



CONQUERING COMPLEXITY AS
AN INTERNATIONAL AGENT

PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF WORLD HERITAGE IN POST CONFLICT ZONES

THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

1. Welcome letter

Dear delegates,

On behalf of the European International Model United Nations foundation, we would like to welcome you to UNESCO and GrunnMUN. We look forward to being your chairs and making your Model United Nations experience worth remembering!

Participating as a delegate in GrunnMUN will be a challenging, but definitely rewarding experience for you. We are certain that this Council will present opportunities for each and every delegate to learn, excel, and broaden their horizons. In and out of session, you will be pushed to consider innovative solutions to modern issues facing the international community. Outside of the committee room, you will have the opportunity to make friends.

With the challenges concerning our globalized world rapidly growing, UNESCO's responsibilities have increased over the past years. As UNESCO seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture, it faces the immense task of uniting nations to protect international heritage sites. As such, as your chairs we expect you to give your best effort while respecting the rules of procedure and your fellow delegates.

We hope that GrunnMUN will be an amazing experience for all of you, and that besides the challenging debates and having a blast, you will make connections and friends that will last for a lifetime. We are very much looking forward to meeting you in February!

Your chairs,

Sterre Wolthuizen & Romee Lutterop

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2. Introduction

The preservation and restoration of cultural heritage is an issue of international importance and one of the primary concerns for UNESCO. UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which looks to build peace through international cooperation in those fields. Part of UNESCO's mandate is protecting and raising awareness for symbols of cultural heritage and property around the world in its UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) program. Defined by the 1972 World Heritage Convention, cultural heritage is defined as monuments, groups of buildings or sites that hold outstanding universal value¹. Aside from that, natural heritage includes naturally occurring formations. A mixed site therefore combines the aspects of both cultural and natural heritage.² While this is explaining tangible heritage, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) also recognises the intangible aspect of cultural heritage as practices, representations, and expressions of groups or a society.³

Thus, heritage provides societies with tangible and intangible manifestations of history and contributes to fields like archaeology, architecture, science and technology.⁴ Furthermore, The New Urban Agenda (2016) identified cultural heritage as a key driver for sustainable development, social participation and inclusion.⁵ It is therefore essential to realize the importance of heritage and its protection.

Established by the World Heritage List (WHL), there are currently 845 cultural sites, of which 209 are natural, 598 are cultural and 38 are mixed.⁶ However, violent conflicts lead to damages and destruction of these heritage sites, with no regard to the cultural, historical, and socioeconomic significance of such. From the aforementioned 845 cultural sites, the WHL market 54 of those in danger from pollution, natural disaster, poaching, uncontrolled urbanisation and most importantly, armed conflicts and wars.⁷ Damages from tangible heritages result from gun fires, illegal constructions, robbery, and much more.⁸ Intangible heritage also faces the risk of disappearance and deterioration in times of violent conflict.

This violence is mainly used by non-state radical actors, who intentionally target local people and archaeological sites to gain attention for their goals' and to victimize groups based on their

¹ UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972

² UNESCO, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, 2012, pp. 13-14

³ UNESCO, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003

⁴ UNESCO, Tangible Cultural Heritage, 2017

⁵ UN General Assembly, New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256), 2017, p. 3

⁶ UNESCO, World Heritage List Statistics

⁷ UNESCO, World Heritage in Danger; UNESCO, World Heritage List Statistics

⁸ Heritage for Peace, Conflict, Heritage and Damage

cultural and ethnic identity.⁹ The destruction of cultural landmarks are attempts to rewrite history by erasing places of memory. Though cultural heritage is often unique to the cultural traditions of a particular state or region, more recent protocols and declarations have asserted that cultural properties are a significant symbol of international heritage. The Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, explained that “protecting heritage is inseparable from protecting populations, because heritage enshrines a people’s values and identities”¹⁰.

Therefore, we ask UNESCO to answer this question: What can UNESCO do in order to protect world heritage in potentially violent conflict- and post-conflict areas and restore landmarks damaged by conflict?

3. Problem specification

As stated above, the UNESCO World Heritage Sites aim to protect and raise awareness of cultural heritage around the world. The heritages added to the World Heritage List are thought to have special importance to everyone, and represent unique examples of the world’s heritage. It has been recognized as an important domain of human history and culture, hereby complementing the value endowed upon its regional cultures. Any cultural property as defined in article one of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict¹¹ (“the Hague Convention) is eligible for enhanced protection, as long as they comply with the three conditions that illustrates a cultural property: it should be movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, they should be buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit movable cultural property, or its centres should contain a large amount of cultural property.¹²

Cultural heritage is increasingly threatened by environmental circumstances, but more importantly, by violent conflict. Violent conflict is often correlated with changing social and economic circumstances, such as mistreatment, recessions or corruption; thus meaning that these factors risk the survival of such sites. Seeing that any disappearance of a World Heritage Site is a loss to all nations of the world, this is an issue which needs to be tackled. To take an example: since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in March 2011, all six UNESCO WHS, including Palmyra, Bosra and the medieval buildings in the Ancient City of Aleppo have been damaged. Another example, between 1979 and 2013 22% of all world heritage in Africa was affected by violent conflict.¹³ However, focus should also lie upon heritage sites in post-conflict areas. Discussing reconstructing or *heritagization* UNESCO WHS in post-conflict areas is just as relevant, as rapid clean-up and rebuilding plans could erase the traces and narratives of the site;

⁹ UN DPI, Alarmed at destruction in Palmyra, Security Council reiterates need to stamp out hatred espoused by ISIL, 2017

¹⁰ UNESCO, Stop the Destruction

¹¹ The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 1954

¹² UNESCO, n.d.

¹³ UNESCO, State of Conservation of World Heritage Properties, 2014, p. 97

thus forever losing the cultural meaning. Furthermore, while it is easy to grasp the extent of which tangible sites are under stress, it is also important to realise that intangible sites are as much under risk of deterioration or disappearance, while being far harder to overlook.

Taking into consideration the theme for this years' GrunnMUN, 'Conquering Complexity as an International Agent', we can see that it is up to UNESCO to step up as an international agent to overcome this complex situation, and to safeguard these sites.

4. Questions A Resolution Must Answer (QARMAs)

During the preparation of your proposals and, at a later stage, you must address the following QARMAs, or "Questions a Resolution Must Answer" in a compulsory manner. If your draft resolution does not include proposals along the lines of these questions, no matter how well-written it is, or if your bloc was the first to present it, we will not be able to accept them, and thus will not be able to pass in a successful manner. The following three questions are meant as the basis for your research, and to guide you in your understanding of the issues we believe must be discussed. We expect that, of course, you will follow the Rules of Procedure provided by the GrunnMUN team, and to expand on this issue beyond these three basic questions.

1. How should communication and actions of actors within a conflict be coordinated during violent conflicts?
2. How does UNESCO respond to the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage sites during violent conflicts?
3. How should UNESCO organize efforts of restoration in post-conflict areas after the destruction of cultural heritage sites?

5. Explanatory section per QARMA

- a. **"How should communication and actions of actors within a conflict be coordinated during violent conflicts?"**

History/background of the problem

When discussing the topic of cultural heritage during conflicts, we are dealing with multiple actors. There will be those looking to damage the heritage sites and those wishing to protect it. Clear communication is therefore key in order to successfully fulfill UNESCO's task, namely to protect these sites in the best way possible. This means that coordinating and establishing communication with all of these actors is within UNESCO's power. UNESCO is responsible for the implementation of the "Reinforcement of UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict,"

which outlines UNESCO's plans during conflicts and is possibly the most important document in this background paper¹⁴.

UNESCO itself has admitted that its mandate often complicates matters, meaning they oftentimes have to work alongside other United Nations organs with a broader mandate to "remove the threats to international security"¹⁵. Since the Security Council can "demonstrate its authority" due to its mandate, it holds important hands in regards to the prevention of destruction of heritage sites in conflicts, as well as the coordination of actions during such conflicts¹⁶. Additionally, UNESCO has previously acted in cooperation with United Nations-organs like the ICC¹⁷, peace-keeping forces and the UNHCR¹⁸, as well as non-UN organizations like the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)¹⁹. The International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) was created by several of these external parties to cooperate in their shared goal of protecting cultural heritage²⁰. Because of its limited mandate, UNESCO often needs other actors to facilitate its mission. Fortunately, these organizations are generally willing to offer their support, but the prepared strategy is vague on its application regarding State Actors²¹.

Recent developments

One of the most recent cases of deliberate destruction of cultural heritage sites has been in Syria. Non-state actors have acted in order to eliminate the sites important to the Syrian people. The former Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, put out a statement that said UNESCO was notified of "the serious damage that has already been inflicted on Syria's heritage," which greatly concerned parties all around the world as evidenced by headlines around the world.²² The City of Aleppo was the focus of most of these headlines, as it was the focus of most of ISIS' strategy and had 10% of its historic buildings destroyed. As Director-General Bokova explained, ISIS' deliberate strategy is "quite new, quite unseen, systematic and deliberate," and she called it "cultural cleansing". While not a lot has been publicized about the communication and coordination during the conflict, Bokova has urged "all parties to take all necessary precautions to stop the destruction of Syria's cultural heritage, which includes some of the most precious in the world"²³.

¹⁴ UNESCO, "The Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit," UNESCO.org. N/d.

¹⁵ UNESCO, *Conflict Resolution: New Approaches and Methods*, Paris: UNESCO, 2000.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ UNESCO, "Reinforcement of UNESCO's action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict", Paris: UNESCO, 2015. Page 6.

¹⁸ Ibid. Page 7.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Gramer, Robbie. "UNESCO Fights Back As ISIS Tries to Stamp Out Culture," *Foreign Policy*, April 12th, 2017.

²³ MacDowall, Angus. "Syria's lost heritage stands out in Aleppo's broken minarets," *Reuters*, May 1st, 2019.

Relevant actors/institutions

The main actor within UNESCO that is concerned with conflicts and the destruction of cultural heritage sites is the “Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit,” which “coordinates and supports activities related to preparedness and response to cultural emergencies”²⁴. However, providing these heritage sites and the people present at these heritage sites with assistance proves complicated in practice, as communication during conflicts is often difficult. UNESCO partners with various NGO’s (like INTERPOL, ICOM and others) that are present in the field²⁵. Additionally, they have previously created “Emergency Action Plans for the Safeguarding of Culture” in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen²⁶. The “Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage Project” document created by UNESCO in 2017 provides a good overview of general steps taken by UNESCO to aid and support to the cultural heritage sites. In this document, UNESCO admits that “the project involved a broad range of beneficiaries and stakeholders,” and that they were “active in establishing partnerships with all actors working on Syrian cultural heritage to ensure global coordination”²⁷. Aside from this, there are many more actors that are important in order to establish a communication strategy, namely national governments, non-state actors that pose potential threats, local communities and those on the ground that are responsible for the cultural heritage.

International approaches that have already been undertaken

As UNESCO itself proclaimed in the “Reinforcement of UNESCO’s Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict”, preparations “in anticipation of conflict applied to cultural heritage management and conservation remains so far limited and under-funded”²⁸. This also results in under- or even unpreparedness during conflicts. In the same resolution, UNESCO has vowed to continue “recognizing the fundamental role of local communities” and “advocating for the full respect ... of international humanitarian law”²⁹. This resolution includes specific measures to be taken by UNESCO in point 24, by announcing they will provide assistance “in support of first aid and mitigation measures,” as well as other supporting measures.

A complication in the UNESCO’s task is that states do not always allow assistance of the United Nations regarding what they view as domestic matters, which is a necessity in allowing UNESCO to offer support³⁰. Former Secretary-General Annan explained in 1995 that “creating a

²⁴ UNESCO, “The Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit,” UNESCO.org. N/d.

²⁵ UNESCO, “Reinforcement of UNESCO’s action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict”, Paris: UNESCO, 2015. Page 6.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. Page 7.

²⁸ Ibid. Page 5.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ UNESCO, “Reinforcement of UNESCO’s action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict”, Paris: UNESCO, 2015.

climate of opinion, or ethos, within the international community in which the norm would be for Member States to accept an offer of United Nations good offices” would help create a culture of peace³¹. By forming a United Nations ‘network’, UNESCO could potentially facilitate in this mission. In order to attain goals like the demilitarization of heritage sites, protection of the sites and its staff and the promotion of peace requires “the agreement of the parties”³². In this sense, preventative actions and activities during conflicts can contribute to peace-building efforts by the United Nations, which exemplifies the goals set by UNESCO for itself. It is the task of UNESCO to ask itself whether it can optimize the United Nations’ goals by optimizing the coordination of activities surrounding conflicts to protect heritage sites and promote peace.

b. “How does UNESCO respond to the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage sites during violent conflicts?”

History/background of the problem

The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict “was adopted in 1954 in the wake of large-scale destruction of cultural heritage carried out during the Second World War”³³. The destruction of cultural heritage during the Yugoslav Wars “sought to destroy the traces or symbols of the ethnic ‘enemy’s’ culture,” specifically targeting cultural sites like the Mostar Bridge³⁴. The 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict states that “damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world”³⁵. In response to all these deliberate destructions, UNESCO adopted Resolution 6.42 during the 4th session of its General Conference, which states its interest in “ensuring the co-operation of interested States in the protection, preservation and restoration of ... all objects of cultural value”³⁶.

Relevant actors/institutions

Aside from UNESCO, other United Nations organs have detailed their support to the “continued protection” of cultural heritage in conflict areas³⁷. Since then, UNESCO and its partners have acknowledged that often the nature of conflicts looking to damage cultural heritage sites are not of an international nature and often concerns the destruction of a particular ethnic group’s heritage³⁸. Therefore, these targeted attacks are often not within its mandate to respond

³¹ Annan, Kofi, “Supplement to an Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations,” *International Peacekeeping* 2.2 (1995), 253-277.

³² UNESCO, *Conflict Resolution: New Approaches and Methods*, Paris: UNESCO, 2000. Page 40.

³³ UNESCO, “The 1954 Hague Convention” page 5

³⁴ UNESCO, *Infokit* page 3

³⁵ UNESCO, *1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*, page 9

³⁶ UNESCO General Conference 4th, page 26

³⁷ Security Council Resolution 1483 page 2

³⁸ UNESCO, *Infokit* page. 8

to. Therefore, the Second Protocol outlines “a new category – ‘enhanced protection’ – for cultural property of the greatest importance for humanity,” directly defining their protection by UNESCO³⁹. Having expanded their mandate to include these enhanced protected sites, UNESCO has attempted to face the targeted destruction of heritage sites on a global scale.

International approaches that have already been undertaken

Also United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2347 can be seen as a historic milestone in the issue of safeguarding endangered heritage. It is the first resolution ever adopted by the UNSC focusing solely on the protection on the protection of cultural maintenance of international peace and security. It mainly focuses on the fight against terrorism and groups to deliberately destroy and/or plunder cultural property, but it also addresses the common interest an entire international community has to protect cultural heritage.⁴⁰ The resolution called for the strengthening the activities of international organisations, with UNESCO in particular, for the protection of cultural heritage for the benefit of the entire global society. It called upon states to ‘take strong and effective measures to combat the looting and trafficking in cultural property from their places of origin, particularly from countries experiencing conflict and internal strife, and to identify and prohibit the trade in looted cultural property that has been trafficked across borders and, as appropriate, to reinforce the monitoring of free ports and free trades zones.

Recent developments

In 2020, the president of the United States, Donald Trump, announced he considered targeting Iranian sites that are “very high level & important to Iran & the Iranian culture,” even though the United States is a signatory to the 1954 Hague Convention⁴¹. Despite international critique, Trump doubled down by saying “we’re not allowed to touch their cultural sites [in response to Iranian actions]? It doesn’t work that way”⁴². The deliberate destruction of Iranian cultural sites would “demoralize the population,” as a military tactic, but would ignore the 1954 Hague Convention⁴³.

One of the most recent cases of deliberate destruction of cultural heritage sites has been in Syria. Non-state actors have acted in order to eliminate the sites important to the Syrian people. ISIL has been targeting cultural heritages in Iraq and Syria. The destruction often took the form of “smashing artifacts in archaeological museums, iconoclastic breaking and bulldozing of archaeological sites, dynamiting of shrines, tombs, and other sites of local communities”

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jakubowski, Andrezej. ‘The evolving role of the United Nations Security Council and the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Event of Armed Conflict; Resolution 2347: Mainstreaming the protection of cultural heritage at the global level’, 2018

⁴¹ Wamsley, par. 2

⁴² Ibid, par. 6

⁴³ Ibid, par. 14

among other forms of violence⁴⁴. ISIL itself often publishes or openly threatens to attack these cultural sites, showing the world how they destroyed Iraqi and Syrian heritage. It has been theorized that these destructions have multiple effects: “from humiliating the local communities to broadcasting a radical ideology of religious fanaticism in order to recruit new transnational militants all the way to defying the common values attached to cultural heritage”⁴⁵. In response, UNESCO’s Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict condemned the “repeated and deliberate attacks against cultural property ... in particular in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Republic of Iraq”⁴⁶.

That destruction often took the form of UNESCO has been tasked with answering the question of how to safeguard heritage sites from being specifically targeted during violent conflicts. In your resolution, please pay special attention to current affairs and how UNESCO should respond to these, and to the announcements of world leaders or organizations to target UNESCO heritage specifically in conflict areas.

- c. **“How should UNESCO organize activity for efforts of restoration, including coordination with other actors, in post-conflict areas after the destruction of cultural heritage sites?”**

History/background of the problem

After violent conflicts and wars, the restoration of cultural heritage sites is not often seen as the first priority to its citizens and government. It is UNESCO’s task to facilitate and even initiate restoration as well as it possibly can. When conflicts end, “vast fields for action open up,” which includes the promotion of peace as advocated for in UNESCO’s main goals⁴⁷. The UNESCO Strategy⁴⁸ states in point 28 that “when recovery and reconstruction of the culture sector become possible, efforts will focus on supporting national authorities in assessing, planning and implementing mid- to long-term programmes for cultural heritage rehabilitation and preservation”.⁴⁹ UNESCO’s strategy includes the “monitoring and initial assessment of damage” and the restoration and recovery of the sites afterwards⁵⁰, as well as “first aid and mitigation measures, including consolidation of damaged monuments, enhanced security at museums and sites, and possible evacuation of cultural assets from sites, museums and other cultural repositories”.⁵¹ However, all of this assistance for the restoration of these heritage sites is

⁴⁴ Harmansah, 170

⁴⁵ Ibid, 171

⁴⁶ UNESCO, “Syria Crisis Response” par. 2

⁴⁷ Ibid. Page 7.

⁴⁸ UNESCO, “Reinforcement”

⁴⁹ Ibid. Page 6.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Page 5.

⁵¹ Ibid.

dependent on States' willingness to allow UNESCO and its partners access into the State, as well as the willingness of UNESCO's partners to aid in this matter. This is one of the reasons why this is difficult; it holds many actors and opinions.

International approaches that have already been undertaken

The 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention established the "Fund for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict" (The Fund) was established (UNESCO, "The 1954 Hague Convention" page 144). This Fund is one of the primary tools with which UNESCO can aid States in the recovery of heritage sites. There are many examples of UNESCO and The Fund providing help to States in their endeavor to restore or protect their cultural heritage sites. One such success story is Angkor in Cambodia, which was targeted by "military upheavals," resulting in more than fifteen major restoration projects⁵². As a result, Angkor is no longer considered as "World Heritage in Danger".

A non-governmental organisation which has played a role in post-war heritage reconstruction, which could be seen as an example to other NGOs, is the Cultural Heritage Without Borders (CHWB) which was originally founded in Sweden in 1995 to preserve heritage damaged in the areas affected by conflicts or natural disasters; which they greatly did in the years after the Yugoslavian wars.⁵³ Other NGOs who do similar jobs, which can be found on the UNESCO website, include the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the European Heritage Network (EHN).⁵⁴

Recent developments

Another area that UNESCO is currently looking into assisting for the restoration of its cultural heritage is the Old City of Sana'a in Yemen. However, there is currently "a lack of support and resources," which has led to a continued need for support to restore the site⁵⁵. Even though Yemen was the subject of its own Emergency Action Plan, the support has been insufficient to take the Old City of Sana'a off the List of World Heritage in Danger. This is largely because financial support is constrained until the security situation improves, as well as a lack of resources. However, the project would "contribute to social cohesion and peace-building through targeted cultural programming and support for the civil society"⁵⁶.

UNESCO has been tasked with the assistance to the restoration of cultural heritage sites after armed conflicts, but its implementation has proven complicated. It is your task to see if the

⁵² UNESCO, "Examples" par. 1

⁵³ Heritage at war, "Post Conflict Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage", 2019

⁵⁴ UMASS, "Heritage Organizations"

⁵⁵ UNESCO, Decision 43 COM 7A.39, par. 6

⁵⁶ UNESCO, "State of Conversation" par. 27

current efforts to restore cultural heritage sites through efforts like The Fund and Action Plans are effective enough to complete UNESCO's mission.

6. Sources for further research

Although you can look at the bibliography for the sources, we recommend to read and study the following sources, as they may help you with further research or in-depth focus points:

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