



Yale *Institute for the Preservation
of Cultural Heritage*



London Declaration on Culture in Crisis

The participants of the Culture in Crisis Conference held on the 14 April 2015 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London in collaboration with the Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage at Yale University and under the patronage of UNESCO, agreed the following:

- Deploing the criminal, brutal, uncivilized and totally unacceptable attacks on people and their cultural heritage being mounted at this time;
- Recognizing that the recent catastrophic destruction of cultural heritage is affecting many countries both directly and indirectly;
- Understanding that much of the cultural heritage under threat must be considered heritage of humanity as a whole and is therefore of global concern;
- Recognizing that these conflicts are cultural and identity-driven and aimed at the destruction of the "other identity", and that this fundamental geopolitical change has not yet reached the political/diplomatic level
- Appreciating the excellent work being undertaken by many organizations and individuals in response to the crisis in Syria, Iraq and further afield.
- Acknowledging various efforts on the intergovernmental level to address the ongoing crisis such as UN SC resolution 2199, the resolution adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/69/281), and others;
- Recognizing the urgent need to raise broad public and political awareness and encourage direct action as expressed for example in the UNESCO #unite4heritage campaign on social media.

The conference participants recommend that every decision-maker, organization and individual concerned:

- 1) Takes a collaborative approach to addressing current culture heritage concerns and to develop a long-term strategy designed to make the destruction and the sale of illicitly sourced cultural heritage a public concern and socially unacceptable.
- 2) Seeks to elevate concerns about the current cultural crisis on the political agenda and to gain assurance from governments that they are doing all that they can to prevent further damage and loss and to enable co-ordinating bodies to respond more effectively to a rapidly changing situation.
- 3) Appeals to all International and Regional Intergovernmental Organizations to mainstream cultural protection and enlarge "human security" to include a cultural dimension as well as to create a joint platform of political and cultural actors, which is overdue.
- 4) Urges the international community to identify those individuals, institutions and governments who are funding the current destruction and looting and demands that they withdraw their support immediately and take legal action condemning and persecuting the actions of the aggressors.
- 5) Identifies stakeholders at all levels including local groups, academics, professionals, politicians, military, law enforcement, humanitarian groups, art trade and other businesses, multinational corporations, museums, universities, NGO's, IGO's and charities to engage in innovative strategies, to speak out together against cultural heritage crimes, to raise public awareness and assure local communities of our concern and support
- 6) Calls upon all actors involved in and responsible for the trade of artifacts to exercise due diligence at the time of purchase and to provide detailed documentation of provenance and where relevant export certificates at the time of sale for all objects and artifacts to prevent illicit trade of cultural goods;
- 7) Encourages and supports academic research and education on cultural cleansing, illicit traffic, forgery detection and authenticity, as well as heritage site and artefact documentation in a truly interdisciplinary way engaging fully with cultural experts from the affected regions.
- 8) Encourages agencies and individuals to document cultural heritage sites and artifacts with the latest technological standards of documentation and data preservation and openly share relevant information, considering cases where open access might endanger the preservation of sites, by making it accessible through innovative means to peers and the public aimed at combating heritage loss and supporting the international law enforcement;
- 9) Supports cultural heritage professionals in countries suffering, or at risk of suffering, cultural crisis and appeals to every decision-maker, organization and individual to be generous, innovative and dynamic in their support.