

# **Resolution on Information as an Instrument for Protection against War Damages to the Cultural Heritage**

**Resolution June 10, 1994**

The international expert meeting held in Stockholm June 9-10 1994 - on **Information as an Instrument for Protection against War Damages to the Cultural Heritage** on the invitation of the Central Board of National Antiquities, the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO and ICOMOS Sweden, have resolved to make the following appeal:

**Recognizing** that deliberate targeting and destruction of important monuments and collections have become increasingly frequent in both national and international conflicts;

**Observing** that this is a part of the increase of ethnic, racial and religious controversies in many parts of the world;

**Recalling** that - as stated in the Hague Convention of 1954 - damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world;

**Recognizing** the important work on the matter of the protection of the cultural heritage against war damage that UNESCO has already undertaken as well as the educational programmes initiated by the Council of Europe;

The meeting expresses its conviction that the deliberate destruction in both international and non-international armed conflicts of the cultural heritage is but one part of a strategy of domination through destruction of self-esteem by torture, rape, expulsion and extinction of its members. The destruction of historic records, monuments and memories serves furthermore the purpose of suppressing all that bears witness that the threatened people were ever living in the area. This deliberate war damage is thus to be condemned as war crimes according to the [Hague Convention](#). When these crimes are carried out in extremis - as has been the case in former Yugoslavia - they must in fact be deemed to be a specific form of genocide, namely ethnocide.

We know that we share with those affected the knowledge that this aggression against people and its heritage are equal parts of the same strategy: to eliminate a race or a group of people.

The meeting finds that the protection of the cultural heritage should always be clearly included in the tasks of UN Peace-Keeping Missions as part of humanitarian aid, as well as included in disaster aid administered by UN agencies since the principles of the Hague Convention are part of international humanitarian law.

The meeting suggests that experts, that could be called heritage monitors, are appointed with the specific task of surveillance of possible damage to the cultural heritage. These should work in conflict areas as part of UN peace-keeping forces as well as parts of

missions from disaster aid agencies. The meeting underlines that it equally is of utmost importance that all UN military personnel be trained on the content of the conventions.

All preparative and conservation work on the heritage at risk must be organized so as to make sure of the full understanding and cooperation with local administration as well as local community and in accordance with their own priorities.

Although it could be argued that the knowledge of the cultural heritage has served as a guide for selective destruction we must not cease our efforts to develop further the promotion of mutual understanding of and tolerance between all peoples and their cultures.

The meeting observes that few countries have registered their most valuable cultural property according to the rules of the Hague Convention. This might be a sign that the awareness of potential threats to this heritage needs to be increased. The meeting is of the opinion that effective national networks - involving governments, the competent heritage administration, NGOs and the military - should be created in order to guarantee that strategic decisions are taken with a view to safeguard that heritage and promote a dialogue with the responsible international organizations.

**The expert meeting has also resolved to make the following appeal to UNESCO:**

The meeting supports the review of the 1954 Hague Convention undertaken by UNESCO.

The meeting supports the initiative to set up a fund for the cultural heritage at risk in order to facilitate the development of activities directed towards the conservation of the cultural heritage at risk.

Public information should be asserted by the publication of appropriate information material by UNESCO.

Cooperation relating to the protection of the cultural heritage involving schools in different countries should be especially promoted. UNESCO could furthermore make a valuable contribution by encouraging studies on the use of nationalistic myths and misinterpretation of facts in educational material.

The meeting suggests that UNESCO includes in the training of journalists and other media personnel the knowledge of the [Hague Convention](#) and the [World Heritage Convention](#) and the universal responsibility for the protection of the Cultural Heritage linked to them.

The meeting therefore invites the Director-General of UNESCO to include the stimulation and facilitation of this debate in UNESCO's Mid Term Plan and recommends the implementation of this proposal through the International Monuments Day, in order to reach youth as well as the public, the politicians and the conservation professionals.

In times of conflict it is of vital importance that international opinion gets access to rapid and accurate information on any violation to the cultural heritage. The meeting

suggests in this context that the role of media in the creation of prewar tensions should be studied in depth. UNESCO has during recent conflicts done much in this field. This work has however, in many countries, failed to attract any larger response from the media. The meeting stresses the importance of the work done henceforth by UNESCO and would therefore like to recommend that it is carried on and developed further.

UNESCO should encourage UN member states to educate all military personnel - as well as those of the civil defence - on the obligations of the Hague Convention and the World Heritage Convention as well as the universal importance of the cultural heritage.

The protection of the cultural heritage should be clearly included in the tasks of the UN peace-keeping forces, and to make this happen UNESCO has an important role to play.

We, the undersigned participants in the expert meeting are prepared to promote the ideas put forward in this document in our respective organizations.

Stockholm June 10, 1994

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