

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE COUNTRIES LISTED BELOW DELIVERED DURING THE UNESCO WORLD CONFERENCE ON CULTURAL POLICIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – MONDIACULT 2022

Delivered by Mr Simonas Kairys, The Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania

I am making this statement on behalf of the following 48 Countries; Albania, Andorra, Australia, Canada, Ecuador, Georgia, Guatemala, Iceland, Japan, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Republic of North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, San Marino, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

And the **European Union** comprising the following member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and my own country, Lithuania.

We have met this week in Mexico to foster multilateral cooperation in support of a more resilient cultural sector, better recognised for both its contribution to sustainable development and its promotion of solidarity, peace and security. While we engaged in these discussions, however, one of our members – Russia – continued to pursue an illegal, unprovoked, and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, in an ongoing violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and the mandate of UNESCO. Since its creation in 1945, the task UNESCO set itself is to build peace in the minds of men and women. This is the responsibility we have taken on this week, with culture at the heart of our agenda.

Across UNESCO's regional groups, as we prepared for MONDIACULT, States highlighted the importance of cultural heritage for identity, social cohesion, peace and security, emphasising the "need for concerted transnational measures, as well as investigations and coordinated actions to address threats to tangible and intangible cultural heritage."

And yet: as of 21 September, UNESCO has verified damage to 193 sites since Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion began – 81 religious sites, 13 museums, 37 historic buildings, 35 buildings dedicated to cultural activities, 17 monuments and 10 libraries. Ukrainian figures are higher still – the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy estimates damages to 514 cultural sites, including 38 museums, 174 religious sites, and 257 historic buildings. In addition, there are multiple media reports that Russian forces are looting cultural property, including 2,000 exhibits which have disappeared from museums across Mariupol. Russia continues to break commitments it has made at UNESCO, including under the 1954, 1970, and 1972 Conventions.

We cannot stand by as one country attempts to erase another country's identity and culture. We cannot accept continued actions contrary to UNESCO's Constitution and our common conventions. We call on Russia immediately to withdraw beyond Ukraine's internationally recognised borders and demand the immediate end of the

aggression against Ukraine, so as to guarantee protection from further damage and harm to Ukrainian natural, built and movable cultural heritage in all its forms.

In the midst of Russia's war of choice, we commend actions already taken by UNESCO and member states to support and safeguard Ukraine's culture and look forward to contributions towards rebuilding Ukraine.

Thank you.

Mexico, 30 September 2022