

Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Culture

Strasbourg, 1 April 2022

“Creating our future: Creativity and cultural heritage as strategic resources for a diverse and democratic Europe”

Declaration on the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine

We, Ministers responsible for culture and cultural heritage, meeting in hybrid form in Strasbourg under the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers on 1 April 2022

- Recalling the decision of the Ministers' Deputies of 24 February (CM/Del/Dec(2022)1426bis/2.3), where the Deputies *“condemned in the strongest terms the armed attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation in violation of international law”, “urged the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally cease its military operations in Ukraine” and “expressed their support to Ukraine and their solidarity with its people”*
- Taking note of Resolution CM/Res(2022)2 on the cessation of the membership of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 March 2022 at the 1428th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies).
- Expressing our attachment to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, among them right to life, right to liberty and security, freedom of expression, including of the arts and culture.
- Recalling the aims and objectives of the European Cultural Convention (1954) as developing mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of their cultural diversity, to safeguard European culture, to promote national contributions to Europe's common cultural heritage respecting the same fundamental values and to encourage in particular the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the Parties to the Convention.
- Recalling the Council of Europe cultural heritage conventions¹ which recognize the cultural heritage as a shared resource, laying the foundations for open, pluralistic democracies, leading the way to a harmonious coexistence and involving a systematic exchange of experience and experts among States.
- Aware that in the context of an armed conflict, culture is often a deliberate target and that erasing cultural traces of the past equates to destroying people's memory, causing a permanent damage to peoples' identity.
- Deploping that the damage, destruction and threats to the rich cultural heritage in Ukraine constitutes an irrecoverable loss also for the rest of the world and a major obstacle to post-war reconciliation.
- Recalling the Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (2017) entering into force today, which aims to prevent and combat the destruction, damage and illicit trafficking of cultural property as well as to foster international co-operation to protect and preserve it in times of instability or conflict.

¹ Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 1985), European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (revised) (Valletta, 1992) and Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro, 2005)

- Recalling the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which was adopted in 1954 by UNESCO, and the Declaration of the European Ministers responsible for Culture, Audiovisual and Media, meeting in Angers on 7 and 8 March 2022.
- Condemning in the strongest terms the violation of fundamental human rights, including the right to participate in cultural life as recognised by article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and emphasizing the crucial role that the Council of Europe plays in protecting and promoting human rights, pluralistic democracy and the rule of law through cultural cooperation, cultural heritage and intercultural dialogue.

We commit ourselves, within the Council of Europe, to:

- assist Ukraine as necessary in dealing with the threats to its cultural heritage and its urgent preservation by using all possibilities offered by the Council of Europe's conventions and legal and technical framework in the area of culture and cultural heritage as well as in future action plans for Ukraine
- elaborate, in cooperation with relevant international organizations, a capacity building programme for securing movable, immovable and intangible cultural heritage that is put at risk by war
- support affected artists, cultural, heritage and creative professionals and scientists from Ukraine through cultural cooperation programmes
- provide support and protection to displaced people from Ukraine engaging with them in intercultural dialogue
- support initiatives towards holding a "Year of culture from Ukraine in Europe", involving also displaced people from Ukraine, in the spirit of both the European Cultural Convention and the Faro Convention
- continue our strong commitment with the arts and other forms of cultural expressions as important components of our collective resilience that counters conflicts and violence in Ukraine and beyond
- increase efforts to protect and promote democracy and human rights through intercultural dialogue across Council of Europe member States and neighbouring countries