

## **Declaration on Strengthening Cultural Sector Resilience in Ukraine**

Ukraine, February 1, 2025

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We, Ministers of Culture and Heads of Delegations of the participating countries, as well as the representatives of the countries participating in the meeting on the 1st of February 2025 in Ukraine, at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine, at the Ukraine Culture Conference: Cooperation for Resilience,

**in follow-up** of the Vilnius Call for Action on the Recovery of the Culture Sector of Ukraine (Vilnius, Lithuania, 6-7 June 2024),

**on the path to** Ukraine Recovery Conference 2025 to be held in Rome in July 2025,

**pursuant to** the principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the UNESCO Constitution and Conventions, as well as the priorities identified in the joint Action Plan for Culture in Ukraine steered by the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine and UNESCO,

**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 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and other attacks damaging or destroying built heritage, cultural institutions and cultural collections,

**also recognizing** the crucial contribution that cultural heritage and culture in all its forms and expressions make to achieving a sustainable society, shaping national identity and fostering social cohesion thus strengthening the national security, driving the economic, social and environmental sustainability,

**considering** the importance of the human dimension and community aspects of artistic creation and culture for preservation and future restoration in the cultural sphere in Ukraine,

**recalling** the Joint Statement of the Ministers of Culture, meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on 14-16 January 2023, and **building on** the work of the Davos Baukultur Alliance and the Recommendations from the European Commission-led expert group on the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Ukraine,

**witnessing** the substantial increase in the damage to Ukraine's cultural heritage and cultural infrastructure, the losses in Ukraine's cultural and creative sectors and the rising needs for the reconstruction and recovery of the culture sector of Ukraine,

**supporting** the Register of Damage for Ukraine which serves to record, in documentary form, evidence and claims information on damage, loss or injury caused, including cultural heritage, on or after 24 February 2022, in the territory of Ukraine,

**acknowledging** the need for joint actions aimed at supporting Ukraine in safeguarding its culture and cultural heritage and preventing cultural identity erasure,

**emphasizing** that the post-war recovery of Ukraine should consider culture and cultural heritage as a cross-cutting issue and the corner stone that shapes the living environment, and plays a vital role in the economic and social recovery,

1. We welcome the idea and pledge to explore mechanisms and possibilities to establish the Ukrainian Heritage Fund with the aim to support the restoration and preservation of the country's cultural heritage. With over 3872 cultural assets damaged or destroyed since 24 February 2022, according to RDNA3 as of 31 December 2023, including 478 cultural properties verified as damaged by UNESCO, there is an urgent need for safeguarding efforts addressing both tangible and intangible aspects of Ukraine's cultural heritage. The Fund should play a pivotal role in financing and supporting the recovery of museums, cultural landmarks, and sites of cultural significance, as well as strengthening the social infrastructure necessary to achieve these goals.

2. We support establishing a coalition for countering illicit trafficking of cultural property of Ukraine in the spirit of the UNESCO Convention 1970 aiming at providing a comprehensive framework to safeguard Ukrainian cultural assets. The coalition could also contribute to the strengthening of human capital in the museum sphere, facilitate the development of preventive measures to protect artworks and cultural heritage from damage, theft, or loss, strengthen international collaboration to counter the illicit trafficking of cultural property of Ukraine, and promote ethical practices.

3. We encourage countries to impose penal or disciplinary sanctions upon individuals and organizations involved in illegal archaeological excavations, theft, pillage, misappropriation of, acts of vandalism, or any other acts prohibited under international humanitarian law, directed against cultural property in the internationally recognized territories of Ukraine.

4. We welcome the launch of the Platform for Cultural Recovery – the group of experts who will develop comprehensive guidelines for integrating cultural heritage preservation into the rebuilding process with due account of the obligations of Ukraine as signatory of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage . Based on the principles of a high-quality Baukultur, the group should focus on strategies for maintaining cultural identity while ensuring sustainable urban development. The guidelines would emphasize balancing architectural, urban, and cultural goals, fostering inclusive and resilient communities in Ukraine in the spirit of Davos Declaration 2018 “Towards a high quality Baukultur for Europe” and Position Paper 2018 “Culture in city Reconstruction and Recovery”, as well as the UNESCO/World Bank CURE framework.