

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
12 July 2022

Original: English

**Letter dated 11 July 2022 from the Permanent Representative of
Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the
Security Council**

I have the pleasure to inform you that Albania and Poland, in cooperation with Ukraine, will organize an Arria-formula meeting on the theme “Destruction of cultural heritage as a consequence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine”, to be held on 15 July 2022. The meeting will be held in the Economic and Social Council Chamber at 3 p.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, Albania and Poland have prepared a concept note (see annex).

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

(Signed) Ferit **Hoxha**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 11 July 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note for the Arria-formula meeting on the theme “Destruction of cultural heritage as a consequence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine”, 15 July 2022

- Organized by:* The Permanent Missions of Albania and Poland, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Ukraine
- Co-sponsored by:* Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom
- Location:* Economic and Social Council Chamber
- Participation:* The Arria-formula meeting is open to all States Members of the United Nations, Permanent Observers, non-governmental organizations and the press.
- The meeting will be conducted with interpretation in all the official languages of the United Nations and will be broadcast on United Nations Web TV (webtv.un.org).
- To register to deliver a statement, please provide the name of the Member State and the name and title of the speaker to etrit.bekteshi@mfa.gov.al. The list of speakers will be open until the start of the meeting.
- Delegations are kindly requested to limit their interventions to three minutes.

Meeting programme

- Welcoming remarks and moderation:* Permanent Representative of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations, Ferit Hoxha
- Keynote speakers/briefers:*
- Director of the World Heritage Centre, Lazare Eloundou Assomo
 - Deputy Minister of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, Kateryna Chueva
 - President of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, Teresa Patricio
 - Director of the National Institute of Cultural Heritage/Support Centre for Culture in Ukraine, Katarzyna Zalasińska

Interventions: Security Council members and United Nations Member States

Closing remarks: Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations, Krzysztof Szczerski

Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, Sergiy Kyslytsya

Introduction

The unprovoked and unjustified attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine brings not only casualties for the population, but also the destruction of cultural heritage. Religious sites, historic buildings, monuments, Holocaust memorials and artefacts are being damaged; cultural property from historical sites, museums, libraries, archives and other sites in Ukraine is being looted and smuggled.

As at 4 July 2022, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has verified damage to 157 sites since the beginning of the war – 71 religious sites, 12 museums, 30 historic buildings, 21 buildings dedicated to cultural activities, 16 monuments and seven libraries. Severe damage has been registered in the city of Kharkiv, a UNESCO Creative City of Music, and the historic centre of Chernihiv, which is on Ukraine's World Heritage tentative list. According to reports from the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, the scale of the damage and destruction may be far greater. What is more, there have been reported cases of looting by Russian forces of Ukrainian cultural goods and artefacts. Damage has also affected cultural institutions, resulting in the severe loss of livelihoods for cultural professionals, as well as the suspension of cultural life and disruption to the intangible cultural heritage that are essential for the resilience, cohesion and well-being of local communities.

Those deliberate actions cause irreversible damage and heavy losses, but, most importantly, they are aimed at undermining Ukrainian cultural identity and nationhood.

Russia's attack against Ukraine violates principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolution [2347 \(2017\)](#) and all basic international laws, including those related to the protection of cultural heritage. As the Russian aggression against Ukraine continues, we see consistent evidence of possible violations of international law, including the 1954 Hague Convention, the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, as well as provisions related to the protection of documentary heritage. In its resolution [2347 \(2017\)](#), the Security Council recognized that the deliberate destruction or appropriation of cultural property may constitute a war crime, under certain circumstances.

The destruction of the cultural heritage of Ukraine has become an integral element of Russia's war. With a growing number of cases of the unlawful, deliberate and widespread destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine, there is a necessity and an obligation for adequate reporting and documentation of those crimes. Ensuring accountability for those actions is our moral and legal obligation.

We need to make sure that the aggressor bears the cost of the massive destruction of Ukrainian cultural heritage and we must do everything possible to protect the unique Ukrainian culture from further devastation and damage. Based on the first interventions coordinated by UNESCO, concrete, timely and well-structured assistance to Ukrainian cultural institutions seems indispensable in order to ensure

that Ukrainian cultural, historical and religious sites are effectively protected in this difficult time of war.

In parallel, international institutions need to work together with Ukrainian counterparts, with the aim of identifying, reporting and documenting the damage and preparing a plan for the restoration of destroyed monuments and sites, so that Ukrainian cultural heritage can be rebuilt after the end of the war.

Objective

This meeting shall offer an opportunity for Member States to hear first-hand accounts and expert assessments of the scale of the damage to cultural property in Ukraine, both movable and immovable, caused by the Russian invasion of a sovereign neighbour. It will also be an occasion to discuss how the international community, including the Security Council and specialized bodies and agencies of the United Nations, in cooperation with international organizations and civil society, can assist in the process of the documentation of crimes against Ukrainian culture to ensure the effective investigation and prosecution of those responsible. Well-prepared documentation and information-gathering are key for the evidence to be admitted in a court of law. UNESCO will document and assess the damage affecting cultural property and institutions, which could provide information and data to relevant stakeholders.

The meeting is also to call upon the international community to continue its financial assistance and to provide adequate coordination of international efforts to protect Ukrainian heritage in cooperation and with the leading role of Ukraine. During a UNESCO mission to Kyiv (7–9 July 2022), the Ukrainian authorities and UNESCO agreed to cooperate on a framework for the monitoring, assessment and documentation of the damage, with a view to coordinating efforts in support of reconstruction and recovery measures.

Guiding questions

- What are the possibilities within the international legal framework to address the intentional destruction of cultural heritage as an element of the tactics of war?
- What are the main challenges in the process of documenting the damage to cultural property in Ukraine? What are the best international practices that could be applied to this process? What can be done to hold those who violate the rules of warfare to account?
- What additional steps could United Nations Member States take to strengthen accountability for the crimes committed in this context in Ukraine?
- How can we better coordinate the current efforts of the international community that are aimed at assisting Ukraine to protect its cultural heritage? What are the best practices already introduced by Member States?
- How can we address the challenges related to recovery and reparations in the context of the destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine?