**FORUM:** General Assembly 3

**QUESTION OF:** Measures to protect World Heritage Sites in areas of conflict

**SUBMITTED BY:** Kuwait

Co-submitted by: Myanmar, Germany, South Sudan, Spain, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Congo, Bahamas, Nigeria, Paraguay, Chad, Holly See, Mauritius, Central African Republic, Cuba

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND CULTURAL COMMITTEE,

*Recalling* the adoption of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was a major step for the protection and preservation of heritage all around the world by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),

*Defining* World Heritage Sites as natural or man-made sites, areas or structures recognized as being outstanding international importance and therefore as sites deserving special protection,

*Acknowledging* the fact that conflict can be either political or armed, and that in many cases of the destruction of World Heritage is caused by extremist organizations in want of full religious control,

*Realizing* that each situation in which World Heritage is threatened is unique and that an ultimate solution is not possible,

*Recognizing* cultural heritage as a worldwide benefit no matter its country of origin and damage to cultural heritage is a horrific act against humanity that should be punished severely,

*Understanding* that the International Criminal Court (ICC)’s attempt to bring the accused to trial was slanted by its lack of jurisdiction on many war-plagued areas,

*Recalling* the #Unite4Heritage campaign that has raised a lot of awareness for the destruction of world heritage sites, especially among younger generations,

*Considering* that protection of this heritage at the national level often remains incomplete because of the scale of the resources which it requires and of the insufficient economic, scientific, and technological resources of the country where the property to be protected is situated,

*Noting* the severe loss of cultural heritage in conflict zones such as in Syria and Iraq,

1. Asks that all conflicts regarding damage to world heritage sites be dealt with by the World Heritage Committee, established in the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage;
2. Requests that the International Criminal Court (ICC) considers the destruction of World Heritage sites as a war crime and treat the offenders as such and asks all Member States to prosecute as many of those who have harmed cultural heritage by:
   1. Creating appropriate legislation to charge all those who have committed such crimes in countries that have not signed the Rome Statute,
   2. Creating legislation to charge all who have destroyed buildings not on the World Heritage List but containing cultural heritage such as:
      1. Museums,
      2. Art galleries,
      3. Religious buildings and houses of worship,
      4. Ancient monuments and ruins;
3. Calls upon all Member States to implement the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and similar treaties, which will be ensured by fines and possible trade embargoes in extreme cases, by means such as but not limited to:
   1. Ratifying the treaty,
   2. Setting up laws against the damaging of World Heritage sites,
   3. Deploying work forces to enforce these laws;
4. Encourages the collaboration of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), overseen by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Outstanding Universal Value (World Heritage Committee) in the search for new suitable solutions in fields such as:
5. Forming quick-response teams that may deploy immediately to help the restructuring of attacked sites,
6. Strengthening infrastructure so as to allow sites to withstand more damage and make restoration more efficient;
7. Calls upon Member States to promote the #Unite4Heritage campaign, which aims are to raise awareness to the issue by means such as but not limited to:
   1. Social media,
   2. Television,
   3. Interactive events such as:
      1. Rallies,
      2. Information sessions;
8. Encourages Member States to aid others in areas of conflict in the protection of cultural heritage by:
   1. Deploying UN peacekeepers/blue helmets peacekeepers to protect sites on which attacks are suspected
   2. Sending experts, selected by the World Heritage Committee, who are trained in the restoration of cultural heritage to help in the rebuilding of damaged cultural heritage once the area is considered safe enough by the World Heritage Committee
9. Recommends the creation of a bi-annual meeting, called United Nations Meeting on World Heritage Sites in Areas of Conflict (UNMWHSAC) that would:
10. Promote the importance of immediate action in areas of conflict that posses valuable sites, which are endangered,
11. Be held twice a year, at the UNESCO headquarters and that it would discuss issues related to World Heritage Sites,
12. Have emergency meetings, which shall occur if there is a highly endangered Heritage Site in a conflict or disputed area which needs an immediate action plan, where the following should take place:
13. The review of the general situation in that area and the sites that are endangered,
14. Experts on that territory shall be invited to participate in the conference in order to discuss efficient tactics and approachable strategies, such as authorities, for example: police men, military forces and other municipalities, experts from the International Council of Museums (ICOM), International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and cultural heritage professionals,
15. Report and write all decisions and future plans that have been made/discussed during the conference and share it with the UNESCO and UN web site, in order to widely promote the safe-keeping of the world heritage sites;

8. Further request states to be open to help other countries which posses endangered moveable heritage sites by:

1. moving these pieces if the country possessing these is willing to
2. making sure that these monuments would still be the property of the country and would be returned in due course when conditions are stable
3. pledging to keep them safe and that the exact location of these shall be discussed within the bi-annual meeting mentioned in clause 7;

9. Recommends steps are taken to protect the movable artifacts in unstable regions from illicit trafficking by:

* 1. Monitoring trade activities and employing stringent checks on export certificates for trade
  2. Digitizing catalogues and archives of cultural heritage in conflict zones to simplify the documentation and record-keeping of any missing artifacts.