reparation orders. That is the first judgment to clearly demonstrate that the destruction of cultural heritage amounts to a war crime, and perpetrators should be held accountable.

Thirdly, safeguarding cultural heritage through capacity-building should be encouraged. The Government of Japan established the UNESCO Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of the World Cultural Heritage in 1989, in response to the Government's decision to set cultural contributions as one of its priority areas for international cooperation. We have so far contributed approximately \$68 million to the fund for 44 projects in 61 countries.

Lastly, I would like to underline the importance of enhancing partnerships, as we need a comprehensive and multifaceted response in terms of protecting cultural heritage. Information-sharing and coordination among a broad range of stakeholders, such as the tourism sector, museums and dealers, are critically important.

To conclude, I would like to state that enhancing respect for other cultures is a fundamental starting point for the success of our collective actions. Japan is fully committed to engaging and cooperating with the United Nations and Member States to protect cultural heritage and thwart atrocities committed by terrorists and violent extremists, focusing on the four points I have just stated.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to commend Italy for its ongoing commitment to the issue of the protection of endangered cultural heritage. France and Italy have always shared the objective of protecting the heritage of humankind. That objective is deeply rooted in our common DNA and that is what led us in March to work together to draft resolution 2347 (2017), which was one of the deliverables of the International Conference on Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Conflict Areas,

held in Abu Dhabi. As others have said, it is the first resolution entirely devoted to the protection of heritage in situations of conflict and that, for the first time, covers all threats to heritage, whether or not they are posed by terrorist groups.

Allow me also to warmly welcome Ms. Audrey Azoulay and welcome her to the United Nations for her first briefing to the Security Council as Director-General of UNESCO, which was especially important and elucidating. I wish her every success in her new duties. I would also like to thank Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General and head of the Office of Counter-Terrorism; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Mr. Jürgen Stock, Secretary General of INTERPOL; and Mr. Alessandro Bianchi, Project Leader for Cultural Heritage Protection in the Italian Ministry of Culture, for their particularly useful briefings.

For France, as for the United Nations, the question of the protection of cultural heritage, given its essential and existential dimension, is and will continue to be a top priority. I will confine my remarks to three main points.

First, I would like to make an observation. Despite our efforts, cultural heritage remains highly threatened today, particularly in situations of armed conflict. Bamiyan, Timbuktu, Palmyra, Nineveh, Mosul and Erbil — there is, alas, no shortage of examples of the destruction of cultural heritage by armed groups or terrorist groups. Beyond the issue of civilization, heritage protection is also a security issue because illicit trafficking in looted cultural goods finances terrorist networks and is a factor in the development of armed conflicts. Armed groups and terrorist organizations are strengthened by the revenue derived from trafficking in antiquities. Stolen cultural property from war-torn countries in turn serves to fuel conflicts. That is why France has supported the possibility of some peacekeeping operations providing assistance to the authorities of the concerned countries in the protection of cultural and historical sites.

As was recalled by the Director-General of UNESCO, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali is already working closely with UNESCO to support the Malian authorities in protecting and valorizing the richness of their tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Resolution 2347 (2017) paves the way for the possible inclusion in the mandate of other peacekeeping operations, at the request of the Security Council, the provision of such support to the authorities of the countries concerned. In that spirit, it is imperative that the international community as a whole remain fully mobilized.

Secondly, I will address France's commitment. At the European level, France has worked hard to propose the new community instrument dedicated to controlling the import of cultural goods, the text of which is currently being discussed in Brussels. At the national level, France is implementing many measures that are in line with the objectives of resolution 2347 (2017). I will not enumerate them all, but emphasize two particular concrete measures.

The first measure is the strengthening of French legislation to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property. For example, the law of 3 June 2016 on the fight against organized crime, terrorism and their financing creates a new criminal offense aimed at punishing the intentional participation in the trafficking of cultural property from areas where terrorist organizations are established. Those provisions are supplemented and reinforced by the law of 7 July 2016, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, which notably provides for the introduction of customs control over the import of cultural goods. The second example is the cooperation of the French police services, in particular the central office to combat trafficking in cultural property, with INTERPOL through information-sharing exchanges, particularly in the context of investigations, thanks to the organization's integrated and secure communication system.

At the international level, France and the United Arab Emirates took the initiative of convening an international conference in Abu Dhabi in late 2016, at which we brought together States, public institutions, private partners, scientists and major non-governmental organizations to create an international alliance to protect endangered cultural heritage. The Abu Dhabi conference, as Ms. Azoulay recalled, launched two unprecedented initiatives. The first is the creation of a network of safe havens to house endangered cultural property and the second is the creation of the International Alliance for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH). France has contributed the first part of its pledge, and the work on

the Board of Trustees has started. UNESCO will also sit as a non-voting member of ALIPH.

All these initiatives are complementary to the UNESCO strategy to strengthen its action in the field of cultural heritage protection and the promotion of cultural diversity in armed conflict, and are in line with existing international conventions. France is also pursuing its cooperation with UNESCO through a number of actions at the regional level, particularly with regard to countries whose heritage is under threat, particularly through the training of heritage professionals, police and customs administrators.

Finally, and this will be my last remark, I want to stress the key role the United Nations plays in the protection of endangered cultural heritage. Resolution 2347 (2017) is a historic step forward in our common struggle to protect endangered heritage. In that connection, I would like to commend the role played by Ms. Audrey Azoulay. The resolution urged States and the United Nations system to redouble their efforts and ensure their consistency.

I commend the essential role played by UNESCO in the protection of heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity as an instrument of peace and a moral conscience of humankind, and recall that culture connects men and women to their history and their land and weaves the fabric of their future community. Thanks to UNESCO, States have committed themselves to this by adopting major conventions on the preservation of our common heritage. The mandate of this institution is more relevant than ever in a world where the values it has embodied since its establishment are being called into question.

In addition to welcoming the recognition in resolution 2347 (2017) of the need to prosecute those responsible for war crimes against cultural heritage, France hails the recent strengthening of the partnership between UNESCO and the International Criminal Court. It is a very positive development and it sends a strong message to armed and terrorist groups who are threatening cultural heritage. Moreover, its just confirms the recent work of the Court on this subject, in cooperation with UNESCO and France in particular.

I would also like to pay tribute to the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and INTERPOL, which both play a crucial role in the prevention of the trafficking of cultural property by raising States' awareness of

these still largely unknown problems through technical assistance or legal and police cooperation.

Lastly, the team of experts of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities is also conducting outstanding analytical work on the use of trafficking in cultural goods by terrorist groups. It is essential that the Security Council continue to support and rely on their expertise.

Each of these organizations and entities has a vital role to play. Resolution 2347 (2017) invites them and Member States to better coordinate their work and to ensure consistency in their approaches. It is our collective responsibility to preserve international peace and security and to prevent the destruction of cultural heritage by murderous attempts to deny history and prevent its use to finance terrorism and fuel conflicts. France will continue to play its part in these efforts and hopes that the Security Council remains fully engaged on this crucial issue.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank our briefers and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/969). It provides a comprehensive summary of the actions many of us have taken to protect cultural heritage sites since the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017) and, perhaps more importantly, of what more we can all do to prevent any further destruction.

In recent years, with the explosion of conflicts across much of the Middle East and Africa, terrorists have endeavoured to destroy not only the ways in which we choose to live today, but also our heritage and the records of how humankind existed in the past. This attempt to annihilate cultures that are not their own — whether through genocide, ethnic cleansing or war crimes — all too often goes hand in hand with the destruction of cultural heritage and identity. As we have seen in Palmyra, in Nimrud and Timbuktu, these brutal groups do not limit themselves to demolition, but also profit in trading artefacts that should belong to all and not to selfish individuals. With this trade, they fund more of their activities, be they attempts to expand their territories, inflict terror abroad or disperse their propaganda.

That is why we particularly welcome the International Criminal Court's sentencing of an individual for directing attacks against religious and

historic buildings in Timbuktu, as discussed in the Secretary-General's report, and we encourage the Court to prosecute all individuals who contribute towards this crime to serve as a deterrent to those who may be inclined to similar actions in the future. We also welcome the education and awareness-raising projects listed in the Secretary-General's report. I would like to commend Italy for its leadership on cultural protection. In addition to unified international action through legal and judicial instruments, this kind of practical action is essential to support those countries most at risk.

May I join others in congratulating Ms. Audrey Azoulay on her election as Director-General of UNESCO and in welcoming her today. We believe that UNESCO has a meaningful role to play in this area. We encourage the new Director-General to review UNESCO activity with a view to focusing resources on programmes and projects that will have the greatest impact and the demonstrable value for money.

To secure progress, public funding needs to be matched by investment from philanthropists and the private sector. I commend those trusts and foundations that are already supporting work in this area. We need more organizations to follow their lead and work in partnership with national Governments, multilateral agencies and civil society to protect our shared heritage for the benefit of humankind.

Allow me to take a few moments to discuss the United Kingdom's national actions in this area. Since the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017), we have ratified the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and acceded to both of its Protocols. This demonstrates the importance we place on responding forcefully to the destruction of cultural heritage by terrorists, looters and other malign forces.

Our enforcement agencies are continuing their efforts to prevent illicit artefacts from entering or leaving the United Kingdom. Considering the size of the United Kingdom's antiques market, we hope this will continue to have a significant impact. We have also established a cultural protection fund, initially of \$40 million, which is already helping to protect and conserve heritage at risk in conflict areas and providing the skills and expertise that are sorely needed to ensure that our shared heritage is safe for future generations.

This will also play an important role in post-conflict situations and support reconciliation between

communities and nations. We know that heritage sites that receive proper protection can produce economic, as well as social benefits, for example through sustainable tourism. Our cultural protection fund is already supporting projects in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Egypt, the Sudan, Yemen and Turkey, but we are keen to support other projects across the Middle East and North Africa, so we are exploring the scope to extend the programme to other regions where cultural heritage is at risk.

As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, world heritage sites and other iconic monuments and artefacts have been subjected to wilful destruction. We should and must do all that we can to prevent a recurrence of such acts. Civilization, education and our shared cultural heritage will prevail over destruction, barbarism and the division of terrorists.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank the Italian presidency for organizing today's briefing, as well as for championing the protection of cultural heritage in conflict situations. We also thank all the briefers for their respective presentations. I would also like to use this opportunity to welcome Ms. Audrey Azoulay and congratulate her on her recent election as the Director-General of UNESCO.

We welcome the first report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/969) on the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017), which shows that cultural heritage on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen continues to be damaged, looted, destroyed and illegally excavated owing to armed conflicts. The looting and smuggling of cultural artefacts and ongoing exploitation of cultural sites by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria and Iraq, as well as by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen, are also of great concern. Trafficking in cultural heritage continues to generate income for terrorist groups, such as ISIL, to fund their activities. It is in that context that we note with appreciation the positive developments that have occurred before and since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2347 (2017), involving institutional capacity-building, legislative accountability and enforcement measures geared towards further strengthening the protection of cultural heritage. We also welcome the work undertaken by UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization to that end.

All parties to an armed conflict have the obligation not to direct hostilities at cultural property, not to use cultural properties for military purposes and to avoid incidental damage to such property unless it is located in the immediate proximity of military targets or dictated by military imperative. Ensuring such special protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses a broad set of measures aimed at strengthening the protective framework for cultural heritage and ensuring accountability for properties.

We recognize that the primary responsibility for protecting cultural heritage from damage, destruction and looting lies with States themselves. They are also required to take all measures necessary within the framework of their criminal legislation to prosecute and punish individuals, groups or entities responsible for the destruction, looting, damage or trafficking of cultural heritage. However, that requires enhanced cooperation among Member States, as the report of the Secretary-General indicates. Strengthening that cooperation, including in the context of Security Council resolution 2347 (2017), is important, and such efforts could be complemented by measures at the international and regional levels and may encompass legislative enforcement, judicial cooperation and temporary protection, among other things.

As affirmed in resolution 2347 (2017), United Nations peacekeeping operations, when mandated, could also play a critical role in assisting relevant authorities, at their request, in protecting cultural heritage from destruction, illicit excavation, looting and smuggling in the context of armed conflicts. In that regard, we take note with appreciation of the support that UNESCO has provided to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

In our view, in addition to mandating peacekeeping missions to assist States in protecting cultural heritage in armed conflict, the Security Council could make a significant contribution to protecting cultural heritage and preventing its trafficking, theft, pillage or misappropriation by armed groups and terrorists. In that regard, I would like to underscore the significant role that the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities continues to play to that end

in providing the Committee with relevant information regarding the illicit trade of cultural property for a possible listing by the Committee, in accordance with Council resolution 2347 (2017).

I would like to conclude my remarks by underscoring the importance of continued implementation and follow-up of the measures identified under resolution 2347 (2017) and relevant international legal frameworks to further strengthen the protection of cultural heritage in the context of armed conflict.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China)(*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes your initiative, Mr. President, to convene today's open meeting on the prevention of the destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict. We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Director-General Azoulay, Executive Director Fedotov, Secretary-General Stock and Mr. Bianchi for their briefings.

Our rich cultural heritage is the very fabric of human civilization and the embodiment of equality, tolerance and cultural diversity. In recent years, we have witnessed frequent acts of destruction of precious examples of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in the course of armed conflicts. Terrorist groups also use the smuggling and trafficking of cultural heritage as a source of financing. This not only threatens international peace and security but also shows contempt for the world's cultures and civilizations. The international community should work together to combat such destruction by terrorist groups, and take effective measures to block any channels they use to smuggle or traffic cultural heritage, and protect cultural heritage in conflict situations.

First, we should implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in earnest and make full use of the relevant Council mechanisms. Resolution 2347 (2017) provides a framework for cooperation on the protection of cultural heritage. Member States bear the primary responsibility for this task and should work to effectively implement the provisions of the relevant Council resolutions, improving their domestic legislation, establishing early-warning mechanisms, strengthening law enforcement and resolutely combating the destruction or smuggling of cultural heritage by terrorist groups. The Security Council and its affiliated mechanisms should play their full part by helping Member States to enhance their relative

capacities to build and block all channels through which terrorist groups smuggle or traffick in cultural heritage to finance terrorism.

Secondly, we should take effective measures to protect cultural heritage in conflict zones and promote international cooperation in that regard. Countries in conflict situations face a more serious challenge in protecting their cultural heritage. The countries affected should develop security policies for the protection of cultural heritage and participate in the relevant international cooperation frameworks as soon as possible. The international community should provide constructive support, based on respect for the sovereignty of countries in conflict situations and their ownership of their cultural heritage. UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization should leverage their advantages by establishing databases on criminal activities such as illegal trade, exchanging intelligence and information and generating international synergy for the protection of cultural heritage in conflict situations.

Thirdly, we should strengthen dialogue between civilizations and promote stability and development in conflict areas. Countries should collectively promote the diversity of civilizations around the world and foster mutual respect and consultation on a basis of equality so as to address gaps and conflicts through exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations. All parties should advocate for the democratization of international relations and, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, assist countries in conflict situations in promoting political processes and realizing national reconciliation with a view to restoring peace and stability as quickly as possible. The international community should help affected countries improve their sustainable development capacities in order to enable them to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, swiftly reduce poverty and achieve common prosperity.

Cultural heritage is the shared patrimony of humankind and terrorism is its common enemy. China has always actively supported and participated in international cooperation for the protection of endangered cultural heritage. We stand ready to work with other nations to contribute further to preventing the destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups in situations of armed conflict.

Ms. Schougin Nyoni (Sweden): I would like to thank you, Sir, and Italy for the initiative of holding this meeting. I should also like to convey a special welcome to Ms. Audrey Azoulay and congratulate her on her election as Director-General of UNESCO. I also thank all the briefers for their important contributions. The perspectives they have shared with the Council have added greatly to our discussion today.

As we have heard, the destruction, looting and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict has both immediate and long-term consequences. We reiterate our steadfast condemnation of these hateful and cynical practices. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/969) shows, the destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage is particularly problematic in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya, with sites in these countries permanently damaged and where our common heritage is lost forever. Even though Da'esh has been pushed back considerably from territories in Iraq and Syria, the reports of continued seizures of antiquities originating from those areas underscore the need for our continued attention.

History has shown that cultural heritage is often targeted in its own right. Continued preventive efforts to protect cultural heritage are therefore essential, including those proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/969) on the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017), adopted earlier this year. We recognize UNESCO's leading role as the standard-setting agency for cultural-heritage protection and welcome its efforts to combat the destruction of cultural heritage and the illicit trafficking of cultural property. Sweden is actively supporting UNESCO's work in this field. We were pleased to join the States parties to the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict after our recent ratification of it.

As clearly demonstrated here today, there are a multitude of international and regional actors that play an important role in the protection of cultural heritage. A positive example of this was Pandora, a joint INTERPOL-European Police Office operation conducted in October and November 2016 with the cooperation of many Member States, UNESCO and the World Customs Organization, which resulted in a large number of works of art and cultural goods seized, as well as a significant number of arrests.

Sweden has been paying increased attention to the illicit trafficking of cultural property and cultural heritage crimes. As mentioned by Director-General Azoulay, a special wildlife and cultural-heritage crime unit was established within our national police force in 2016. There is also a dedicated national coordinator within the Swedish police authority working on strategies and developments in the field, and we are continuing our efforts to increase understanding of these issues among Swedish nationals travelling to conflict areas, as well as to train customs officers on export and import regulations related to cultural property.

As with all forms of trafficking, it is essential to look at the demand side of the trade. The burden cannot be borne solely by countries affected by war or terrorism. For that reason, we welcome the fact that the Secretary-General's report addresses the role of the art and antiquities market. The Swedish National Heritage Board has opened a dialogue with major Swedish art and antique dealers in order to raise their awareness of Security Council resolutions, with the aim of strengthening the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property. Revised anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorist financing legislation also creates stronger incentives for the private and public sectors to work together on such issues.

Looking forward, we take note in particular of the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding the training of personnel on the protection of cultural heritage and on planning processes ahead of mandate renewals and the establishment of new missions, where relevant. We look forward to UNESCO's continued involvement in that regard, together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and other relevant actors.

Where preventive efforts have failed, accountability for attacks on cultural-heritage sites and their destruction is essential, and the perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice. As shown by the *Al Mahdi* case, the International Criminal Court plays an important role where national authorities are unwilling or unable to properly investigate and adjudicate such crimes. We look forward to the important work of other investigative mechanisms, such as the International Impartial Independent Mechanism for Syria and the investigative team for Da'esh crimes in Iraq, in the fight against impunity for these crimes.

Finally, we warmly welcome the Secretary-General's call for further engagement and partnership with civil society, communities and young people through heritage education and other activities. Hopefully, with a stronger connection to our common heritage and a better understanding of it, we can promote respect for cultural diversity and tolerance and build inclusive societies that not only help to protect our cultural heritage better but that are also less prone to falling into conflict in the first place.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to warmly thank and commend the Italian and French delegations for once again inviting us, as they did eight months ago on 24 March (see S/PV.7907), to contemplate and take action based on the maxim of the German thinker Heinrich Heine that "where they burn books, they will also ultimately burn people". The bloody actions of armed groups and terrorists on the international stage have unfortunately confirmed that tragic universal reality.

I would also like to thank and commend today's briefers, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism; Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, whom we are very pleased to see appointed to lead that body and wish every success in her work; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Mr. Jürgen Stock, Secretary-General of INTERPOL; and Mr. Alessandro Bianchi, Project Leader of Cultural Heritage Protection for Italy's Ministry of Culture. Their admirable presentations call for determined and coordinated action on the part of the international community to prevent and put an end to the destruction and illicit trafficking of cultural heritage and, where possible, to restore or return them to their rightful owners.

Nothing has been left unsaid regarding the role of cultural heritage in preserving peace and security, as both tangible and intangible cultural heritage form part of the identities of whole communities, societies, peoples and nations for whom such heritage is a point of reference for shared values. It is a source of cohesion and togetherness — as a former President of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, has said, a common will to live together. With the adoption of its historic resolution 2347 (2017), the Security Council has fully recognized this essential dimension of cultural heritage.

The proliferation of armed conflicts throughout the world, coupled with the spread of international terrorism and violent extremism, owing to the criminal actions of terrorist groups whose trademark is the destruction, looting and trafficking of property, is one of the factors that is putting the world's cultural heritage in increasing danger. Organized looting and the illicit trafficking of cultural property have become a tactic of war for terrorist groups, which then use the proceeds to finance their criminal activities. Senegal has been shocked by the mass destruction and brutal sacking by these criminal groups of sites in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Libya, not to mention the destruction in 2012 of the mausoleums in Timbuktu, city of 333 saints. As a result, we contributed actively to the launching in June 2012 of the Saint Petersburg Declaration, which condemned their destruction.

It is therefore clear that the protection of world cultural heritage in conflict situations is a major challenge to which the international community must respond rapidly and appropriately. The international Conference on Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage, held in Abu Dhabi on 2 and 3 December 2016, laid a good foundation for that response. Given the persistence of this threat, we believe that it is essential to take an inclusive approach in the international efforts to adopt new strategies to tackle the destructive fury of these terrorist groups. Within the framework of that dynamic, as set out in paragraph 17 (j) of resolution 2347 (2017), it is important to take steps to make as precise an inventory as possible of cultural properties and other objects of archeological, historical, cultural and religious importance that have been illegally displaced, removed or transferred from conflict areas, so as to ensure coordination with the relevant United Nations entities and international actors for their speedy repatriation.

We also welcome the relevance of paragraph 4 of resolution 2347 (2017), which affirms that

“[D]irecting unlawful attacks against ... buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, or historic monuments may constitute, under certain circumstances ... a war crime and that perpetrators of such attacks must be brought to justice.”

The Senegalese delegation therefore once again commends the decision of the International Criminal Court of 27 September 2016, which for the first time in

the history of humankind identified the destruction of religious and cultural heritage as a war crime and, as a consequence of that decision, sentenced a perpetrator of such acts, Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, to nine years in prison, setting an important legal precedent that we hope will serve as a deterrent in future. Senegal encourages including support for safeguarding cultural heritage in peacekeeping missions' mandates so as to maintain the example set by resolution 2100 (2015) — which established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) — and subsequent related resolutions, the latest of which is resolution 2364 (2017), which, in paragraph 22 (c), entitled “Support for cultural preservation”, authorizes MINUSMA

“[T]o assist the Malian transitional authorities, as appropriate and if possible, protect the cultural and historical sites of the country against all attacks, in collaboration with UNESCO.”

Because the protection of cultural heritage is first and foremost the responsibility of the State where it is located, the United Nations and other relevant bodies must provide Governments that request it with all the support and assistance they need to establish national protection mechanisms. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of an international fund to protect endangered cultural heritage. It is equally important to strengthen cooperation — bilateral, subregional or regional — through joint initiatives within the framework of the appropriate UNESCO programmes. Similarly, enhanced cooperation among other international organizations, such as UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, would also help to further mobilize the international community in better coordinating the activities and initiatives of all stakeholders.

In conclusion, based on the connection between trafficking in cultural property and funding terrorism, I join the Secretary-General, as he outlines in paragraph 111 of his report (S/2017/969), in calling on Member States to consider the relevant provisions of resolutions 2199 (2015), 2253 (2015) and 2368 (2017), which complement the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017). Lastly, the French-Italian initiative that has brought us together today is part of the dialogue among cultures and civilizations, which is very important to my country and crucial to maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The tasks outlined in resolution 2347 (2017) regarding the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts, and in particular from terrorists, have not lost their relevance. I would like to thank the briefers for their detailed information on the work of the bodies they head and their thorough analysis of the challenges currently facing the international community in this area. We join others in congratulating Ms. Azoulay on her appointment as Director-General of UNESCO and wishing her every success.

We support strengthening and actively involving the expert capacity of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, including in providing States with technical assistance for combating crimes involving cultural property. We have great hopes for the future work of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, which has been entrusted with the vitally important task of coordinating the anti-terrorist efforts of the United Nations and partner organizations.

My delegation has studied the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/969) on the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017) with interest. We note its information on my country's active efforts to combat the destruction and illegal trafficking of cultural treasures. Our fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the Middle East and North Africa is coming to an end, and a key contribution to that achievement has been the success of the Russian aerospace forces in Syria. Nevertheless, it will take a long time to repair the damage that the terrorists have done to the region's cultural heritage. Much has been lost forever. Moreover, the revenue from trading in artefacts continues to be one of the main sources of funding for terrorists, despite the fact that combating this type of illegal activity has been on the Security Council's agenda for some time now. With the support of our delegation, the task of combating the financing of terrorism through trafficking in cultural property was set out in resolutions 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015). However, many unresolved issues remain with regard to their implementation.

Terrorists and the criminal groups affiliated with them exploit every possible loophole to send cultural property abroad. For example, Russia's border-control authorities were able to confiscate Ottoman-period tiles and other Syrian artefacts that had been stolen from territory under ISIL's control. If they had not,

part of Syria's cultural property would have wound up illegally in the hands of private collectors. According to our information, this trade in cultural property is carried out mainly by anonymous dealers. Cases of the illegal acquisition of such items via the Internet have also been documented. Unfortunately, it is difficult to track such transactions owing in large part to the difficulty of identifying the smuggled artefacts. A couple of months ago there was an interesting article in *The New York Times* on the methods used to smuggle artefacts into Europe and elsewhere. In the light of that, we once again call on all States to immediately submit to the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities any information they have on sources of funding for those organizations. We would like to highlight the importance of including individuals and organizations involved in trading cultural property with terrorists on the sanctions list.

Demining cultural sites and objects, in accordance with resolution 2347 (2017), is a major priority. The resolution calls on Member States, the relevant United Nations entities and other international bodies to provide assistance in that area. My country was one of the first to respond. Nowhere is the humanitarian issue of demining and preserving historic cultural heritage more acute today than in Syria. The specialists in the Russian armed forces' international anti-mine centre are contributing to those efforts. In Palmyra alone we have cleared more than 2,000 hectares while also identifying and defusing more than 24,000 explosive devices. However, our efforts to preserve Palmyra's cultural heritage have not been limited to that. The fourth Saint Petersburg Cultural Forum, in November, for example, mounted a Palmyra photo exhibit that included a three-dimensional model of the ancient city and high-definition relief maps provided by specialists from the Russian Academy of Sciences.

In general, we want to highlight the importance of involving experts in the field of cultural-heritage conservation. A good example in that regard was the signing, between UNESCO and the State Hermitage Museum, of a memorandum of understanding on the issue of the safeguarding and restoration of cultural property in conflict areas, primarily in the Middle East.

In conclusion, we reiterate our determination to develop cooperation with all interested parties in the context of implementing resolution 2347 (2017). We stand

readily to actively share our experience in protecting cultural property from terrorists. We are convinced that fighting the barbarous attempts by terrorists to destroy the memory of ancient civilizations is the common and historic task of the global community.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the briefings that we heard this morning from Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism; Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); Mr. Jürgen Stock, Secretary General of INTERPOL; and Mr. Alessandro Bianchi, Project Leader for Cultural Heritage Protection of the Italian Ministry of Culture. We express to them our support for their work.

Bolivia, as a country that abides by international law and one with a diverse and abundant cultural history and heritage, has elaborated domestic legislation and mechanisms aimed at regulating the classification, registration, restitution, protection, conservation, restoration, defence, custody and safekeeping of its cultural heritage.

It has also ratified the relevant international treaties and conventions and shares good practices in multilateral, regional and bilateral forums. With this understanding, and aware of the inestimable value of cultural heritage as a living portrayal of the identity of peoples, we express our strong and categorical condemnation of the plundering, trafficking, smuggling, destruction and any related activity systematically perpetrated by Da'esh, Al-Nusra, Al-Qaida and other terrorist and criminal groups to finance their criminal activities through the smuggling and illegal sale of cultural heritage property, the proceeds of which are laundered and funnelled into tax havens with few or no controls, especially with respect to investing in the tertiary sector.

The tremendous economic gains made by terrorist groups through these criminal acts have been possible mainly due to governance gaps, the weakening of the forces of order and security, and the absence of control at the borders to prevent such acts. We must therefore reiterate that these situations were caused primarily by the implementation of policies of regime change, interventionism and interference in the internal affairs

of States. It is clear from the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/969) that, since the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017), significant progress has been made. However, we must continue to make further efforts to ensure its comprehensive implementation. We believe, therefore, that the resolution is a useful tool for tackling the challenges involved in countering the illicit traffic in cultural heritage and property. Cooperation among States and various international organizations, including UNESCO, INTERPOL and UNODC, is a priority that must be given impetus and strengthened by the international community.

We also believe that joint action between special United Nations missions deployed on the ground in areas facing internal conflict would help effectively to strengthen their efforts and build capacity to counter illicit trafficking in cultural heritage. We believe that the efforts made to implement the resolution must also focus on returning cultural sites to their pre-conflict condition and also include mine-action efforts so as to clear explosive remnants of war and anti-personnel mines in such areas, given that post-conflict restoration and rehabilitation efforts can begin only when the security situation allows. We therefore believe that the positive experience registered in coordinating and carrying out joint mine action, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General, in which Mali, along with the United Nations Mine Action Service, began a general programme to neutralize these threats, is something that could be replicated in other countries.

Furthermore, those States in whose formal and informal markets cultural heritage has been identified and recovered must develop and adopt policies for redress and the return of said property and take into account the guidelines laid down in the various international instruments on the issue.

In this vein, there is also a need to strengthen the judicial mechanisms enabling the investigation and prosecution of persons involved in the commission of such crimes, and the international community needs to lend greater support to this effort. Therefore precedents such as the sentence handed down by the International Criminal Court in the Al-Mahdi case, on the destruction of historical and religious sites in Mali, is a necessary benchmark in terms of combating impunity.

In closing, Bolivia reiterates its rejection of all acts of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motive, whenever and by whomsoever committed.

We reiterate the need for all States to use every means available to combat terrorism, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law. All counterterrorism efforts made by the Security Council and the United Nations must be fully supported by Member States, which must seek to bring to justice those responsible for such crimes, so that they can be duly investigated, prosecuted and punished.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking all the briefers who spoke this morning. I would like to pay particular tribute to Ms. Audrey Azoulay, who has been appointed the new Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

According to the agenda, this will be the last formal Security Council meeting under the Italian presidency, so allow me, Sir, to convey to you and your entire team our congratulations on the excellent work that you have carried out. You and your team are duly complimented.

Cultural goods are a physical manifestation of a people's identity, history and culture, and for this reason they deserve to be safeguarded. Cultural artifacts that fall within the category known as world cultural heritage have exceptional universal value, and therefore protecting them is a right and obligation borne by all. We owe it to our ancestors and future generations.

The international community has recognized this value and the need to safeguard it, and it has adopted legal instruments such as the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which provides that harm done or damage caused to cultural property belonging to any people is an attack against the cultural heritage of the entire human race. The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage holds that the deterioration or disappearance of cultural heritage represents a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all peoples of the world.

Uruguay attaches great relevance to efforts to protect and preserve cultural heritage, and here we underscore the central role and importance of the work of UNESCO, with which Uruguay maintains close cooperation links.

We also recognize the value of coordinating action with other United Nations entities, international organizations and non-governmental organizations,

including INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Customs Organization, to name just a few. We welcome the letter of intent signed by the International Criminal Court and UNESCO last November to formalize and strengthen their cooperation.

Resolution 2347 (2017) provides that Member States have the primary responsibility for protecting their cultural heritage. It urges them to take effective measures to prevent and counter the trafficking of cultural property and related crimes and to cooperate in various ways and at different levels. In that regard, we wish to emphasize that, thanks to police and judicial cooperation, Uruguay was recently able to seize archaeological pieces from various sources, including some from the city of Palmyra.

Uruguay ratified the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and acceded to its Second Protocol. It also ratified the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

In the area of regional cooperation, last April, the Technical Committee to Prevent and Combat Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Goods of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was established in order to facilitate joint work on combating the trafficking and illegal sale of cultural property and on its recovery.

At the national level, as noted in the report of the Secretary General, Uruguay enacted Law No. 18.494 on the Control and Prevention of Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism. That law includes auctioneers and the natural and legal persons engaged in the purchase and sale of antiques, works of art and precious metals and gemstones among those that must report to the Financial Information and Analysis Unit of the Central Bank of Uruguay on transactions considered suspicious or unusual, in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Also, under decree 42/017 of February of this year, the National Committee to Prevent and Combat the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property was established. The tasks of the Committee include the drafting of joint strategies to reduce and to combat the illicit trafficking of cultural property, the administration of a register of stolen or trafficked cultural property and the development of protocols for the prevention,

identification, recovery and restitution of such goods. The Committee is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Association of Mayors, which brings together the regional governors of Uruguay.

The Chair of the Committee is also the focal point for cooperation among the technical committee on the illicit trafficking of cultural property of MERCOSUR, the working group on the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage of UNASUR and other international areas in which the country participates or may participate on that issue.

In addition, with regard to the adoption of legislative measures, the executive branch is drafting a bill that includes aspects such as police procedures, delivery protocols, formalities and communications with ministries of culture of third countries, as well as the establishment of a database on stolen, recovered or lost objects of cultural heritage and the obligations of pawnshops, auction houses and antique dealers.

In conclusion, we would like to express our commitment to continuing to work to implement resolution 2347 (2017) and our willingness to continue to cooperate bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally for the protection of cultural property and heritage.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to join other speakers in thanking the Italian presidency for convening this meeting. My thanks also go to today's briefers for their valuable inputs to our discussion. An especially warm welcome goes to Ms. Azoulay, whom I congratulate on her recent election as UNESCO Director-General.

By adopting resolution 2347 (2017), the Security Council drew the attention of the international community to a growing problem of destruction of cultural heritage and trafficking in antiquities, which has become a feature of numerous armed conflicts worldwide. The most vulnerable to those threats are the countries of Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Yemen, given the involvement of non-State actors such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida, the Taliban and the like. In some cases, the actions of terrorists in pursuit of easy profit can lead to the wholesale obliteration of a country's archaeological record. In several countries where terrorists have suffered major territorial losses, their ability to conduct such criminal activities in order

to fund their atrocities was limited. Yet, according to UNESCO estimates, the value of the illicit trade in artefacts excavated or looted from protected sites and museums is nevertheless enormous.

As outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/969), resolution 2347 (2017) is far from being implemented in full, as States may need more time to adjust their respective legislation. I would like to limit the rest of my statement to the following measures on which States can focus, apart from the universalization of the relevant international treaties adopted under the auspices of the United Nations or regional organizations.

First is the broader criminalization of offences against cultural heritage and the imposition of stiff penalties for illegal activities with regard to antiquities, such as prison sentences or very high fines. It is important to increase the latter so that they are not viewed as simple business expenses for professional smugglers. That will serve the purpose of bringing perpetrators to justice.

The second measure is the strengthening of import-export regimes and the respective national institutional frameworks. International coordination between law enforcement and customs agencies will also contribute to the effective conduct of the investigations, prosecutions, seizures and returns of smuggled cultural property. In addition, States must ensure broader information-sharing on trafficking routes and the modus operandi of criminals. There must also be active cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels on exposing and on stopping transnational organized crime groups, which assist terrorists in exporting looted antiquities from conflict zones. For those purposes, liaison with UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL, as well as the utilization of their relevant databases, are also essential.

Thirdly, close public-private partnership is necessary to track the sale of illegally imported artefacts. Given that the Internet has become a major conduit for criminal activities, special attention should be given to supervising relevant online auctions. In that regard, the development of self-regulations by participants in the art market is particularly welcomed.

Finally, the further monitoring by the relevant United Nations bodies of the actual impact of resolution 2347 (2017) on preventing the destruction and smuggling

of cultural heritage is required to assess the dynamics in that area and to develop lasting solutions.

In conclusion, I would like to pay the highest tribute to the Italian presidency for the excellent and professional conduct of our business in November.

Mr. Awad (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the Italian presidency for having convened this briefing. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017) (S/2017/969). And I thank all the briefers for their valuable statements. I would like to congratulate Ms. Azoulay on the assumption of her new post.

The importance of resolution 2347 (2017) lies in its reaffirmation of the protection of cultural heritage from destruction, looting or misuse for terrorist ends. That is a very sensitive topic, since it is closely linked to sites, property, museums or objects that are directly related to the history and identity of peoples and countries. Egypt is aware of that fact. We possess invaluable cultural heritage that garners the respect and appreciation of all. Secondly, we enjoy a geographical location in a continent and a region that is home to the majority of the world's cultural heritage. Egypt is therefore aware of the importance and sensitivity of the topic of protecting cultural heritage from destruction or looting by terrorist groups in situations of armed conflict.

Despite the relatively short time since the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017) and the publication of the Secretary General's report, the report nevertheless managed to adequately take stock of the efforts made to implement the resolution — from all legal, judicial, legislative, institutional, procedural and operational aspects, in addition to those related to international cooperation and raising awareness. Aware as we are of the importance and sensitivity of the issue of protecting cultural heritage from the dangers of terrorism, Egypt would like to highlight five important considerations that must be taken into account.

First, we stress the primary role of every State to protect its own cultural heritage. Efforts to protect cultural heritage in armed conflicts must be aligned with Charter of the United Nations and international law. Respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States are principles that must be upheld. In that regard, we affirm that the protection of cultural heritage, including the possibility

of establishing safe havens for such heritage, cannot be achieved but through the State having control over cultural heritage within its territory. In other words, Egypt categorically objects to any interference in the internal affairs of any country under the pretext of protecting cultural heritage. We refuse categorically the transfer of cultural heritage owned by any country to another State beyond its territories under the pretext of protecting or preserving it in safe havens.

Secondly, we stress the need for UNESCO, in its capacity as the specialized agency on the issue of cultural heritage, to continue providing all types of assistance to States, at their their request, to enable them to protect their cultural heritage. The Security Council must not address the topic of protecting cultural heritage except in cases that pose a threat to international peace and security, namely, in the context of combating international terrorism or addressing international conflicts that are on the agenda of the Council.

Thirdly, States must take the necessary steps to avoid and prevent the illicit trafficking and smuggling of cultural objects or properties, especially from conflict zones — and more specifically via terrorist groups.

Fourthly, States must prepare lists of their cultural properties that were transferred from their original sites illegally during armed conflicts. In that regard, cooperation and coordination is needed with United Nations entities and other relevant international actors to ensure the secure restoration of such objects.

Fifthly, we must ensure that peacekeeping operations include a component that assists the countries concerned, at their request, to protect their cultural properties from destruction, looting or similar offences.

In conclusion, while Egypt underscores that protecting cultural heritage is a commendable goal, we nevertheless believe that the real lesson to be learned concerns the need for States to implement Security Council resolutions, and for the Council itself to ensure close follow-up in the implementation of its resolutions and guarantee that States comply with their provisions.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank the invitees for their briefings, and also I also thank Italy for having organized this meeting.

Earlier this year, Iraqi soldiers discovered tunnels dug below the remains of the tomb and osque of Jonah

in Mosul, which showed that militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) were excavating into an ancient Assyrian palace that is at the same site. That excavation took place, of course, after ISIS had already destroyed the historic tomb and mosque above, in 2014. What was the likely target of ISIS? Valuable antiquities to loot and then traffic in global markets. I share this story to illustrate that nefarious activity has become, in effect, part of the business plan of ISIS.

Even after liberation from ISIS, cultural heritage and antiquities remain under threat, as fleeing members of ISIS will likely seek to sell artefacts that could continue to provide a substantial revenue stream. The ability to sell looted goods over the Internet has turned a once cost-prohibitive market into one accessible by anyone with a cell phone or Internet connection. The United States has been unwavering in its commitment to protecting and preserving cultural heritage. Our policy is clear: the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage and the trafficking of cultural property are unacceptable.

We join the United Nations and Council members in affirming that countries have a responsibility to preserve and protect heritage of universal importance and prevent its exploitation for terrorist purposes, including illicit financial gain. The United States continues robust implementation of its own domestic tools for putting an end to the destruction of cultural heritage and trafficking of cultural property. The emergency import restrictions on Syrian and certain Iraqi cultural property remain in place, and serve as a strong disincentive to would-be traffickers.

The United States has also negotiated bilateral agreements with 16 countries to block the illegal importation of archaeological and ethnological material into the United States. We urge States parties to the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property whose heritage is in jeopardy to request the same type of protection.

The cultural antiquities task force established by the United States Department of State focuses on the recovery and repatriation of looted cultural objects and supports law enforcement agencies in such efforts. The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation maintains an national stolen art file — a computerized database of stolen art and cultural property — and makes its

information available to law enforcement agencies around the world.

For several years, the United States Government has provided funding to the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) to continue its important work in Syria and northern Iraq. This year we have expanded ASOR's work to also include Libya. With that funding, ASOR monitors cultural heritage sites in those areas using satellite imagery, human intelligence and public information in order to document evidence of destruction and looting by ISIS and other actors. United States funding has also enabled the Smithsonian Institution to train Iraqi cultural heritage professionals so that they can be prepared to implement needed interventions when the security situation allows.

We remain fully committed to those efforts, and we look forward to coordinating with the United Nations and Member States and with the United Nations and international entities, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities over the coming year on the full implementation of resolution 2347 (2017).

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I commend today's briefers for their insightful remarks and for their strong commitment to the protection of cultural heritage, which has increasingly become one of the main targets of systematic and deliberate attacks by terrorist groups and in situations of conflict, and is also used, as we were reminded, to finance terrorism and organized crime. Those attacks affect people's historical identity and undermine important values, such as tolerance, respect for diversity and inclusiveness, thereby hampering post-conflict reconciliation and the long-term stability of the countries affected.

The international community has recognized the link between the destruction of cultural heritage and violence against local populations, including through a landmark statement of the International Criminal Court in the case of *Prosecutor v. Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi*, and the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the UNESCO General Conference and its Executive Board.

It is critical to elaborate and implement coordinated measures at the legal and operational levels aimed at preventing and countering all forms of trafficking in cultural property. We have made the protection of cultural heritage and the fight against the illicit trafficking in cultural artefacts one of our main priorities, including during our mandate on the Security Council, during which we have focused on the Mediterranean, where Italy's cultural identity is rooted in thousands of years of exchanges and where today instability threatens our common heritage.

In Paris, at UNESCO, we launched the idea of the Blue Helmets for Culture. We have supported the Unite4Heritage campaign by creating a national task force, and promoted a specific resolution devoted to intervention in areas of crisis. Together with Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, we co-chaired the Counter-ISIS Finance Working Group of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, and we co-chair the sub-working group on the fight against the smuggling of archaeological artefacts.

In New York since 2015, we have been working with many organizations, such as United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNESCO and INTERPOL, whose heads briefed the Council today, and with many countries, including France and Jordan, to address different aspects of the protection of cultural heritage, with special attention to the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural artefacts. In particular, that initiative concluded with the presentation of a list of proposed key actions to be undertaken by all the main stakeholders in response to attacks against cultural heritage.

In September, at the high-level event on protecting cultural heritage from terrorism and mass atrocities, held on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr. Angelino Alfano, stressed once again the fact that acts of intentional destruction of cultural heritage are a huge obstacle to peace since they hinder dialogue and reconciliation by fomenting hatred among communities and between generations.

To address the rise in destructive attacks and serious crimes perpetrated by terrorists, France and Italy together — and we share the same vision, as Ambassador Delattre said earlier — we jointly

promoted resolution 2347 (2017), as many speakers recalled today, as an advanced legal framework for the protection of cultural heritage and property in armed conflicts. The resolution foresees, inter alia, promoting the ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments; strengthening international cooperation; introducing operational measures to safeguard and preserve endangered cultural heritage; promoting cultural pluralism; introducing operational measures to prevent and counter the trafficking of cultural property illegally appropriated and exported in the context of armed conflicts, notably by terrorist groups for financing their operations; and affirming that the mandate of United Nations peacekeeping operations may encompass the protection of cultural heritage from destruction.

As has already been underlined this morning, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/969) offers the first overview of the implementation of resolution 2347 (2017), and contains specific proposals dedicated to future actions based on the provisions of the resolution. The report expresses the strong commitment of the United Nations system to acting in a more harmonious way and to enhancing its cooperation among Member States, which hold primary responsibility for the protection of their community and culture.

We will continue to actively work on that issue through the expertise of our Carabinieri and dedicated experts like Mr. Bianchi, because Italy believes that the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion and respect of cultural diversity are key elements of reconciliation and peacebuilding processes and in establishing a sustainable, inclusive human development. No society can flourish without culture. No mutual relations can be established without respecting peoples' history and its soul.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

As this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of November, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Italy to Council members, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives, the respective staff and the secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given to us. It has been a busy month, one in which we have addressed, I think always constructively, together with the Council members many important issues.

We could not have done so without the hard work, support and positive contribution of every delegation, the representatives of the secretariat and all relevant conference service officers and interpreters.

As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council, in wishing good luck to the delegation of Japan in the month of December.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.