

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 1 May 2023 from the representatives of Cyprus,
France, Italy and the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations
addressed to the President of the Security Council**

We have the pleasure to inform you that the Permanent Missions of France and the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, with the co-sponsorship of the Permanent Missions of Cyprus and Italy to the United Nations, will organize an Arria-formula meeting entitled “Protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts” on Tuesday, 2 May 2023. The meeting will be held in Conference Room 7 at United Nations Headquarters from 3 p.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, the Permanent Missions of Cyprus, France, Italy and the United Arab Emirates have prepared a concept note (see annex).

We should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Andreas **Hadjichrysanthou**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

(Signed) Nicolas **de Rivière**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

(Signed) Maurizio **Massari**
Ambassador
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(Signed) Mohamed **Abushahab**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative



**Annex to the letter dated 1 May 2023 from the representatives of
Cyprus, France, Italy and the United Arab Emirates to the
United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

**Concept note for the Arria-formula meeting on the theme
“Protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts”, to be held on
2 May 2023**

I. Introduction

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

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

Security Council resolution [2347 \(2017\)](#) is the first Council resolution entirely dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict. Another objective of the event is to explore progress made and challenges related to the efforts towards giving a better place to culture in the discussions on peace, security and humanitarian norms and processes. The event will showcase some success stories related to the implementation of resolution [2347 \(2017\)](#) and the body of United Nations instruments.

II. Background

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

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

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

Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have addressed the protection of culture in conflict situations and highlighted the connection between the

destruction of cultural heritage, trafficking in cultural property and the financing of terrorism, including in Council resolutions [2199 \(2015\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#).

In March 2017, upon the initiative of France and Italy, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2347 \(2017\)](#) on the maintenance of international peace and security and the destruction of and trafficking in cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict, the first-ever Council resolution to be focused on the protection of cultural heritage and in which the importance of heritage protection for peace and security was recognized.

More recently, these concepts have been highlighted at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022, which was held in Mexico in September 2022. Adopted by 150 countries, the MONDIACULT 2022 declaration provides the reaffirmation that culture is a global public good and welcomes the new impetus given to the role of culture in peace and stability.

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

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

Against this backdrop, UNESCO has stepped up its efforts, working closely with Member States and the agencies and other relevant international organizations concerned (e.g. the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas) in the protection and safeguarding of culture in armed conflicts, including efforts to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property.

III. Questions for discussion

- What good practices and lessons have been learned regarding the implementation of the United Nations instruments, including Security Council resolution [2347 \(2017\)](#)? How can the implementation of the existing international and regional legal instruments be strengthened?
- What role can cultural heritage play in promoting resilience, dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance and peaceful coexistence between and within communities, including in post-conflict situations and between displaced populations and host communities? How to better include communities in the decision-making process and empower them, especially youth and women?
- What role should the protection of tangible and intangible heritage play in international security and humanitarian action and the transition to development?

- What measures can be taken to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in cultural objects originating in the context of armed conflict?
- What can be done to address the harmful effects of climate change and extreme weather patterns that could threaten cultural heritage in conflict and post-conflict situations?

The debate will be aimed at exploring gaps and opportunities, considering these parameters and sharing some of the relevant experiences and good practices. Special focus will be placed on the most recent initiatives to advocate the protection of culture in conflict situations.

IV. Briefers

- Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO
- General Vincenzo Molinese, Commander of Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Italy)
- Omar Al Taweel, UNESCO Site Coordinator for the Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative (virtually, from Iraq)

V. Format

The meeting will be held on 2 May 2023 from 3 to 6 p.m. at United Nations Headquarters, in Conference Room 7. Interpretation will be provided in the six official languages of the United Nations.

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

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

To subscribe to the list of speakers, please email Anne Freudenreich (Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations) at anne.freudenreich@diplomatie.gouv.fr no later than Monday, 1 May, at 12 p.m.

Statements should be sent to the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations at sec.italyun@esteri.it.
