

**JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF CULTURE OF G7
ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING
“CULTURE AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR DIALOGUE AMONG PEOPLES”**

We, the Ministers of Culture and the cultural authorities of the G7, on the occasion of our first meeting, held in Florence on March 30-31, 2017, recognizing the distinctive role of culture as instrument for dialogue among peoples as well as the importance of a common and coordinated action to strengthen the safeguarding of cultural heritage, issue the following declaration:

Mindful of the importance of concerted international action in the field of the protection of cultural heritage and, in this framework, *commending* the recent approval by the UN Security Council of its Resolution 2347 (2017);

Taking note of the Milan Declaration adopted on July 31, 2015, during the meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the countries participating in Expo 2015, and of the Abu Dhabi Declaration made during the Conference on Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage on December 2-3, 2016;

We reaffirm our belief that cultural heritage, in all its forms, tangible and intangible, movable and immovable, being an extraordinary link between past, present and future of mankind:

- a) contributes to the preservation of identity and memory of mankind and encourages dialogue and cultural exchanges among nations, thereby fostering tolerance, mutual understanding, recognition and respect for diversity;
- b) is an important tool for the growth and sustainable development of our societies, also in terms of economic prosperity; and
- c) is both a driver and a subject of the most advanced technologies and a context for measuring the potentials and opportunities generated by the digital era;

We express our deep concern at the ever-increasing risk, arising not only from terrorist attacks, armed conflicts and natural disasters but also from raids, looting and other crimes committed on a global scale, to cultural heritage and all related institutions and properties, such as museums, monuments, archaeological sites, archives and libraries;

We express our deep concern about the destruction of cultural heritage sites, as such actions obliterate irreplaceable patrimony, extinguish the identity of targeted communities and erase any evidence of past diversity or religious pluralism;

We affirm the need to promote effective implementation of existing international legal instruments for protection of the world’s cultural heritage;

We further call upon all States to take steps to increase their safeguarding and preservation of cultural heritage, including the heritage of religious and ethnic minorities, as well as to identify and share appropriate best practices for fighting every form of illegal activity in this field, including those concerning the protection of endangered cultural heritage in conflict zones;

We also affirm that effective international cooperation facilitates widely accepted solutions for assuring the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural diversity;

We call upon the United Nations, in particular UNESCO and other relevant International Organizations working in this field, to strengthen their activities, within their existing mandates, for the protection of cultural heritage and to continue these activities in a coordinated way, including initiatives undertaken within the United Nations, mindful of the above mentioned UN Security Council Resolution 2347 (2017), that may encompass, where appropriate and on a

case-by-case basis, when authorized by the UN Security Council, a cultural heritage protection component in security and peacekeeping missions;

We express our strong support for UNESCO's role in promoting the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, aware that cooperation and dialogue are vital to all efforts in countering violent extremism and radicalization to violence; in this regard, we welcome relevant measures already taken, such as the "Unite4Heritage" campaign, and take note of the *Strategy for Reinforcing UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict* and the drawing up of a Plan of Action to make it operational;

We affirm the leadership role of UNESCO in coordination of international efforts within its mandate to protect cultural heritage, working closely with Member States and relevant international organizations;

We call upon all States to take strong and effective measures to combat the looting and trafficking in cultural property from their places of origin, particularly from countries experiencing conflict and internal strife, and to identify and prohibit the trade in looted cultural property that has been trafficked across borders and, as appropriate, to reinforce the monitoring of free ports and free trade zones; *we also affirm* that closer cooperation and determined action among international judicial and law enforcement authorities is a crucial element in our continuing efforts to preserve and protect cultural heritage worldwide;

We encourage all States to prioritize the safeguarding and enjoyment of cultural heritage, including through the promotion of public awareness and education, in order to preserve the memory of the past for future generations, to foster cultural development, and to encourage cultural dialogue and peace among nations;

We welcome the designation of 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage, with the opportunities it will offer for the protection and valorization of the world's cultural heritage, as a positive example of an initiative supporting the principles expressed by this Declaration;

We stress the role of cultural relations in promoting tolerance for cultural and religious diversity and mutual understanding among peoples, and *encourage* all States to provide opportunities for cultural exchanges in the spirit of reciprocity and mutual benefit, including at large-scale international events, such as the World Expositions or the Olympic and Paralympic Games;

We encourage the forthcoming Chairs of the G7 to organize future meetings of Ministers of Culture and cultural authorities, in order to monitor the progress of our efforts.