



## **Background Paper**

Committee: UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

Topic A: Protect cultural Heritage in conflict zones

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Cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of life developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. Cultural heritage is often expressed as either intangible or tangible cultural heritage. Cultural and historical heritage must be protected and respected in countries involved in armed conflicts. Attacks have created irreversible damage to cultural property such as buildings, temples, theaters, monuments, sculptures, books, and other works of art with archeological and historical value. As a result this destruction can have consequences for current and future society. Cultural heritage helps countries to maintain their identity and keep the attributes from inherited past generations for present and future generations. The United Nations through UNESCO have been reaching out for the implementation of protocols in order to provide protection to cultural heritage property. Furthermore, attempting to increase the implementation of cultural conventions in order to strengthen cultural protection. Heritage sites are great for economics as they provide tourist revenue as well as educating people about different cultures. Evolution of human consciousness is a continuous process and heritage sites play a big part in this evolution. Cultural heritage needs to be preserved and it is absolutely necessary to end any form of vandalism, destruction, or aggression to cultural property.

The destruction of cultural heritage during the Second World War is what prompted the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict to be created with the main purpose of protecting cultural heritage in the world. This is an international treaty. Following this, the 1954 First Protocol and the 1999 Second Protocol were created to reinforce some measures. The International Alliance For the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas paired with seven countries, France, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Luxembourg, Morocco and Switzerland, and they all made a contribution of more than 75 million US Dollars to rebuild affected sites. Also, there is the International Committee of the Blue

Shield, which was made to give protection from attacks in the event of any armed conflict, as well as protecting the world's cultural heritage that is constantly threatened by wars and natural disasters. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, some archeological places like the National Kabul Museum and the National Museum of Afghanistan suffered damage, having a big effect on Afghanistan's cultural heritage.

The city of Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, has been a conflict zone since the year of 2014 and the Islamic State (IS) has been taking over the territory. A consequence of this, soldiers are constantly fighting with guns to recover their territory and the destruction caused by them has completely destroyed the city. That is why UNESCO, partnered with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have made an agreement where the UAE will provide economic support to rebuild the city. Also, UNESCO has been trying to help Syria since it is also suffering from the occupation of ISIS in their country. These and other conflicts are constantly smashing cultural heritage sites in other places such as Palmyra, Raqqa, and Aleppo. Since many countries are suffering from the demolition of cultural and historical heritage, UNESCO has been working everyday to contribute to peace and security in the world, as well as protecting the valuable cultural heritage of every country. Due to the destruction of cultural heritage in World War Two, UNESCO has been constantly working to protect any future damages. This is because cultural heritage is what helps countries maintain their identity and the attributes from inherited past generations for present and future generations. Regardless of the United Nations efforts, conflicts are still happening today in Syria and Iraq. Nonetheless, the countries of France, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Luxembourg, Morocco and Switzerland are constantly helping and donating money to restore cultural heritage in countries with armed conflicts or those who suffer natural disasters. However, it is necessary for UNESCO to keep working and debating to find more ways to stop more destruction of cultural heritage from happening.

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