

**JOINT STATEMENT**  
**on cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage**

Mr. President,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of a cross-regional core group comprising Brazil, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Ireland, Mali, Poland, Serbia and Switzerland. This statement has received the support of 145 countries.
2. Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, we underline the important role that the Human Rights Council can play, in concert with all other relevant international actors, in global efforts to protect cultural heritage, with a view to promoting universal respect for cultural rights by all.
3. As Members and Observers of the Human Rights Council, we condemn all acts of intentional destruction to cultural heritage occurring most commonly during, or in the aftermath of, armed conflicts around the World and we are alarmed by their increasing frequency and scale. We note that such acts and the violations and abuses of cultural rights they result in can constitute an aggravating factor in armed conflict and may also represent major obstacles to dialogue, peace and reconciliation, for instance when they interfere with the right to manifest one's religion by limiting access to places of worship. Parties to armed conflicts must refrain from any unlawful military use or targeting of cultural property, in full respect of their obligations under international humanitarian law.
4. We are equally concerned by the organized looting, smuggling and illicit trafficking in cultural objects which violate or abuse cultural rights and breach relevant provisions of international law and which, in some current instances, generate funds for the financing of terrorism. We call for enhanced global cooperation in preventing and combating such illegal activities and in restoring the looted or trafficked cultural properties to their places of origin.

5. Against this backdrop, we welcome the decision of the Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, Ms. Karima Bennouna, as expressed in her first report presented to the Council on 10 March 2016 (A/HRC/31/59), to consider as a matter of priority the detrimental impact of the destruction of cultural heritage on the enjoyment of cultural rights. We call on States to offer their full support to the Special Rapporteur in undertaking such activities under her mandate, including by inviting her to relevant country visits.
6. We are convinced of the need to identify innovative ways and best practices, at national, regional and/or international level, for the prevention of violations and abuses of cultural rights, as well as, in particular, for the prevention and mitigation of damage caused to cultural heritage in armed conflict. Raising awareness on the mutually reinforcing relation between the protection of cultural heritage and human rights and on the risks faced by defenders of cultural heritage is very important, particularly in this context.
7. Acknowledging the key role, respective competences and expertise of UNESCO and UNODC in international efforts to prevent and combat the damage or destruction, looting, smuggling and illicit trafficking of cultural heritage, we call for enhanced cooperation between them and the Human Rights Council, with a view to strengthening the implementation of the existing international legal framework.
8. Finally, we note with satisfaction the strong interest in the relevant side-event held during the High Level Segment of this Human Rights Council session and express our readiness to further explore the ideas that have been presented during its rich deliberations in taking this initiative forward.

A complete list of Member and non-Member Observer States that have supported the Joint Statement will be uploaded on the extranet.

I thank you.

## MEMBER STATES

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Andorra
4. Argentina
5. Armenia
6. Australia
7. Austria
8. Azerbaijan
9. Bangladesh
10. Bahrain
11. Belarus
12. Belgium
13. Bolivia
14. Bosnia & Herzegovina
- 15. Brazil**
16. Bulgaria
17. Canada
18. Chile
19. China
20. Colombia
21. Costa Rica
22. Croatia
23. Cuba
- 24. Cyprus**
25. Denmark
26. Ecuador
27. El Salvador
28. Estonia
29. Fiji
30. France
31. Georgia
32. Germany
- 33. Greece**
34. Haiti
35. Honduras
36. Hungary
37. Iceland
- 38. Iraq**
- 39. Ireland**
40. Italy
41. Japan
42. Kazakhstan
43. Kuwait
44. Kyrgyzstan
45. Latvia
46. Lebanon
47. Liechtenstein
48. Luxembourg
49. Maldives
50. Malta
51. Mexico
52. Moldova
53. Monaco
54. Mongolia
55. Montenegro
56. Myanmar
57. Netherlands
58. New Zealand
59. Nicaragua
60. Norway
61. Oman
62. Pakistan
63. Panama
64. Paraguay
65. Philippines
- 66. Poland**
67. Portugal
68. Qatar
69. Republic of Korea
70. Romania
71. Russian Federation
72. Saint Kitts and Nevis
73. San Marino
74. Saudi Arabia
- 75. Serbia**
76. Slovakia
77. Slovenia
- South Africa, as coordinator of the African Group, on behalf of (78-131):
  78. Algeria
  79. Angola
  80. Benin
  81. Botswana
  82. Burkina Faso
  83. Burundi
  84. Cabo Verde
  85. Cameroon
  86. Central African Republic
  87. Chad
  88. Comoros
  89. Congo, Republic of the
  90. Congo, Democratic Republic of the
  91. Cote d'Ivoire
  92. Djibouti
  93. Egypt
  94. Equatorial Guinea
  95. Eritrea
  - 96. Ethiopia**
  97. Gabon
  98. Gambia
  99. Ghana
  100. Guinea
  101. Guinea-Bissau
  102. Kenya
  103. Lesotho
  104. Liberia
  105. Libya
  106. Madagascar
  107. Malawi
  - 108. Mali**
  109. Mauritania
  110. Mauritius
  111. Morocco
  112. Mozambique
  113. Namibia
  114. Niger
  115. Nigeria
  116. Rwanda
  117. Sao Tome and Principe
  118. Senegal
  119. Seychelles
  120. Sierra Leone
  121. Somalia
  122. South Africa
  123. South Sudan
  124. Sudan
  125. Swaziland
  126. Tanzania
  127. Togo
  128. Tunisia
  129. Uganda
  130. Zambia
  131. Zimbabwe
132. Spain
133. Sri Lanka
- 134. Switzerland**
135. Syrian Arab Republic
136. Tajikistan
137. Thailand
138. Timor-Leste
139. Ukraine
140. United Arab Emirates
141. United States of America
142. Uruguay
143. Venezuela
144. Yemen

## NON MEMBER OBSERVER STATES

145. State of Palestine