

# Galilee Model United Nations Conference 2018



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**UNESCO**

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**Research Report**

### **Introduction to the committee :**

The United Nations conference that took place in London in November 1945, established the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, known as UNESCO. UNESCO works on promoting policies regarding scientific research and intercultural dialogue in order to create suitable conditions to ensure peace and solidarity to the world.

The main principles of UNESCO call for the respect of cultural diversity and human dignity, access to quality education and the protection of cultural heritage. Therefore, it is no surprise that UNESCO became known as the “intellectual” agency of the UN.

### **Introduction to the topic :**

The destruction of historical sites and the illicit trafficking in antiquities is an undeniable threat to humanity today. This is particularly a problem in instable states where such destruction has taken place on a large scale. This is particularly a problem in the Middle East and Africa. The protection of cultural heritage directly affects not only the cultural heritage, but also cultural identity and culture as a whole. Therefore, international organizations have to deal with this serious issue.

Cultural property offers many development opportunities to local populations it impacts the economy of the state. The protection of historic monuments and items helps to foster an appreciation for cultural diversity, knowledge of human society and understanding of our past.

In recent years, illicit trade of cultural commodities has increased dramatically worldwide becoming one of the main threats to cultural property. Illegal trafficking of artistic heritage is beyond doubt one of the biggest criminal trades in the world with prices and profit margins skyrocketing. Cultural objects are being unlawfully excavated and stolen, and if the situation persists, the future of our common past is endangered.

The protection of cultural heritage is a key mission of UNESCO and the protection of the sites must be conciliated with the needs for economic, touristic, urban and social development.

Therefore, it is imperative that the international community act immediately and protect cultural heritage, especially nowadays, when the rise of new challenges in countries like Syria, Iraq, Mali and many more are constantly increasing and worsening.

### **Latest actions by UNESCO :**

Throughout the years , UNESCO has tried to address the issue of safeguarding cultural inheritance with a large number of initiatives and responses, as the topic of protecting cultural heritage remains one of the top priorities to UNESCO. These are the latest actions undertaken by UNESCO:

- The 11th meeting at UNESCO headquarters in December of 2016. The main aim of this meeting was the implementation of the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague convention.
- The conference “Targeting Heritage: in search of new paradigms- save heritage through dialogue,” hosted on December 5, 2016. In this conference, the role of military and security forces in protecting cultural property in times of conflicts was discussed, resulting in the launch of “Military Manual Protection of Cultural Property.”
- The colloquy in January of last year, where representatives from international organizations and governments exchanged views upon the matter of strengthening collaborations to protect cultural heritage from destruction and illicit trafficking including organized crime and terrorist groups .
- A special mention should be given to international organs and bodies such as “The Blue Shield International” and “The association of National Committees of Blue Shield” (ANCBS), that have created an attempt in the past to protect cultural property under the threat of destruction during armed conflicts or natural disasters.

### **Major International Treaties:**

- Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention 1954.
- The UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.
- The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001.

- The 2017 Blood Antiquities Convention – Protecting Cultural Property through Criminal Law.

**Questions to consider :**

1. Why should we intensify our efforts to protect cultural heritage and cultural property?
2. How can we prevent terrorist groups from destroying and looting cultural heritage?
3. Which actions should be taken by the international community in order to efficiently tackle the illegal trafficking of cultural objects?
4. Which actions should be taken to prevent online transactions of cultural commodities?
5. How can we decrease the legal gaps emerging from the current international legal conventions and documents, regarding the safeguarding of cultural inheritance and antiquities in cases of armed conflicts?
6. What actions could be suggested and implemented for locating and restoring trafficked cultural property?

**Helpful links :**

- <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/?&&danger=1>
- <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/09/150901-isis-destruction-looting-ancient-sites-iraq-syria-archaeology/>
- <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/sure/what-happens-to-heritage-sites-in-times-of-conflict/>
- [https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/culture-policies/trafficking\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/culture-policies/trafficking_en)
- [https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/trafficking\\_in\\_cultural/CCPCJ\\_EG\\_1\\_2009\\_CRP\\_1/V0987314E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/trafficking_in_cultural/CCPCJ_EG_1_2009_CRP_1/V0987314E.pdf)
- <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/scientific-diplomacy/archaeology-humanities-and-social-sciences/french-archaeological-missions-are-key-actors-in-international-scientific/safeguarding-endangered-heritage-in-conflict-zones/>

- [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/our\\_responsibility\\_to\\_protect\\_cultural\\_heritage\\_from\\_terrori/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/our_responsibility_to_protect_cultural_heritage_from_terrori/)