

The Hague/Brussels, 29 October 2020



EUROPA NOSTRA STATEMENT RELATED TO THE ARMED CONFLICT IN AND AROUND THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH REGION

EUROPA NOSTRA, as the European Voice of civil society committed to cultural heritage in all countries of the Council of Europe, deplores the on-going armed conflict opposing Armenia and Azerbaijan in and around the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, with tragic impacts on human lives and also with serious damage and threats to the cultural heritage in the wider area affected by the conflict. In this respect we wish to endorse the recent statement made by [UNESCO](#)ⁱ.

The area in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region has an extremely rich and diverse cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, with several thousands protected monuments and sites and with a large number of museums which forms part of Europe's shared cultural heritage. We therefore join our colleagues from [ICOM](#)ⁱⁱ (International Council of Museums), [ICOMOS \(International Council of Monuments and Sites\)](#)ⁱⁱⁱ, and the [Blue Shield International](#)^{iv} in lamenting the on-going military operations with the related dangers for cultural heritage. We especially wish to recall that both Armenia and Azerbaijan are state parties of the [1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#)^v, and of the Convention's Protocols of 1954 and 1999, which stipulate - among others - that any deliberate destruction of cultural heritage is an unlawful attack on the past and present of humanity.

Europa Nostra has always insisted that defending cultural heritage is more than a cultural issue: it is also a peace and security issue. It is inseparable from the vital goal of defending our humanity and our planet as a whole. Cultural heritage does not belong to one nation, one country or one region alone: cultural heritage is part of our shared humanity and our shared history. Once lost, it is lost forever and for all. To preserve, share and transmit this heritage to the next generation is, therefore, a joint responsibility of us all: international organisations, governments, heritage professionals and civil society alike.

We therefore call upon the political and military leaders of all countries involved in the conflict to reach a lasting cease-fire and take all measures needed to resolve the current crisis and the underlying conflict through diplomatic means with full respect of international conventions, including a series of relevant international and European conventions related to the safeguard of cultural diversity and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible^{vi}.

We also call upon the European Union and the OSCE to further step up their diplomatic efforts to put an end to the ongoing military operations with the aim of achieving a lasting solution for a peaceful future for the entire region. In line with the [European Union's commitment](#)^{vii} to promote peace based on the respect of cultural diversity, such a lasting peace agreement must ensure due safeguard of the cultural identity, heritage and memory of all communities who live in this region or are historically connected with this region.

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More specifically, **Europa Nostra**:

- a) strongly recommends that any future solution for a lasting peace in the region includes collaboration on a comprehensive and unbiased inventory and assessment of the multi-cultural heritage in the wider region affected by the ongoing conflict;
- b) urges to bring together heritage experts at local, national, European and international level to jointly ensure adequate safeguard and enhancement (including research, interpretation, conservation and management) of the rich cultural heritage in the region, and its proper use as a key instrument for reconciliation and for confidence and peace building between all parties concerned;
- c) stresses the vital importance of due involvement of civil society organisations committed to cultural heritage at local, national, European and international level as well as of full participation of local communities concerned; and
- d) last but not least, in the longer term, insists on the crucial role of heritage education, including history education based on the principles of multiperspectiveness, to help build bridges and promote dialogue between the various communities, as an indispensable requirement for a lasting peace in the region, in the spirit of a recent initiative launched under the auspices of the Council of Europe for the creation of a "[History teaching Observatory for Peace](#)" (HOPE)^{viii}.

Europa Nostra, together with its large network of members and partners, stands ready to contribute to any future cultural diplomacy and mediation efforts by European or international organisations that would be based on the above-mentioned principles and goals.

We insist that at any time and at any place cultural heritage must be taken out of the equation of (geo)political tensions or armed conflicts and be put where it belongs, at the very heart of what brings humanity together in mutual respect and dialogue, as a driver of sustainable development and as a source of enrichment and inspiration for present and future generations, across borders and divides.

About Europa Nostra

[Europa Nostra](#) is the European voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. A pan-European federation of heritage NGOs, supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals, it covers more than 40 countries. Founded in 1963, it is today recognised as the largest and the most representative heritage network in Europe.

Europa Nostra campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes, in particular through the [7 Most Endangered programme](#). It celebrates excellence through the [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#). Europa Nostra actively contributes to the definition and implementation of European strategies and policies related to heritage, through a participatory dialogue with European Institutions and the coordination of the [European Heritage Alliance 3.3](#). Europa Nostra was one of the instigators and an important civil society partner of the [European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018](#).

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ⁱ UNESCO, 9 October 2020 "[Situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone UNESCO statement](#)"

ⁱⁱ ICOM, 5 October 2020 "[ICOM strongly condemns the targeting of cultural heritage as a weapon of war in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and urge parties to find a peaceful solution](#)"

ⁱⁱⁱ ICOMOS, 7 October 2020 "[Blue Shield Statement on fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh](#)"

^{iv} Blue Shield International, 7 October 2020 "[Blue Shield Statement on fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh](#)"

^v UNESCO, 1954 "[Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention 1954](#)"

^{vi} In addition to the 1954 The Hague Convention and its two Protocols:

UNESCO, 1972 "[World Heritage Convention](#)"

UNESCO, 2003 "[Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#)"

UNESCO, 2005 "[Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)"

Council of Europe, 2005 "[Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society](#)"

and any other relevant Conventions signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan.

^{vii} European External Action Service, 20 May 2020 "[World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development: Joint Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell and Commissioner Mariya Gabriel](#)"

^{viii} French Presidency of the Council of Europe, 2019 "[Creation of an Observatory on history teaching in Europe - Ministerial Declaration](#)"

