

**STATEMENT DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE COUNTRIES LISTED BELOW UNDER AGENDA ITEM 11 (MUSEUMS) DURING THE 2022 INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION AND RESTITUTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY**

I am giving this statement on behalf of Albania, Austria, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and my own country, Canada.

Ukrainian Deputy Minister for Culture and Information Policy, Ms Kateryna Chueva has just described to this Committee, in devastating detail, the damage done to Ukraine's museums in the three months since Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine. Ukrainian collections hosted in museums, cultural institutions and libraries, which embody the heritage, creativity and history of Ukraine, are under serious threat. Many collections have not been relocated to safe storage spaces due to a lack of time and the difficult conditions facing museum personnel. The rapid evolution of the conflict, and Russia's bombing means that even those collections which have been entirely or partially relocated are at risk.

Under the 1970 Convention, Russia has both legal and moral obligations to respect Ukraine's national heritage. Article 11 of the Convention also states clearly that the export and transfer of ownership of cultural property under compulsion arising directly or indirectly from the occupation of a country by a foreign power shall be regarded as illicit.

We welcome the work done bilaterally by several state parties/member states and by UNESCO, in partnership with 13 of the world's biggest museums to provide equipment and materials to protect museums and cultural institutions in Ukraine, as well as interdisciplinary advice for them. This includes legal and scientific expertise and technical assistance for the urgent safeguarding of collections, including safe storage, evacuations and preventive measures to fight illicit trafficking of cultural property; capacity building; and importantly, technical advice for future large-scale reconstruction.

In the midst of Russia's war of choice, UNESCO and many of its member states are working to safeguard cultural property and helping people plan for a more peaceful future. This remains the core of UNESCO's mandate.

Meanwhile, Russia's war continues. But when the time comes, the 1970 Convention, as well as the 1954 Convention and its Protocols, will play an important role in supporting the return of all looted items to Ukraine, and in holding Russia to account for its actions.

Thank you.

Paris 19 May 2022