J. PAUL GETTY TRUST OCCASIONAL PAPERS
IN CULTURAL HERITAGE POLICY

NUMBER 5
2021

UNESCO's Response to the Rise of Violent Extremism

A Decade of Building International Momentum in the Struggle to Protect Cultural Heritage

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Los Angeles
Getty Publications

This publication was created using Quire™, a multiformat publishing tool owned by the J. Paul Getty Trust.

The free online edition of this publication is available at getty.edu/publications/occasional-papers-5/. Also available are free PDF, EPUB, and Kindle/MOBI downloads.

First edition, 2021
github.com/thegetty/occasional-papers-5/

Published by Getty Publications, Los Angeles
1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 500
Los Angeles, California 90049-1682
getty.edu/publications

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ISBN 978-1-60606-750-5 (online)
ISBN 978-1-60606-751-2 (e-book)

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Cover: The Temple of Bel in Palmyra, March 13, 2016, contrasted with a photograph of the same site taken two years earlier. Photo: Joseph Eid/AFP via Getty Images

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FOREWORD

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Its goal is to build peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences, and culture.

Irina Bokova was UNESCO's tenth, and first woman, director-general, serving from 2009 to 2017. She had previously served as Bulgaria's first secretary of state for European integration, minister of foreign affairs ad interim, and as ambassador to France.

As director-general, Irina Bokova championed the protection of cultural heritage. On March 28, 2015, she launched #Unite4Heritage, a global campaign to raise awareness of the importance and vulnerability of the world's cultural heritage, seeking to "protect and safeguard heritage under threat" in areas where it is endangered by extremists.[1] Among its most dramatic projects is a multipronged information campaign, "Safeguarding Syrian Cultural Heritage," which aims to protect the movable and immovable heritage in the country's museums and archaeological sites. There, she coined the phrase "cultural cleansing," arguing that "[when] you destroy identities of people, destroy their history, you destroy the reasoning for future reconciliation and peace."[2]

Currently, Irina is participating in a Getty Publications book project, *Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities* (due to be published in 2022), for which she contributed the foreword. There she wrote that heritage is "a vision for peace and mutual respect, carved in stone and cultural landscapes, with the power to change the minds of women and men, to shape a different future for all.…[A]ll cultures are different but that difference does not divide—it unites." Getty is pleased to publish Irina Bokova's reflections of her time as director-general of UNESCO in the *J. Paul Getty Trust Occasional Papers in Cultural Heritage Policy*.

James Cuno
President and CEO
J. Paul Getty Trust

INTRODUCTION

It has been said many times that if the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) did not exist, it would have been invented now, in the twenty-first century, at a time in which international cooperation in the areas of education, science, and culture is so critical to the world we live in. My experience as former director-general of this unique United Nations (UN) agency highlighted for me UNESCO's global importance in ways more dramatically than in its entire previous existence. I have said many times that *culture alone is not enough to build peace. But without culture, peace cannot be lasting.* In a time that has seen cultural destruction on an arguably unprecedented scale, the need to focus on exploring the links between the preservation of cultural heritage and peace has never been greater.

UNESCO is unique because of the idea inscribed in the preamble to its constitution, that "a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."[3]

This powerful idea, that peace should be built differently, was launched well before the end of World War II by the Allied countries, including the United States. It was the American poet Archibald MacLeish, the Librarian of Congress until late 1944, who famously penned the following phrase in the preamble: "[S]ince wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." After leaving this post, MacLeish served as an assistant secretary of state and as the chair of the US delegation to the San Francisco Conference, which founded the UN in 1945.

Another American, J. William Fulbright, was also prominent among supporters of the creation of a new United Nations agency with a mandate to promote international cooperation in education, culture, and science. He attended one of the preparatory meetings on the drafting of the UNESCO constitution, at which time he was a young US congressman from Arkansas, later to become senator.

Addressing the closing plenary session of the San Francisco Conference on June 26, 1945, US president Harry S. Truman declared: "We must set up an effective agency for constant and thorough interchange of thoughts and ideas, for there lies the road to a

better and more tolerant understanding among nations and among peoples."[4] This was, and still is, a highly humanistic idea, relevant in a world of rapid change, shifting geopolitics, and disruptive technology, defining every aspect of our lives and the newly emerging questions about identities, cultural divides, and living together.

These were also the challenges that confronted me when I became the tenth director-general of UNESCO in 2009. I ran the elections on a platform of "UNESCO in a Globalized World: New Humanism for the 21st Century." An important part of this proposed agenda was the idea that culture and heritage protection should find their rightful place in all UN efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable development, intercultural dialogue, and peace.

At every crossroad of human history for the last seventy-five years, UNESCO has served as a global platform for intellectual debate, fostering partnerships, encouraging the creation of knowledge, and launching new ideas. This is how the concept of "world heritage" and a whole range of cultural conventions, ideas, and principles were born, such as education for all, knowledge-based societies, expressions of cultural diversity, the ethics of science, and ethical principles in relation to climate change.

Nevertheless, while considered the "laboratory of ideas" of the UN system, UNESCO has been increasingly torn between its intergovernmental nature and the expectations of an independent intellectual debate. Not that they are always opposite to each other, but with time more questions have emerged. These include: Is UNESCO still the "intellectual" agency of the UN or merely a technical one that sets up targets and benchmarks and implements projects in the field? How do you measure the impact of its various normative documents and new ideas in the areas of education, the sciences, and culture? How should they be quantified? And how do you apply such measures to culture and heritage protection? These are all relevant questions that clearly define two distinct approaches, a "technical" and a "political," and the constant necessity to take both into account.

Such a dichotomy is at the same time an opportunity and a challenge. An opportunity, as UNESCO has a huge convening power and unmatched normative outreach to define areas of common public good, such as education for all or heritage protection. And a challenge, as it requires navigating through a complex political landscape, competing regional and national agendas, and often minefields of unresolved historical narratives that may lead to conflict.

Like the United Nations itself, UNESCO reflects, sometimes even more so, political shifts and ambitions—all becoming more visible and contentious with competition and conflicting narratives over history, heritage, and identity. If anything, this has only intensified with the end of the Cold War, and new geopolitical realities, which opened unresolved historical disputes and unhealed wounds, have challenged the very system of norms established by UNESCO. It happened with the wars in the former Yugoslavia, with the conflicts in the post-Soviet space, and in Asia, including the Far East. Not to mention

the most conspicuous, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the status of the Old Town of Jerusalem, sacred to the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The latter issue came dramatically to the fore in November 2011, when UNESCO's General Conference, which consists of representatives of the organization's member states, adopted a decision to grant Palestine full membership. This triggered the automatic suspension of the American contribution to the regular budget, under a 1990 US law that prohibits the funding of any UN body that "accords the Palestine Liberation Organization the status of member state." Losing 22 percent of the budget was a major blow to UNESCO, weakening its capability to deliver on its programs and mandate.

However, the suspension of US funding was more than simply a financial issue. The universality of UNESCO was at stake, its ability to be the broad multilateral platform for international cooperation, negotiation, and decision-making in its area of competence. I deeply regretted this development: the consequences were quite obvious—both UNESCO and the United States were losers. I was consequently committed to preserving the universality of the organization and to keeping the United States as a member. The country was not only a founding member state but a valuable partner supporting education for all, women's empowerment, science, freedom of speech, and particularly the protection of world heritage.

After all, it was an American, Russell E. Train, who strongly promoted the concept of world heritage in the early decades of the UN. He left an indelible mark on environmental protection in the United States and a deep imprint on the world through his leadership of the World Wildlife Fund and, not least, his vision of world heritage. For example, Train participated in the 1965 White House conference that established the idea of combining the preservation of cultural and natural sites, and it was his discussions with Dr. Joseph Fisher, chairman of the conference's Committee on Natural Resources, that led to the creation of a World Heritage Trust to, in their words, "identify, establish, develop, and manage the world's superb natural and scenic areas and historic sites for the present and future benefit of the entire world citizenry."[5]

Invited to address the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in Venice in 2002, the year following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, Train famously remarked: "At this particular time in history, as the fabric of civilized human society seems increasingly under attack by forces that deny the very existence of a shared heritage, forces that strike at the very heart of our sense of community, I am convinced that the World Heritage holds out a contrary and positive vision of human society and our human future."[6]

These words encapsulate the spirit of world heritage. While years have passed, they have lost none of their relevance or urgency.

THE RISE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The twenty-first century began with the shocking destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan. However, nobody expected that these horrible acts would be followed by the rise of violent extremism in Mali and the Middle East. And I could not have imagined the challenges UNESCO would confront with the brutal and systematic destruction of emblematic cultural sites. Culture has always been the victim of war and conflict—as collateral damage, or from looting of sites. But this phenomenon was different. The destruction was used as a tactic of war to intimidate populations, attack their identities, destroy their link with the past, eliminate the existence of diversity, and disseminate hatred.

In 2012, the French news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP) interviewed someone said to be part of the extremist group controlling Timbuktu in Mali. "There is no world heritage," he claimed. "It doesn't exist."[7] This attitude captures the challenge the world has faced with the rise of a violent extremism that has perpetrated the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage as well as mass atrocities against people on cultural and religious grounds—in Afghanistan, Mali, Syria, and Iraq.

Many questions have emerged from these actions, such as: How do we apply the international legal and institutional regime to keep pace with the new forms of "modern" warfare by nonstate actors? How do we make a convincing case that heritage is not only about bricks and stones but about humanity in its diversity, and that it gains meaning from being inscribed in the lives of people and local communities? How do we convince the humanitarian and security community that heritage matters, and that destroying heritage means destroying the social fabric of societies and depriving people of their identity?

My experience in these years has strengthened my conviction in the growing relevance of heritage and culture. And not only mine. In the face of deliberate destruction and looting of cultural heritage by extremist groups, a new understanding of why cultural heritage matters has emerged, an understanding that protection of heritage cannot be separated from the protection of human lives in times of conflict, and that it is a key security imperative.

My own conviction grew stronger that protecting cultural heritage is not a luxury that can be left for better days, but that it is vital for peace and reconciliation. Often the first victim of war, culture also heals, and can restore ties that have been broken. The destruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and the Buddhas of Bamiyan were warning signs of a phenomenon that ran counter to an already widely accepted approach, both legally and ethically, that protecting heritage is a global public good.

Then, in 2012, the unthinkable happened. Extremists took control of the northern part of Mali and destroyed the city of Timbuktu's ancient mausoleums and mosques. About 4,200 manuscripts of the Institut des Hautes Etudes et de Recherches Islamiques Ahmed Baba (IHERI-AB) were also burned. Timbuktu was considered the center of Islamic learning from the thirteenth century, and at one time counted nearly 200 schools and universities attracting thousands of students from across the Muslim world. It is thanks to this history of enlightenment that the entire city of Timbuktu was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1988.[8]

The case of Mali was a serious wake-up call. In January 2013 the extremists were pushed out of the city and most of the north of the country by Malian government and French forces. A few months later the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2100, establishing the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), whose peacekeeping mandate included the protection of cultural and historic sites, the first time such protections were included in a council resolution establishing a peacekeeping operation.[9]

Working closely with UNESCO, MINUSMA engaged in a number of activities through its Environment and Culture Unit. These included the training of civil, military, and police personnel to raise their awareness of Malian cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible; support for the program coordinated by UNESCO and the Malian Ministry of Culture to rehabilitate the damaged heritage sites; and support for the resumption of cultural events, contributing to the transmission of intangible heritage and social cohesion.

This inclusion of heritage protection in the peacekeeping operation was a breakthrough in linking heritage protection to peace and security. It was a true recognition that heritage—both tangible and intangible—plays an important role in peace and reconciliation. While this aspect of MINUSMA's operation was omitted by the Security Council in its 2018 mandate renewal,[10] it is nevertheless an important reminder of why heritage and culture matter. What has remained is the training of UN peacekeeping forces on cultural heritage protection, with the strong involvement of experts from the Blue Shield network, a nongovernmental organization established in the late 1990s to "protect cultural heritage in emergency situations."[11]

The conflict in Iraq and Syria and the rise of violent extremism created a new environment: a huge humanitarian crisis, paired with unprecedented deliberate

destruction of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Mesopotamia, known as "the cradle of human civilization." The aim was obviously to destroy the history of diversity and eliminate the culture of coexistence that is the DNA of this region.

In Iraq, parts of the ancient city of Hatra were bulldozed, and Nimrud dynamited. There was also serious damage to Nineveh and Mari, among other sites.[12] In Syria, all six of the country's World Heritage Sites have been severely damaged by fighting, including the Old Cities of Aleppo and Damascus. Al-Madina Souq in Aleppo, the world's largest covered historic market, was burnt, and the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo has become a battlefield. Already by 2013, such destruction encouraged UNESCO's World Heritage Committee to make the decision to put all Syrian sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in order to draw attention to the threats they faced.[13]

The destruction continued, and in 2015 the Arch of Triumph and the Temple of Bel in the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra were blown up by explosives. Then, on August 18th of that year, extremists of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS or Daesh) publicly beheaded Dr. Khaled al-Asaad, the renowned guardian of the city, who had helped evacuate the Palmyra museum prior to the city's seizure. Before his brutal murder he was tortured in an attempt to force him to reveal the location of the museum's hidden artefacts.[14] Thoughts of Dr. al-Asaad are particularly poignant for me. Before the conflict, in 2010, I have fond memories of visiting Palmyra, accompanied by Dr. al-Asaad's son Waleed, who gave me the gift of a small booklet with a dedication in French, "Palmyre: histoire, monuments et musée," written by his father, that I keep in my library as a precious reminder of a life and a sacrifice for the protection of heritage.

By this time, with its devastating humanitarian consequences, the Syrian conflict was already firmly on the agenda of the Security Council. However, it was extremely important that the protection of the country's rich and diverse heritage also find its rightful place on the council's agenda. This attitude does not reflect a "weaponizing" of culture and heritage, as some have claimed, but a strong political declaration on the link between heritage protection, diversity, and peace.

In pursuit of this linkage, on February 22, 2014, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2139, to "ease aid delivery to Syrians, [and] provide relief," and called on "all parties to immediately end all violence which has led to human suffering in Syria, save Syria's rich societal mosaic and cultural heritage, and take appropriate steps to ensure the protection of Syria's World Heritage Sites."[15] This was followed a few weeks later, on March 12, by a joint statement titled "The Destruction of Syria's Cultural Heritage Must Stop," issued by then UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon; Lakhdar Brahimi, the League of Arab States's joint special representative for Syria; and myself.[16] The statement launched an appeal to "all parties to halt immediately all destruction of Syrian heritage, and to save Syria's rich social mosaic and cultural heritage by protecting its World Heritage Sites." In the words of the statement, "The destruction of such precious heritage gravely affects the identity and history of the Syrian people and all humanity, damaging

the foundations of society for many years to come. The protection of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, is inseparable from the protection of human lives, and should be an integral part of humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts." I am particularly grateful to Ban Ki-moon and to Lakhdar Brahimi for raising their voices loud and clear in support of Syrian cultural heritage against the background of a huge humanitarian catastrophe.

It was time to act and send a strong message of UNESCO's commitment to the protection of cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq against extremism and destruction. To that end, in fall 2014 I decided to go to Iraq, which was largely occupied by ISIL, to talk to the authorities and local communities, and to see for myself how UNESCO could help. I subsequently chose the date of November 2 for the UN to mark for the first time the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists: in part to send a message that extremists not only destroy heritage, but persecute people and stifle free thinking and speech.

After meeting Iraqi leaders and visiting the Bagdad Museum, which had still not officially reopened, I headed on to Erbil, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. I personally presented the governor with the UNESCO certificate of the inscription of the historic citadel on the World Heritage List during a moving ceremony as a testimony of support to the people of Iraq. My conviction of the deep connection between the persecution of people and attacks on culture and heritage became even stronger after visiting the Baharka refugee camp in Erbil, most of whose inhabitants had fled ISIL. It was also strengthened by a long meeting with representatives of various minority communities: Christian, Turkoman, Yazidi, Assyrian, Chaldean, Shabak, Baha'i, Sabean Mandaean, and Kaka'i. This was the moment when I called for the first time what was happening "cultural cleansing."[17]

The following year, 2015, was the turning point. At the end of February extremists published shocking images on the Internet of the destruction of the Mosul Museum. I immediately called both the UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, and the president of the Security Council to request an emergency council meeting. It was obvious that a new approach was urgently required at both international and national levels to strengthen the link between protection of cultural heritage and diversity on the one hand, and humanitarian action, peacebuilding processes, and security policies on the other. It was a moment to have a different look at conflicts, to build peace, and to put words to the nature of the threat we faced. It was ultimately a moment to recognize something extremely important: that violent extremists do not seek *only* to kill or seize control of a territory, instead their primary objective is the complete annihilation of the "*other*." Extremists do not choose between culture and people. They attack *both*—and we need to defend *both*.

This understanding was strongly supported by the reports of two consecutive special rapporteurs of the UN Human Rights Council in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheen (2009–2015) and currently Karima Bennoune, who have both defended the view that

destruction of heritage is a human rights violation. In the words of Benounne, who has put the protection of heritage as the main focus of her reports, “Destruction of heritage is often accompanied by other grave assaults on human dignity and human rights. We must care not only about the destruction of heritage but also about the destruction of the lives of human beings. They are interrelated.”[18]

UNESCO'S RESPONSE: THREE LINES OF ACTION

When I look back at UNESCO's response to conflict and heritage destruction, I realize that what occurred to me most forcefully at the time was the need to think and act both within the existing legal and institutional framework and, at the same time, outside the "culture box." There was an urgent need for action, for new ideas, for collaboration, for mobilizing governments and the expert community, and for working ever more closely with the UN's partners. What emerged were three lines of action: leveraging all the legal and institutional frameworks; working closely with the humanitarian and security communities in member states and within the United Nations broadly; and, last but not least, awareness raising. This approach received the strong support of the UN and many member states. The three are discussed in turn below.

International Legal Framework

The first and most obvious line of action was linked to the international legal framework. As the guardian of a comprehensive set of international conventions, covering tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the diversity of cultural expressions, UNESCO has the legitimacy and a particular responsibility for the protection of heritage and cultural diversity as a global public good. Over its seventy-five years of existence, the organization has created an entirely new space for international cooperation, adopting legal instruments and documents and coordinating practical action by governments, experts, and civil society groups. It was important to see how and to what extent these legal instruments could be applied within the framework of "modern" conflicts, where nonstate actors were often the main perpetrators of destruction and looting.

Four conventions have particular relevance to the protection of heritage in conflict:[19]

- 1954: Protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict (and two 1999 protocols);
- 1970: Fighting against illicit trafficking of cultural property;
- 1972: Protection of world cultural and natural property; and
- 2003: Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Still very much needed was wider ratification of these conventions and thus a strengthening of international cooperation. This was particularly the case for the 1954 convention and its later protocols and the 1970 convention, the latter of which still had important international players missing.

The 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, adopted in the wake of massive destruction of cultural heritage during World War II, was the first multilateral treaty with a worldwide vocation focusing exclusively on the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict: immovable and movable cultural heritage; monuments of architecture, art, or history; archeological sites; works of art, manuscripts, books, and other objects of artistic, historical, or archeological interest; and scientific collections of all kinds, regardless of their origin or ownership.

The convention and its two protocols have become an important part of international humanitarian law with their focus on the protection of cultural institutions and heritage in time of war. UNESCO and its many partners, particularly the Blue Shield International and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), had long been advocating for the convention's wider ratification. We strengthened our message on the urgency of the moment, which, at the end of the day, brought results. With France becoming party to the second protocol in 2016,[20] and the ratification of the convention and protocols by the United Kingdom the following year,[21] all five permanent members of the Security Council (the so-called "P5" of the United States, China, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom) are now states parties to the convention—critical for its implementation and a strong commitment to the protection of heritage.

It was on the basis of the 1954 convention that UNESCO signed a memorandum of understanding with the ICRC in March 2016—the first agreement of its kind.[22] This consolidated the ongoing advocacy of both organizations for the wider ratification of the convention and opened the way for greater exchange of information, particularly regarding areas of difficult access, aimed at protecting cultural property at risk. The ICRC thus could potentially play an operational role in the rescue and evacuation of cultural property in some conflict situations. Being the impartial, neutral, and independent keeper of international humanitarian law, the ICRC has become a key UNESCO partner in emergency situations. This provides additional strong testimony to the growing global awareness that the protection of cultural heritage is not just a cultural emergency, but a humanitarian imperative.

In the fight against cultural heritage trafficking, the main international legal instruments are the 1970 Convention Concerning the Measures to Be Taken to Prohibit and Prevent the Illegal Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property[23] and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Heritage.[24] By the adoption of the latter, UNIDROIT, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, stated clearly that if a cultural object is stolen, it has to be returned, and that

there is a need for due diligence in acquiring objects of art. It was an important addition to the fight against illicit trafficking of stolen or looted antiquities, as it obliges the buyer to check the legitimacy of their purchases.

Initially, the 1970 convention did not make any provisions for a periodic monitoring body. In the first forty years of the convention's existence, only one meeting of the General Conference of states parties was ever held, in 2003. While the convention is an important platform for international cooperation, it lacked mechanisms of monitoring and follow-up in terms of national legislation, training, exchange of best practices, and peer review.

However, the General Conference's executive board approved my proposal for a second meeting, held in June 2012.[25] Here, in order to monitor implementation, the states parties agreed to convene a meeting every two years, as well as to establish a subsidiary committee, strengthening the convention's relevance. Among the main purposes of the committee were to review national reports of states parties, to identify difficult situations resulting from the implementation of the 1970 convention, including protection and return of cultural property, and to submit recommendations and guidelines to the states parties.

This created a concrete platform for stronger international cooperation in the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural objects from Syria and Iraq. While it is difficult to assess the scale of plundering and looting of antiquities, there were dozens of intercepts, widely reported in the media.[26] It is not by chance that the 1970 trafficking convention is mentioned in several Security Council resolutions on heritage and conflict.

No doubt the emblematic Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 played the most critical role in awakening public opinion to the tragedy of the destruction. The convention remains the most widely ratified international legal instrument in modern history: with 193 states parties, it sends an undisputedly universal and humanistic message of respect and recognition of the contribution of all cultures to human civilization.

The World Heritage Committee has taken numerous important decisions to raise international awareness of the need to mobilize support for the protection of cultural heritage in conflict. These include inscribing the sites that have been attacked and damaged onto the List of World Heritage in Danger, such as Timbuktu and the Tomb of Askia in Mali[27] and the six Syrian World Heritage Sites,[28] in addition to authorizing missions and creating funds for emergency conservation measures. For example, already in March 2014 UNESCO established an "Observatory of Syrian Cultural Heritage" at its Beirut office with the financial support of the European Union (EU).[29]

The fourth primary instrument with a relevance to culture and conflict is the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.[30] It covers traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and

practices concerning nature and the universe, and the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

Although it has been increasingly recognized that intangible cultural heritage, which is predominantly community based, has a direct relevance and is often affected during conflict, it has not found the place it deserves on the agenda of decision-makers and experts. One reason might be that such destruction is often "invisible," as the criteria for recognizing it as being part of the intangible heritage of humanity is not its "outstanding universal value," but its value to a community, albeit small and distant. Nevertheless, significantly enough, in the case of Mali, MINUSMA recognized that "intangible heritage was also affected by events and numerous cultural events and practices were interrupted from the beginning of the conflict." It also recognized that the "oral expressions and traditions existing in Mali allow populations to express and transmit their values and knowledge and are, in particular, tools for the resolution of conflicts and to create inter- and intra-community cohesion."[31]

A telling example among the eight Malian items on the Lists of Intangible Heritage is the "Charter of Manden," proclaimed in the early thirteenth century by the founder of the Mandingo Empire, situated between present-day Guinea and Mali from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries. The charter is one of the oldest constitutions in the world, albeit mainly in oral form, and contains a preamble of seven chapters advocating social peace in diversity, the inviolability of the human being, education, food security, freedom of expression, and trade. While the empire has disappeared, the words of the charter and the rituals associated with it are still transmitted orally from father to son in a codified form.

Working Closely with International Actors

Our second line of action was working closely with member states, as well as with the humanitarian and security communities at the UN broadly. Given the intergovernmental character of UNESCO, an important milestone was the adoption of a comprehensive "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" in November 2015 by the organization's thirty-eighth General Conference.[32]

The strategy clearly stated that it "[s]upports the Director-General's efforts aimed at embedding the protection of cultural heritage and cultural diversity in humanitarian action, global security strategies and peacebuilding processes, by means of all pertinent United Nations mechanisms and in collaboration with the relevant United Nations departments."[33] Overall, the strategy made it very clear that "attacks on culture are characterized by the deliberate targeting of individuals on the basis of their cultural, ethnic or religious affiliation. Combined with the intentional and systematic destruction of cultural heritage, the denial of cultural identity, including books and manuscripts, traditional practices, as well as places of worship, of memory and learning, such attacks have been defined as 'cultural cleansing.'"[34] It went on to say that "cultural cleansing,

intended in this way, aims to eradicate cultural diversity from a geographical area and replace it with a single, homogeneous cultural and religious perspective."

The implementation of this strategy became an indispensable pillar of UNESCO's activities: to build broad coalitions by connecting the dots between humanitarian, security, and cultural imperatives. In other words, to convince the political and security constituencies within and outside the UN that there is a strong causal link between the rise of violent extremism, and humanitarian crises and the destruction of heritage. Consequently, the strategy also declared: "This form of multi-faceted denial of culture and cultural diversity, linked with aggressive propaganda…highlights how the destruction of cultural heritage is far more than a cultural tragedy and has become a security issue and that culture cannot be delinked from humanitarian operations and must be a key component of any strategy for peace."

In a further move to engage international actors, on November 26–27, 2015, UNESCO convened an expert meeting on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)[35] as applied to cultural heritage destruction.[36] Its primary purpose was to explore the possible application of R2P to the protection of cultural heritage. Participants included twenty-two distinguished specialists and practitioners representing various international governmental and nongovernmental organizations in this field, including Adama Dieng, then UN special adviser on the prevention of genocide.

While most experts agreed on the challenges and the difficulties of applying the concept of R2P in the context of cultural heritage, and that it might be unrealistic to expect that it represents a viable path for international cooperation vis-à-vis the destruction of heritage in Syria and Iraq, the meeting did adopt recommendations[37] that "highlighted the preventive aspect" of R2P. The meeting also helpfully noted that "acts of intentional destruction and misappropriation of cultural heritage can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, can indicate genocidal intent, and are frequently associated with ethnic cleansing and its accompanying 'cultural cleansing.'"

There were also two important recommendations to member states and the UNESCO Secretariat. First, that due consideration be given to the idea of "safe havens" for cultural property situated in states outside the conflict zone, as envisaged by the 1954 convention. And second, that due consideration be given to the idea of "cultural protected zones," in accordance with the 1954 convention; with the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts;[38] and with the UN Charter.

The illegal trafficking of arms and drugs, and their link with the financing of the activities of extremists in the Middle East and Africa, has also emerged as an issue of serious concern within the UN. It came high on the Security Council's agenda well before the adoption of the above-mentioned strategy by the General Conference in 2015. This concern grew when satellite images, provided with the cooperation and special agreement

of the United Nations' UNITAR-UNOSAT program in 2014 and 2015,[39] provided undisputed proof of the looting of sites and smuggling of antiquities.

Consequently, on February 12, 2015, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2199, submitted by Russia, which broke new ground by banning cultural trade from Iraq and Syria, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter—permitting military enforcement—as a means of financing terrorism. This in itself was a major step, linking cultural issues and security concerns. It also acknowledged that cultural heritage stands on the frontline of conflict and so should be placed at the frontline of security and political responses to the crisis.

The Security Council clearly declared that a link exists between trafficking in cultural objects and the financing of terrorist groups, who thus "are generating income from engaging directly or indirectly in the looting and smuggling of cultural heritage items from archaeological sites, museums, libraries, archives, and other sites in Iraq and Syria, which is being used to support their recruitment efforts and strengthen their operational capability to organize and carry out terrorist attacks."[40]

Our work with the Security Council P5 and the negotiation of concrete texts were critical for the inclusion of the respective paragraphs in Resolution 2199, and for support for the future work of UNESCO. In addition, the resolution placed a special responsibility on UNESCO and other important international players, such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Customs Organization, and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) to curb the trafficking of antiquities from these countries. On this basis UNESCO created a new platform for close cooperation, with regular exchanges with these partners at both an expert level and that of the organization heads.

The list of joint activities and initiatives, based on the specific mandates of the different partners and entities, is long. In 2015 UNODC and UNESCO launched a training program for judges and prosecutors—to connect the fight against illicit trafficking of antiquities from Syria and Iraq with that against money laundering and corruption. Coordination among law enforcement agencies, experts, museums, and auction houses was boosted, as was close collaboration with the World Customs Organization to identify cultural heritage fraud and prevent trafficking. Entrusted by the Security Council and relying on the 1970 convention, UNESCO has also supported countries in strengthening legislation, building capacity, and deepening information sharing. As a result, by 2017 more than sixty governments had amended or adopted new legislation in order to respond to the need for stronger measures and coordination efforts, and had adapted institutions and launched national and regional projects against the illicit trafficking of antiquities from Syria and Iraq.

Since most of the existing international legal instruments do not provide for penal actions, a recent prominent question has been how to fight impunity for destruction of cultural heritage. Here the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has been

critical, as it declares the intentional destruction of buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science, or charitable purposes without military justification to be a war crime. It was almost immediately after the destruction of the mausoleums of Timbuktu that I called the ICC chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, to discuss the possibility of the court opening an investigation as to whether a crime had been committed under its statute. We also encouraged the government of Mali to submit such a request, which they did in July 2012, opening the way for the court's investigation.

After scrupulous joint work by the UNESCO and ICC teams, on July 1, 2012, Bensouda declared that the destruction of mausoleums in Mali constituted a war crime under the Rome Statute, and launched a preliminary examination into the violence that had been engulfing the country since January 2012.[41] UNESCO and the ICC thus established a close and unique partnership with the purpose of bringing to justice those who have committed crimes by destroying cultural heritage—an extremely challenging task, with no precedents.

As a result, the first suspect for this destruction, Ahmed al-Faqi al-Mahdi,[42] was arrested and transferred by the authorities of Mali and Niger to The Hague, the Netherlands, where the ICC is based, on September 26, 2015. In August the following year, al-Mahdi pled guilty before the court to the intentional damage of nine mausoleums and a mosque in Timbuktu in June and July 2012.

On September 27, 2016, al-Mahdi was sentenced by the ICC to nine years' imprisonment. This was the first time the court had taken action in relation to the war crime of destruction of cultural heritage.[43] The conviction of al-Mahdi thus made history in the fight against impunity—recognizing the restoration of justice and the rule of law as an essential step of any recovery process. It set a historic precedent for similar cases in the future—to treat such deliberate destruction as a war crime. Building on this cooperation, in November 2017, Bensouda and I signed a letter of intent formalizing and further enhancing the collaboration between UNESCO and the ICC.[44]

During this period, UNESCO also worked with many other partners to strengthen protection of heritage and to counter violent extremism. Perhaps most prominently, on May 3, 2017, the Council of Europe adopted a Convention on Offenses Relating to Cultural Property, which aims to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking and destruction of cultural property, in the framework of the council's action to fight terrorism and organized crime. The convention, elaborated with the active participation of UNESCO, is open for signature to any country and is the only treaty specifically dealing with the criminalization of the trafficking of cultural property. In a further example, on September 21, 2017, in cooperation with UNESCO and other international institutions and agencies, the EU adopted a new policy to protect cultural heritage from terrorism and mass atrocities.

Awareness Raising

The third line of action, namely raising global awareness of the scale of the destruction and looting, was equally important. UNESCO aimed at mobilizing civil society, the expert community, academia, and young people around a common understanding of why protection of heritage matters, and countering the narrative and hate speech of extremists. To this end, in May 2015, six months after my first visit, I went back to Iraq to launch UNESCO's new campaign, #Unite4Heritage, at the University of Bagdad with young Iraqi students. #Unite4Heritage became a major social network platform that aimed to build a global movement of predominantly young people that shared stories, knowledge, and experience about heritage and culture, challenging the extremists' narrative about identity and values.

We launched #Unite4Heritage at the thirty-ninth session of the World Heritage Committee in 2015 in Bonn, along with the German Presidency, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOC), Interpol, and Iraqi officials, among other partners. The committee adopted the Bonn Declaration on World Heritage, which condemned the barbaric assaults, violence, and crimes recently committed by ISIL against the cultural heritage of Iraq, including the World Heritage Site of Hatra, which recalls the mindless destructions in Bamiyan, Timbuktu, and elsewhere. Importantly, the declaration also recommended that heritage protection be included in the mandate of peacekeeping missions where appropriate and called on UNESCO to enhance its international leadership in coordinating the response to the protection of heritage in the event of armed conflict.[45]

In order to give more visibility to #Unite4Heritage, I attended events with young people in many places, including at headquarters in Paris; the UN in New York; the Beirut National Museum, Lebanon; in Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates (UAE); in Cairo, during the reopening of the Islamic Museum, which had been damaged by a terrorist attack; and in Kabul's historic Babur Garden in Afghanistan. At the latter location I launched a new UNESCO publication, "Keeping History Alive," to remind young Afghanis about their rich and diverse identity.

At these events I discussed issues of diversity and the need to protect common heritage in schools and universities. Among other memories, a striking exchange in 2012 with a seventh-grade class in a school in Tunis stands out. I mentioned how proud they should be of their history and heritage with such rich Roman, Phoenician, and Islamic layers of culture. One girl raised her hand and said something that I will never forget: "Why should I be proud about heritage that does not belong to me, that does not belong to my culture, to my religion, that belongs to somebody else, why should I care to preserve it?"

In response I described how much cultures permeate each other. That maybe one of her ancestors had made the extraordinary Roman mosaics exhibited at the magnificent Bardo Museum—attacked in three years later in 2015 by extremists. I also explained to her that there is no pure culture, that there are always influences and that by understanding these cultural and historical interactions we also understand better who we are and

where we come from, and ultimately how to live together more effectively. I came out of the meeting with the deep conviction of the need to engage more with young people, to help them to learn to respect their own heritage and that of others.

While in Cairo in May 2015, I gave a speech at one of the oldest and biggest Islamic academic institutions in the world, Al-Azhar University, and met with the prominent and respected Islamic scholar the Grand Imam Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, who supported the campaign and shared his concern over the rise of extremism. I was happy to meet him again at the beginning of 2018, after stepping down as director-general of UNESCO, at a conference in Abu Dhabi, the UAE, on intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The conference was followed by an important and highly symbolic event—the signature by al-Tayeb and Pope Francis of the "Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," with a powerful message of mutual respect and humanity as one single family.[46]

Other universities and civil society groups later joined #Unite4Heritage. Yale University, for example, organized a special day dedicated to the campaign in 2016, inviting me and then UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon to speak to the students. The Metropolitan Museum of Art ("the Met"), the US National Committee of ICOMOS (US/ICOMOS), and the Smithsonian Institution also became close partners of UNESCO, organizing conferences and advocacy events on the protection of the heritage in Syria and Iraq, often with the support of the US Department of State and with the participation of experts and high-level officials, including former US secretary of state John Kerry.

There were indeed many memorable events at the Met. I would particularly mention one organized in September 2016, "Today's Struggle to Protect and Preserve the Cultural Heritage of Religious Minorities," which included keynote speeches by former French president François Hollande and former US vice-president Joe Biden, now president of the United States.[47] This was indeed an expression of the strong political commitment to protection of heritage and cultural diversity so much needed in these turbulent times, and an encouragement for us, at UNESCO, to continue our fight.

Among UN member states, France and Italy took the lead for the protection of heritage in conflict at important international fora. Italy held the first "International Conference of Ministers of Culture" in Milan on July 31, 2015, highlighting the key role of culture for peace and dialogue. And in March 2017, with the support of UNESCO, Italy also organized the first ever meeting of the Group of 7 (G7) on "Culture as a Tool for Dialogue among Peoples." Then, in December of the following year, France and the UAE organized in Abu Dhabi, jointly with UNESCO, the "Conference for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Conflict Areas," and decided to create an International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH). ALIPH has subsequently developed a network of partners and already supports one hundred projects in twenty-two countries.

Momentum has been built. In 2016 a memorandum of understanding[48] was signed between Italy and UNESCO on the establishment of a #Unite4Heritage task force for the

protection of cultural heritage at risk. It was a major and innovative step in our effort to gain recognition for the importance of cultural heritage in fostering identity and resilience in times of crisis, and in building social cohesion. The establishment of the task force, bringing together cultural heritage experts and the Italian Carabinieri police force, did enhance immensely the capacity to respond to future emergencies. The agreement contained in the memorandum was a concrete step toward implementing the aforementioned November 2015 "Reinforcement of UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict," notably through mechanisms for the rapid deployment of national expertise in emergency situations under UNESCO's overall coordination.

The agreement was also a direct result of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2199, which demanded concrete action against looting and illicit trafficking of archeological objects used as a means to finance criminal and terrorist activities. Today, as a consequence of these initiatives, representatives of the Carabinieri are in Mosul and Erbil training police, experts, and law enforcement administration.

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During my eight years at UNESCO I saw the power of culture and heritage to mobilize, to rebuild, to reconcile, to renew, and to heal. I remember visiting Timbuktu in 2013 with François Hollande,[49] witnessing the pain, suffering, and devastating effect of the destruction of the centuries-old heritage of mausoleums and manuscripts on the local communities. Standing in front of one of the destroyed mausoleums, I promised on behalf of UNESCO to rebuild them. Two years later, in July 2015, I went back to inaugurate fourteen mausoleums reconstructed under the auspices of UNESCO. Meeting with the local community was an emotional and memorable experience—I had the feeling of giving back to the local people their own identity.

Among the distinctions I received during my time as director-general of UNESCO, there is one that I deeply cherish: becoming an honorary citizen of Timbuktu. It reminds me always that the reconstruction of the city's mausoleums was one of the most compelling examples that attacks against culture are attacks against the identity of communities and peoples, and against the very idea of sharing common histories, narratives, and values. They lead to devastation and lost identities. If not addressed, that loss can be irreparable, making reconciliation all the more difficult.

A decade earlier, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, former enemies had joined forces to rebuild the Mostar Bridge, destroyed by war. While attending the moving ceremony of the tenth anniversary of its inscription on the World Heritage List in 2015 and the beautiful late evening concert "The Bridge That Hugs the Coasts," I reflected on the greater knowledge about and respect for each other that the world needs. Nowadays, I am proud to say there is much higher recognition of the link between culture, heritage, and humanitarian and security concerns.

In this regard, in the last few years the Security Council has adopted several landmark resolutions linking the protection of heritage with combatting mass atrocities. Resolution 2347,[50] promoted by UNESCO and submitted by France and Italy on March 24, 2017, is a milestone in the effort to preserve heritage in conflict. It is the first council resolution adopted to ever recognize protection of cultural heritage as a matter of the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as to highlight the responsibility of the entire international community to protect cultural heritage during armed conflict. The resolution not only deplored the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, religious sites, and artefacts, and the smuggling of cultural property by terrorist groups during armed conflict, but affirmed that such attacks might constitute a war crime and that perpetrators must be brought to justice. It thus constitutes the first global initiative by the Security Council to integrate and consolidate various elements of international law and policy vis-à-vis cultural heritage. This was followed in September 2017 by Resolution 2379, on ISIL accountability, which importantly underscored the link between the destruction of heritage and attacks on human lives. Peacekeepers from various countries have also begun to integrate the protection of heritage in training their armed forces, including in France and Italy.

CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND THE UN 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

All of this has strengthened the understanding that heritage is not just a list of marvelous sites—it is a vision for peace and mutual respect, carved in stone and cultural landscapes, with the power to change the minds of women and men, and to shape a different future for all. Heritage preservation shows us that cultures have always influenced each other, that they are in fact irresistibly intertwined. The result is a formidable and unprecedented diversity.

Our notion of culture has broadened significantly over the decades. The 2001 UNESCO "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity," signed by every one of its member states, compellingly states that "cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence."[51]

The current era of globalization, with its unprecedented acceleration and intensification in global flows of ideas and information, is having a homogenizing influence on local culture. While this phenomenon promotes the integration of societies and has provided millions of people with new opportunities, it may also bring with it a loss of uniqueness of local culture, which in turn can lead to loss of identity, exclusion, and even conflict. Because of this, balancing the benefits of integrating into a globalized world against protecting the uniqueness of local culture requires a careful approach. Placing culture at the heart of development policies does not mean to confine and fix it in a conservative way. On the contrary, it invites us to invest in the potential of local resources, knowledge, skills, and materials to foster creativity and sustainable progress. Recognition and respect for the diversity of cultures also creates the conditions for mutual understanding, dialogue, and peace.

As UNESCO director-general I was an ardent proponent of integrating culture as a driver of social cohesion and sustainable development during the elaboration of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which elaborated seventeen "Sustainable

Development Goals" (SDGs). It was a unique opportunity for the first time to recognize culture as bringing social inclusion and respect for human dignity, but also for creating economic growth and decent jobs, contributing to gender equality, fighting climate change, and creating peaceful and inclusive societies.

With all this in mind, the years in the run-up to September 2015, when the UN General Assembly was supposed to adopt the 2030 Agenda, were indeed busy ones. We had to mobilize all our partners and networks to convince member states that culture matters, in all its diverse forms and expressions. Our many allies on this journey included the expert community, museums, private foundations, cities, associations of artists and theater workers, and the film and music industries, among others.

We also partnered with the powerful International Confederation of Societies of Performers and Composers (CISAC) for the December 2015 launch of a report, "Cultural Times: The First Global Map of Cultural and Creative Industries," prepared by Ernst & Young.[52] CISAC has 232 member societies in 121 countries, representing more than four million creators from all geographical areas and all artistic repertoires—music, audiovisual, drama, literature, and visual arts. The report analyzed the economic weight of eleven sectors—advertising, architecture, books, gaming, music, movies, newspapers/magazines, performing arts, radio, TV, and visual arts—revealing the considerable economic and social contribution of the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) to the world economy. According to the report, in 2013 these sectors together generated US$2,250 billion in revenues, representing 3 percent of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 29.5 million jobs or 1 percent of the world's active population. Interestingly enough, these figures surpassed those for telecom services worldwide, at $1,570 billion in revenues, and the number of combined jobs in the automotive industry in Japan, Europe, and the United States, at 25 million.

Most importantly, in order to succeed, we had to work with member states both at UNESCO's headquarters and in New York, where the UN General Assembly's members were engaged in a complex process of drafting new, ambitious, universal, and comprehensive development goals for humanity for the next fifteen years, the 2030 Agenda.

Our advocacy brought about three successive General Assembly resolutions, adopted in 2010, 2011, and 2013, recognizing the role of culture as an enabler and driver of sustainable development. We encouraged the creation of an active and committed Group of Friends of Culture and Development at the UN in New York, composed of influential countries from all regions. The group not only met regularly, but pushed strongly so that culture did not slip between the cracks of the complex negotiating process on the new global agenda.

There were many important initiatives, such as the "Creative Economy Report" of 2013, and the world conference in Hanzhow, China, the same year with its declaration of "Culture: Key to Sustainable Development." This was followed in 2014 by the World Forum

in Florence, Italy, and its adoption of the Florence Declaration on "Culture, Creativity and Sustainable Development: Research, Innovation."

At the time we were working on strengthening the normative framework in the area of culture and on the elaboration and submission of new instruments. This is how a new UNESCO document was adopted on November 19, 2011, by the thirty-sixth General Conference: "Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape."[53] Recognizing the "dynamic nature of living cities," it states in article 11: "The historic urban landscape approach is aimed at preserving the quality of the human environment, enhancing the productive and sustainable use of urban spaces, while recognizing their dynamic character, and promoting social and functional diversity. It integrates the goals of urban heritage conservation and those of social and economic development. It is rooted in a balanced and sustainable relationship between the urban and natural environment, between the needs of present and future generations and the legacy from the past."

The adoption of the 2011 recommendation played an important role in our advocacy for the inclusion of culture in the 2030 Agenda. It was not by chance that the explicit text for protection of heritage is included in Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities: "to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage" in order to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable." Later, at the thirty-seventh UNESCO General Conference in 2013, member states also adopted an important resolution "highlighting the role of cultural and creative industries in poverty alleviation through job creation and income generation," with a view to integrating culture in the 2030 Agenda.

Later, in November 2015, the thirty-eighth session of the General Conference adopted the "Recommendation Concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, Their Diversity and Their Role in Society,"[54] establishing another building block in the normative field of culture. As a result, the SDGs, adopted within the 2030 Agenda by the UN in September 2015, included culture and heritage protection for the first time—as an end in itself, but also as a means to achieving many of the other Sustainable Development Goals, such as safe and sustainable cities, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, environmental protection, promoting gender equality, and peaceful and inclusive societies.

This is a great achievement, as I have always insisted that if the purpose of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people, then culture and heritage should play a very central role. The more so considering that the SDGs enshrine a conceptual shift in thinking about development beyond economic growth, envisioning a desirable future that is equitable, inclusive, peaceful, and environmentally sustainable.

Last but not least, culture and heritage play a positive role in the critical debate about living together in a globalized and connected world, about reconciling different cultures through an intercultural dialogue and the use of cultural diversity as a force for creativity and peace, and not for destruction, hatred, and conflict. World heritage plays a vital role

in this: it is an open book of diversity and knowledge about the "other" that has to be taught in schools and embraced by education systems globally. Heritage gives confidence and helps reconcile individuals with a globalizing world. Protecting cultural heritage of "outstanding universal value"—an idea that did not exist some fifty years ago—is an extraordinary way of getting to know each other, of respecting one another's cultures, and of living together.

CONCLUSION

After my eight years as director-general of UNESCO, from 2009 to 2017, I still have many questions. Some are a result of the sad period of the rise of violent extremism and the deliberate destruction of emblematic heritage sites. Others stem from new threats to heritage, such as climate change. Do we have enough legal instruments and norms to prevent and mitigate such acts in the future? Can we create a UN peacekeeping force for the protection of heritage? What about the establishment of safe havens for looted antiquities in time of conflict? What are the lessons of including heritage protection in UN peacekeeping operations, as was the case with Mali? Are we doing enough to make heritage protection a tool for peace and reconciliation, particularly in multicultural societies?

Soon the world will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and the competition for inscription of new sites is running high. Without any doubt, the concept of world heritage is a huge success of the multilateral system: the convention is the most widely ratified international legal instrument since the creation of the United Nations, with 193 states parties and more than 1,100 heritage sites.

Nevertheless, future progress requires answers to more questions: Are we keeping high the integrity of the convention and its criteria, while adapting them to the new challenges? Do we put enough emphasis on the conservation efforts for, and the safeguarding of, the sites already inscribed? Are we cognizant of and serious enough about the threats to our world heritage, such as urbanization, unsustainable tourism, lack of resources, lack of human capacity, natural disasters, and, the biggest of all, climate change? Are governments aware that the desired green, inclusive, just, and sustainable future is not possible without heritage protection and that heritage holds the key to many of the answers? Are we involving enough civil society and local communities in the protection and preservation of heritage? Are we educating enough young people about why heritage matters? Some of these still remain unanswered.

One thing is certain, however. The concept of the world's cultural and natural heritage is still one of the most unifying, visionary, and transformative ideas of the twentieth century. It is the idea that monuments, sites, temples, historic cities, and landscapes that

embrace all the diversity of humanity may represent "outstanding universal value" and should be protected, cherished, and shared by all. It is the idea that humanity stands united in all its diversity around shared values, that all cultures are different but that difference does not divide—it unites.

The diverse legal, institutional, and cultural measures enumerated above require further development and to be augmented by new initiatives by international and local actors—political, private, and civil society—if the importance of cultural heritage and its central but underappreciated relationship with peace are to be made effective in the decades to come.

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34. The strategy specifically indicates that the term "cultural cleansing" is not a legal term, and was

used by me for the first time in a public statement on the situation in Iraq in August 2014, and that it has since been used in public statements, speeches, and interviews to raise awareness of the systematic and deliberate nature of attacks on cultural heritage and diversity perpetrated by violent extremist groups in Syria and Iraq.

35. The Responsibility to Protect is an international norm that seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to halt the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The concept emerged in response to the failure of the international community to adequately respond to mass atrocities committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. See Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "What Is R2P?" https://www.globalr2p.org/what-is-r2p/.
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, Irina Bokova was the director-general of UNESCO for two terms, from 2009 to 2017. She is the first woman to lead the organization. As director-general, Bokova was actively engaged in the UN efforts to adopt Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, focusing on quality education, gender equality, the role of culture in sustainable development, and the protection of the world's cultural heritage. She has been particularly active in the defense of cultural heritage against its deliberate destruction by extremists, which led to the 2017 adoption of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 2347.

After graduating from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Bokova was a fellow at the University of Maryland, Washington, and participated in an executive program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Before being elected director-general of UNESCO, from 2005 to 2009 Bokova was ambassador of Bulgaria to France, Monaco, and UNESCO, and personal representative of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria to the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

Currently, Bokova is a member of the board of the Ban Ki Moon Centre for Global Citizens; member of the Concordia Leadership Council; member of the Strategic Committee of the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA, SciencePo); lecturer on cultural diplomacy, Honorary Dean of the Humanitas College, and Miwon Scholar of Peace Studies at Kyung-Hee University, Seoul; visiting lecturer at the University of Geneva; and member of the board of L'Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS), Paris, among other activities.

For her leadership and service, Irina Bokova has received state distinctions from countries across the world and has been awarded an *honoris causa* degree from more than forty universities. She was also on the Forbes list of the world's most influential women for 2016. In 2020 she was elected international honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.