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STRATEGY FOR THE REINFORCEMENT OF UNESCO'S ACTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURE AND THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL PLURALISM IN THE EVENT OF ARMED CONFLICT

OUTLINE

Background: This document is submitted to the consideration of the General Conference, pursuant to 202 EX/Decision 5.I.H on the "Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict".

Purpose: It contains, in Annex I, an Addendum to the Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict, concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards, with a view to its adoption by the General Conference. It also contains, in Annex II, an Appeal on "Protecting Culture and Promoting Cultural Pluralism: The Key to Lasting Peace".

Decision required: paragraph 8.

1. At its 38th session, the General Conference adopted 38 C/Resolution 48, concerning a *Strategy for the reinforcement of UNESCO's action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict* (hereinafter the *Strategy*).



39C/2017/025/04

2. The resolution invited the Director-General to elaborate, in coordination with Member States and relevant actors, an Action Plan in order to further refine and implement the *Strategy*, in accordance with UNESCO's mandate (paragraph 2); invited Member States to support the elaboration of the Action Plan for the implementation of the *Strategy*, by defining mechanisms of rapid response and mobilization of national experts, as well as by contributing to the Heritage Emergency Fund (paragraph 3); and invited the Director-General to explore, in collaboration with Member States, practical ways for implementing such mechanism for the rapid intervention and mobilization of national experts (paragraph 4).

3. Following the presentation of a report on the implementation of the *Strategy*, together with the Action Plan to its 201st session, and recognizing that many activities conducted in response to armed conflict are also relevant to crisis situations associated with natural disasters, the Executive Board, by its 201 EX/Decision 5.I.E, took note of and welcomed the Action Plan, and decided to include disasters within its scope (paragraph 14). The Board also recommended that the General Conference, at its 39th session, consider including natural disasters within the scope of the *Strategy*, as appropriate.

4. Pursuant to this decision, a proposed Addendum to the *Strategy*, laying out a strategic framework for UNESCO's work on culture in relation to emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards, was presented to the Executive Board at its 202nd session. The Board, by its 202 EX/Decision 5.I.H, requested that the agenda of the 39th session of the General Conference include an item to consider the Addendum to the *Strategy* on natural disasters and recommended its adoption as an integral part of the Strategy, the operationalization and financing of which would be ensured through the implementation of its Action Plan (paragraph 6).

5. The *Strategy* has not been modified in the process of adding the Addendum concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards. Its content remains unchanged since its adoption by the 38th session of the General Conference.

6. In addition, the Executive Board also recommended to the General Conference, in the context of the same item, to endorse and launch the appeal on "Protecting Culture and Promoting Cultural Pluralism: The Key to Lasting Peace", presented to it in the annex to 202 EX/PX/DR.5.I.H (paragraph 7). The appeal is aimed at raising global awareness on the importance of protecting culture in the event of armed conflicts and natural disasters as a means to achieve peace and strengthen resilience, and invites the Director-General, as well as Member States, to continue fostering the role of UNESCO in this critical area of work.

7. Therefore, this document contains in its annexes the Addendum to the *Strategy* concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards (Annex I), as well as the appeal on "Protecting Culture and Promoting Cultural Pluralism: The Key to Lasting Peace" (Annex II).

8. The General Conference may wish to adopt the following resolution:

The General Conference,

Recalling 38 C/Resolution 48, 201 EX/Decision 5.I.E and 202 EX/Decision 5.I.H,

Recognizing the need to protect culture from the increasing number of natural disasters, in line with the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the positive contribution that culture can make to strengthening the resilience of communities in the face of natural and human-induced hazards,

Welcoming the central role played by UNESCO in sensitizing the highest political levels on the protection of cultural heritage as a security and humanitarian imperative,

Recalling the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2347 (2017), the first resolution to focus exclusively on cultural heritage and its role for the maintenance of peace and security,

Having examined document 39 C/57 and its two annexes,

1. *Adopts* the Addendum to the *Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict* concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards, as described in document 39 C/57, Annex I;
2. *Calls upon* all Member States to continue supporting the implementation of the *Strategy*, including its Addendum and the related Action Plan, notably through voluntary contributions to the Heritage Emergency Fund and in-kind contributions as appropriate;
3. *Endorses and launches* the appeal on "Protecting Culture and Promoting Cultural Pluralism: The Key to Lasting Peace" with the aim of raising global awareness on the importance of protecting culture in the event of armed conflicts and from natural disasters as a means to achieve peace and strengthen resilience, and of inviting the Director-General, as well as Member States, to continue fostering the role of UNESCO in this area.

ANNEX I

Addendum to the *Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict (i.e. the Strategy)*, concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards

The present Addendum lays out a strategic framework for UNESCO's work on culture, in relation to emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards (in short: natural disasters). In doing so, it complements the *Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict* (hereinafter the *Strategy*), adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 38th session in 2015 (38 C/resolution 48), of which it becomes an integral component. Both the above-mentioned *Strategy* and its present Addendum are to be operationalized through the implementation of the Action Plan that was welcomed by the Executive Board of UNESCO in its 201 EX/Decision 5.I.E¹. While the above-mentioned *Strategy* and the present Addendum are intended as policy frameworks and thus normally not subject to change, it is recalled that the Action Plan should be understood as a living document, to be adjusted and enriched over time, in coordination and consultation with Member States, as deemed appropriate.

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been an exponential rise in the number of reported disasters across the globe. In addition to causing enormous loss of life and property, these disasters – which can result either from natural hazards such as earthquakes or cyclones, or from human-induced hazards such as fire or infrastructure failure – have caused widespread damage, at times irreversible, to culture. Recent disasters such as the earthquakes in Nepal (April 2015) and Ecuador (April 2016), or the fire at the Royal Palaces of Abomey, Benin (January 2015) are just some examples of the extreme vulnerability and exposure of culture and the lack of resources and planning in place to protect it.

The vulnerability and exposure of culture to disasters is on the rise due to a wave of profound social environmental changes, including global climate change, resulting in both rapid-onset and slow-onset disasters. Evidence demonstrates that rapid economic growth, combined with fast population expansion in urban areas and more frequent extreme weather events, is increasing disaster vulnerability and exposure of culture and heritage in cities.

The challenges posed by the growing impacts of disasters on culture are further compounded by armed conflict. Indeed, it has been acknowledged² that armed conflict and disasters often interact and reinforce each other, and that their co-location undermines peaceful and sustainable development, and hampers efforts to build resilience. In this spirit, actions meant to protect culture and heritage under attack are, in many instances, complementary to preventive and response measures for managing disaster risks to culture and heritage.

In addition to the direct impacts of disasters on physical assets, their effects include the disruption of the culture sector's governance³, the looting and trafficking of cultural objects, the disruption of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) transmission, the loss of traditional knowledge and practices, and

¹ The Action Plan is accessible from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002489/248900e.pdf>

² See K. Harris, D. Keen and T. Mitchell: "When disasters and conflicts collide. Improving links between disaster resilience and conflict prevention", ODI, London, March 2015, accessible from: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8228.pdf>

³ By "culture sector" (with small initials), it is intended here and in other parts of this document to designate the public and private institutions and organizations, at all levels, working in the field of culture, while Culture Sector (with capital C and S) refers to the Sector of Culture of UNESCO.

of the economic opportunities associated to cultural industries, including tourism, and in general, limitations to the ability of the affected populations to access and benefit from their cultural resources and practices. The loss of culture equally results in a loss of identity, and thus affects the way in which people relate to the world. The significance of culture in the lives of communities and individuals, as an anchor for identity and belonging, makes its continuity a powerful tool for building resilience, serving as a basis for sustainable recovery, with the rehabilitation of heritage contributing towards healing the psychological impact of a disaster by allowing communities to recover a sense of hope, dignity and empowerment.

There is now a growing appreciation of the dual role of culture in disasters – on the one hand as key consideration in risk prevention, and on the other hand as a contributing factor in enhancing resilience. In the latter respect, in particular, it has been increasingly recognized that both tangible and intangible cultural heritage are not merely passive resources liable to be affected and damaged by disasters, but rather have a proactive role to play in building the resilience of communities and saving lives and properties from disasters. This is exemplified through local knowledge systems and practices embodied in planning, construction, management and ecology, which not only may prevent or mitigate the impact of disasters but also provide sufficient coping mechanisms to deal with post-disaster situations. Similarly, cultural properties can serve as refuge, both physical and psychological, for surrounding communities for their temporary relocation during emergencies.

Despite the above, culture is often not accounted for in global statistics concerning disaster risks, neither is it always effectively integrated in general disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies and plans at the national and local levels. This is a reflection of the persistent institutional gap, which must be urgently addressed, between the culture and DRR sectors. Indeed, on the one side, the culture sector often underestimates its vulnerability and exposure to disaster risks, with the number of World Heritage properties that have established policies, plans and processes for managing potential disaster risks remaining low. On the other side, the DRR sector often overlooks risks to the culture sector and/or potential opportunities to enhance resilience through culture and heritage-driven initiatives.

Recent developments within the international debate concerning disaster risks, however, offer reasons for hope. The *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (HFA)*⁴, the first international plan adopted by United Nations Member States in the wake of the South-Asia tsunami of 2004, described in detail the work required from all different sectors and actors to reduce disaster losses, and included various references to culture and “culturally important landmarks”. In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the successor framework of the HFA, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR)*, which charts the global course for DRR over the next 15 years. The SFDRR goes further than the HFA in clearly recognizing the essential relationship between different aspects of culture, DRR and resilience and provides a foundation to work on disaster preparedness and response in the field of culture at the national and local levels, with the support from partners through regional and global cooperation. Other key global frameworks have also recognized the culture-disaster risk-resilience nexus, including, for example, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This acknowledges the integral role of culture across many of the Sustainable Development Goals, with culture directly addressed in Goal 11, notably because of its importance in fostering inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements.

Within UNESCO, attempts to integrate a concern for culture in DRR led to the adoption, by the World Heritage Committee in 2007, of a *Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties*.⁵ In the framework of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, since 2016 Chapter VI of the Operational Directives sets out the principles and measures to be implemented by State Parties at the national level, both to harness the contribution of ICH to DRR

⁴ Accessible from: <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>

⁵ Accessible from: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2007/whc07-31com-72e.pdf>

and community-based resilience to natural disasters, as well as to mitigate the impact of natural disasters on ICH practice and transmission⁶. In addition, in 2013, a specific chapter on culture was integrated in the interagency Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), a government-led process supported by the United Nations system in cooperation with the World Bank and the European Union.⁷ Numerous other activities were also undertaken by UNESCO to strengthen the protection of culture from the effects of disasters in the areas of capacity building, awareness raising, and advocacy, including the development of resource materials, training workshops and technical assistance on the ground.

In view of the adoption of the SFDRR, and building on correlations and synergies with the *Strategy*, this Addendum intends to strengthen the policy framework underlying UNESCO's work to protect culture in emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards. Such a policy framework will be also consistent with the new cross-cutting Expected Result 5 (ER 5) of UNESCO's Programme and Budget for 2018-2021 (draft 39 C/5), which reads: "Culture protected and cultural pluralism promoted in emergencies through better preparedness and response, in particular through the effective implementation of UNESCO's cultural standard setting instruments".

Goal and objectives of UNESCO's response

The overall goal of the present *Strategy* is to enhance Member States' capacity to successfully implement the culture and heritage-related provisions of the SFDRR, which aims for the following expected outcome and goal, respectively:

*"The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, **cultural** and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries", and : "Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, **cultural**, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience".⁸*

In this context, and in line with the two main objectives of the *Strategy*, the two intertwined objectives of UNESCO in relation to emergencies associated with natural disasters are the following:

- (1) **Strengthen the ability of Member States to prevent, mitigate and recover the loss of cultural heritage and diversity as a result of disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards.** This will be done primarily through capacity building initiatives, as well as support to preparedness, response and recovery.
- (2) **Incorporate consideration for culture into the DRR sector and humanitarian action related to disasters by engaging with the relevant stakeholders outside the cultural domain.** This will involve the development of partnerships and tools, and engaging with UN-wide processes to encourage a culturally sensitive approach to DRR, which would draw on culture to strengthen resilience in the face of disasters.

Priority areas of action

Action under most of the priority areas listed in the *Strategy* are also relevant to disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards. With reference, in particular, to the SFDRR's Four Priorities for

⁶ Accessible from: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/Directives/6.GA/170>

⁷ Accessible from: https://gfdrr.org/sites/gfdrr/files/WB_UNDP_PDNA_Culture_FINAL.pdf

⁸ Accessible from: http://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrr.pdf

Action, the following type of action would be essential to achieve the above-stated goal and objectives:

Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk to culture

- Lack of baseline information at all levels is a key challenge to the implementation of disaster risk management in the culture sector. There is a need to strengthen, centralize and share key baseline information across relevant authorities and agencies, including up-to-date inventories and multi-hazard maps, in order to establish the main features and mechanisms of the sector prior to a disaster (pre-disaster conditions), and to effectively assess the extent and impact of a disaster (post-disaster conditions), particularly in the context of PDNAs.
- Risk assessment is the first essential step in disaster risk management planning. However, there is a need to build the capacities of national authorities, agencies, site managers and communities – through training, the promotion of applied research, and access to inter-sectoral tools that draw from new information technologies – to undertake multi-hazard risk assessments for the culture sector in order to effectively prioritize risks and inform emergency preparedness. There is also a need to disseminate methodologies and tools for assessing risks to intangible cultural heritage.

Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance of the culture sector to manage disaster risk

- The integration and consideration of the culture sector in the overall agenda for DRR remains inconsistent. There is a need to strengthen the integration of the culture and DRR sectors at all levels, in order to bridge institutional silos, promote the sharing of data and information, develop culture-sensitive policies, and enhance coordination mechanisms among relevant institutions and actors in the implementation of DRR strategies and plans.
- At present, the culture sector lacks capacity for managing disaster risks. There is a need to engage in capacity-building assessment processes at the national level for DRR and emergency preparedness and response, to identify key capacity gaps and needs specific to the culture sector, with a view to continue developing tailored capacity-building materials and tools, including the provision of training for national authorities, institutions as well as communities.
- Local communities are key to an effective management of disaster risks and are bearers of relevant ICH knowledge and practices for DRR and for coping with emergencies (e.g. vernacular building techniques, indigenous early warning systems). There is a need, therefore, to fully integrate communities who are bearers of such ICH knowledge into the overall governance and policy-making processes for DRR planning, mitigation, and recovery at the national and local levels.

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction of culture for resilience

- The culture sector often underestimates its vulnerability and exposure to disaster risks, with the number of world heritage properties that have established policies, plans and processes for managing potential disaster risks remaining low. Building on the *2007 Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties*, which encourages all State Parties to develop disaster risk management plans for world heritage properties in their respective countries, there is a need to promote the broader inclusion of disaster risk management as an integral component of site management plans, including for historic urban areas, heritage sites, museums and other cultural repositories.
- In order to facilitate international support for disaster preparedness and efficient response, there is a need for a mechanism, under the coordination of UNESCO, which enables the

rapid intervention and mobilization of experts in order to assist in the protection and safeguarding of culture and heritage. To this end, establishing and maintaining a roster of experts in culture-related aspects of DRR for the deployment of rapid assessment and advisory missions to assist national authorities in affected countries is needed.

- The culture sector offers unexplored potential for partnerships. There is a need to develop an enabling environment at the national, institutional, and policy levels to foster innovative partnerships with new actors, including the private sector, to co-develop DRR activities and measures – both structural and non-structural – with due regard for authenticity and the respect of local cultural contexts.

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction of culture

- The post-disaster setting is a complex and demanding environment, which requires a prompt assessment of the effects and impact of the disaster as a basis for the development of a recovery plan within an overall effort to “Build Back Better”. Building on its experience and expertise, UNESCO will continue supporting and building the capacity of countries to plan and coordinate PDNAs for the culture sector. In addition, in order to further refine the Culture Chapter of the PDNA, an evaluation of the methodology will be undertaken as well as training materials developed and piloted, based on lessons learned and best practice from the field.
- Intangible cultural heritage can be directly affected and threatened by natural disasters while it can also be a source of resilience and recovery. Building on Chapter VI of the Operational Directives of the 2003 Convention, it therefore seems necessary to take a separate approach for each of these two dimensions: on the one hand to ensure support for the safeguarding of disrupted intangible cultural heritage practice and transmission as identified by the affected communities, and on the other hand to ensure recognition and promotion of intangible cultural heritage as a critical means for facilitating recovery for communities confronted with natural disaster situations.
- Despite recent efforts, the role of culture in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction is still not fully understood both within and beyond the sector. There is a need to collaborate with relevant authorities and actors to mainstream culture into recovery and reconstruction processes at the national and local levels, and to promote an approach to recovery and reconstruction post-disaster which, on the one hand, preserves culture and heritage, and on the other hand, draws on the potential of culture as a catalyst for social and economic recovery.

Implementation and monitoring

The implementation and monitoring processes of the present Addendum are those listed in the *Strategy for reinforcing UNESCO’s Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict*.

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit, established in 2014 within the Culture Sector of UNESCO, would act as the focal point for the work covered under this Addendum and be responsible for the development of global partnerships and tools, in close coordination with the secretariats of all UNESCO’s conventions and field offices. The latter will be responsible for the implementation of operational activities on the ground. The Unit will be also coordinating the Heritage Emergency Fund and providing technical and financial backstopping to colleagues in the Sector to support preparedness and response activities, as required.

Monitoring of UNESCO activities will be undertaken by a variety of mechanisms including regular narrative reporting in SISTER and statutory EX/4 reports, in the framework of the relevant Expected

Results within the approved UNESCO Programme and Budget (C/5). Reports will be also submitted to the relevant intergovernmental committees and general assemblies of culture conventions. In addition to these standard monitoring and evaluation processes, specific monitoring and evaluation plans, including, as appropriate, detailed monitoring and evaluation frameworks, are established for activities funded through earmarked extrabudgetary sources.

ANNEX II

PROTECTING CULTURE AND PROMOTING CULTURAL PLURALISM: THE KEY TO LASTING PEACE

APPEAL

“Unlawful attacks against sites and buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, or historic monuments may constitute, under certain circumstances and pursuant to international law, a war crime and perpetrators of such attacks must be brought to justice”.⁹ These words come from Paragraph 4 of the historical Resolution 2347 which was adopted by the United Nations Security Council in March 2017 (**UNSC Res. 2347, para 4**);

We, the Member States of UNESCO,

Recalling that UNSC Resolution 2347 was inspired by the constant efforts that we have deployed since April 2015 in order to raise public awareness on the devastating effects of the destruction of cultural heritage and of the loss of cultural diversity as a result of armed conflicts on the human, social, economic and environmental conditions of the affected peoples (**38 C/49, para 1, para 7, para 18**);

Affirming that the protection of culture and heritage, both tangible and intangible, as mainsprings of cultural diversity, is not only a cultural emergency, but also a security and humanitarian imperative, especially in conflict and transition situations, and an essential element in ensuring sustainable peace and development, and that participation and access to culture and its living expressions can help strengthen people’s resilience and sustain their efforts to live through and overcome crisis (**Preamble of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003; 38 C/49, para 10**);

Recalling the *Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO’s action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict*, adopted by the General Conference in 2015 (38 C/Resolution 48), together with its Addendum on natural disasters and the Action Plan, as well as all the relevant international decisions and resolutions adopted in recent years, notably by the UN Security Council and the Human Rights Council, which have marked a historical turning point in the response to this unprecedented challenge (**202 EX/5 Part I H**);

Solemnly appeal to all Member States and to the international community as a whole to further strengthen their efforts for the prevention, mitigation and recovery of the loss of cultural heritage and diversity that may result from natural disasters or conflicts, notably those perpetrated by extremist groups, and to ensure, to the extent possible, the necessary conditions for the exercise of the cultural rights of the concerned groups and individuals (**38 C/49, para 16; Preamble of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005**);

Further appeal upon all Member States to take steps, at national level, to reinforce measures for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism, as well as to identify and share appropriate best practices for fighting every form of illegal activity in this field, including those concerning the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property, both in peacetime and wartime (**Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970**);

⁹ <http://undocs.org/S/RES/2347%282017%29>

Appeal, furthermore, to all Governments, international organizations on a regional and global level, cultural and educational institutions as well as individuals of all regions of the world, to strengthen efforts to raise awareness about the importance of protecting culture and promoting cultural pluralism for achieving peace, security and sustainable development, notably through educational programmes for the young generations (**38 C/48: “Strategy for Reinforcing UNESCO’s Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict”**; **UNSC Res. 2347, para 17, i**);

Invite the Director-General, as well as the Member States, to pursue efforts over the coming years in order to foster the role of UNESCO in this area of work, including by mobilizing the necessary resources, and to reinforce the integration of culture within international humanitarian, security and peacebuilding policies and operations, as a means to encourage dialogue and peace among nations (**38 C/48, para 6**);