

Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Culture

on the 9th of July 2023

in Rīga, Latvia

Condemning in the strongest possible terms the ongoing brutal and unprovoked military aggression perpetrated by Russia against Ukraine, including its intentional assaults on the Ukrainian population, civilian objects, and infrastructure, which encompass the destruction or harm inflicted upon Ukrainian cultural sites, cultural heritage, natural spaces and places of memory, as well as vast looting and illicit trafficking of the Ukrainian cultural property to Russia's territory and its occupied Ukrainian territories, in flagrant breach of international law;

Denouncing Russia's destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam on the Dnipro River in southern Ukraine, which constitutes the biggest environmental and humanitarian tragedy in Ukraine since Chornobyl, and creates collateral damages and new threats to the Ukrainian cultural heritage,

Deploring the loss of life suffered by the Ukrainian people during the war;

Expressing our solidarity with Ukraine – an independent, peaceful, and democratic country – and its people, as well as their relentless fight for freedom, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders;

Mindful that cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, is the pillar of national and regional identities;

Stressing the importance of the principles and values enshrined in the UNESCO Conventions, including the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954 and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003;

Recalling the principles and commitments of the MONDIACULT declaration adopted by the ministers of culture at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development in September 2022;

Recognizing that the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors are strategic targets of Russia's warfare, considering that Russia's war on Ukraine is a war on the Ukrainian culture and identity, and as such constitutes an attack on our common values;

Complimenting international efforts to protect and safeguard the cultural heritage of Ukraine, including through such instruments as the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding;

Reaffirming our common will to rebuild Ukraine and help safeguard its cultural heritage in a coordinated way that is led by the needs identified by Ukraine itself, and with the participation of Ukraine;

We,

the Ministers of Culture, meeting from 8 to 9 July 2023 in Rīga, Latvia, at the invitation of Mr. Nauris Puntulis, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well as to mark the 150th anniversary of the Latvian Song and Dance Festival tradition which, in 2008, together with the Estonian and Lithuanian song and dance celebrations, was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,

declare our common interest in enhancing coordinated international efforts in the safeguarding, promotion, and transmission of Ukraine's intangible cultural heritage as an integral part of the cultural heritage of Europe, as well as of Humanity, in the face of Russia's unforgivable attacks upon it;

highlight the importance of continuing advocacy work in the name of Ukraine for the sake of preserving and safeguarding its cultural heritage for present and future generations, including through national, European, and international programmes and instruments;

call on the European Commission and European Union member states to increase their commitment to support Ukraine, through specially dedicated financial instruments at the EU level for the recovery of the cultural and creative sectors and the restoration of cultural heritage affected by Russia's war against Ukraine;

declare a common interest to initiate the establishment of the International Culture Heritage Protection Fund for Ukraine;

commit to raising further awareness on the ways in which the European Union's support for the cultural heritage of Ukraine is currently organized, thereby serving as a reminder of the importance of promoting Ukrainian culture in Europe, as well as beyond;

recall the experience of recovery and reconstruction which led to the adoption of the Warsaw Recommendation on Recovery and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage in 2018;

express our will to further exchange our best practices in the field of culture, as well as in supporting Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors, and to encourage using ours and Ukrainian cultural and creative resources, including intangible cultural heritage, for the resilience, recovery and healing of the Ukrainian society;

reaffirm our readiness to continue providing unwavering targeted support in response to the direct needs identified by Ukraine, and in doing so, cooperate with Ukrainian governmental and non-governmental institutions, as well as its private sector;

commit to providing safe and supportive environments for the communities of exiled Ukrainians to safeguard, practice and transmit their intangible cultural heritage which is an essential part of the Ukrainian identity and plays an important role in the life, development and resilience of society and individuals.

On behalf of the Republic of Estonia

Heidy Purga

On behalf of the Republic of Latvia

Nauris Puntulis

On behalf of the Republic of Lithuania

Simonas Kairys

On behalf of the Republic of Poland

Piotr Gliński

On behalf of Ukraine

Oleksandr Tkachenko