

Vilnius Call for Action on the Recovery of the Culture Sector of Ukraine

Vilnius, Lithuania, 6-7 June 2024

We, the representatives of countries – Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, as well as the representatives of the international partners – Cultural Emergency Response (CER), Europeana Network Association (ENA), European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), Goethe-Institut, Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO), Ukraine Art Aid Center (Germany), World Monuments Fund, met in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 6-7 June 2024 on the occasion of the International Conference “Towards the Recovery of the Culture Sector of Ukraine”, organised by Lithuania in cooperation with Ukraine and in partnership with UNESCO,

stressing the importance of the principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and noting the UNESCO Constitution and its Conventions, including the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), and its First (1954) and Second (1999) Protocols, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005);

recalling Resolution 2347 (2017) of the UN Security Council on the destruction of cultural heritage, as well as the Resolution of the 42nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO „UNESCO’s action in Ukraine“, Decision of the 7th special session of the Executive Board of UNESCO „Impact and consequences of the current situation in Ukraine in all aspects of UNESCO’s mandate“, Decisions of the 215th, 216th, 217th and 219th sessions of the Executive Board of UNESCO „UNESCO’s actions and emergency assistance programme for Ukraine“, Declarations on the protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine, adopted at the 2nd and 3rd extraordinary meetings of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict;

resolutely condemning Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and its people, in violation of international law including the UN Charter, and the destruction of Ukraine's civilian objects and infrastructure, including the destruction of and damage to Ukrainian historic cities and cultural sites, and attacks in areas protected under the Convention of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), and other attacks damaging or destroying built heritage, cultural institutions and cultural collections

emphasising the continuing devastating impact of Russia's war of aggression on the diversity, richness and viability of cultural and creative sectors, including the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, of Ukraine which provide people and communities with a strong sense of shared memory, identity and social cohesion;

observing the substantial increase in the damage to Ukraine's cultural heritage and cultural infrastructure, the losses of Ukraine's cultural and creative sectors and the rising needs for the reconstruction and service delivery restoration of the culture sector of Ukraine, as documented by UNESCO in the Second and Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment of Ukraine Reports (RDNA2 and RDNA3), carried out by the Government of Ukraine, the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations;

recognising that culture, in all its forms, serves as a lever of resilience both in times of peace and war, acting not only as a foundational element for economic and social development but also as a powerful driving force in Ukraine's emergency response, recovery and post-war reconstruction;

1. We acknowledge the leading role of UNESCO, other international organisations, NGOs and funds in mobilising international efforts and coordinating a wide range of interventions to support the cultural and creative sectors of Ukraine, and we ask them to continue doing so. We commend the coordinated international efforts and the work already done along six priority lines of action under the Action Plan for Culture in Ukraine, developed by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and UNESCO together with international and national partners, that contributes to the efforts to avoid overlaps, create synergies and ensure the efficient management of the available resources. In recognition and support of these international efforts and at the request of the Ukrainian authorities, we endorse the updated Action Plan for Culture in Ukraine of May 2024 and commit to contributing to it, as well as supporting and promoting its implementation.

2. We recognise the prominence of international partners and donors in the stabilisation, recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine from the effects of the Russia's war, as well as the importance of effective coordination, including through UNESCO's dedicated funding mechanisms. We welcome the pledges made by donors at this International Conference in further support of the stabilisation, recovery and reconstruction of the culture sector of Ukraine and we urge to continue doing so, encouraging the international community to keep its coherent commitment towards the stabilisation, recovery and reconstruction of the culture sector of Ukraine.

3. We reaffirm our joint commitment to the stabilisation, recovery, reconstruction and building back better of Ukraine, including of and through its culture sector and cultural heritage, in internationally coordinated efforts under the leadership of Ukraine and in close partnership with UNESCO and other international organisations, in line with the priorities and needs of Ukraine, in particular, those of the “Recovery and Development Plan for Ukraine” presented at the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2022 in Lugano, Switzerland, and with international standards, as well as those of the “Ukraine Plan” formally submitted by Ukraine to the European Commission on 20 March 2024 and whose assessment proposed by the Commission was approved by the Council on 14 May 2024.

4. We request UNESCO and international partners to continue, alongside Ukraine to fully play its role in coordinating international efforts to support the stabilisation, recovery and reconstruction of the culture sector of Ukraine, ensuring that these efforts are closely aligned with the country’s needs and priorities, as well as international standards. This includes the involvement of Ukrainian non-governmental and professional organisations and local communities and should be done in the spirit of the high-quality Baukultur values.

5. We call for placing the culture sector at the forefront of Ukraine’s stabilisation, recovery and reconstruction process, reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories and sustainable after-war development. Within these efforts, we stress the preparatory role of the International Conference “Towards the Recovery of the Culture Sector of Ukraine” held on 6-7 June 2024 in Vilnius, Lithuania, for the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024 taking place on 11-12 June 2024 in Berlin, Germany, which will include a discussion, for the first time, on the recovery of the culture sector of Ukraine. We pledge our commitment to promote the integration of culture in all relevant discussions on Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction planning, including at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Italy in 2025.