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REPORT*

**“The Role of the Parliaments in Strengthening the Protection of Cultural Heritage in
the BSEC Member States”**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Cultural heritage encompasses tangible and intangible aspects of a society's traditions, values, customs that have been passed down through generations and its preservation is crucial for maintaining a sense of identity and continuity with the past. Protection of cultural heritage helps to cultivate respect for different cultures and encourages tolerance to other cultures and cultural differences, promotes cultural diversity, contributes to social cohesion. Protection of cultural heritage allows to understand and appreciate the history and achievements, plays a significant role in fostering intercultural dialogue, and promoting mutual understanding among different peoples.

2. Preservation of cultural heritage plays an important role in socio-economic life. Cultural heritage influences various spheres of human life, including the economy, attracts investments, and promotes international cooperation. Protection, revival and exploration of cultural heritage are especially relevant today for intergenerational transmission of knowledge, values and traditions ensuring the continuity and viability of the cultural identity of societies in the future.

3. Considering the special role of parliaments in improving the legal framework for the preservation of cultural heritage, the PABSEC Committee on Social and Humanitarian Policy decided to take up “The Role of Parliaments in Strengthening the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the BSEC Member States” as the main item on the agenda of its 63rd meeting in Istanbul on 17 October 2024.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly of Black Sea Economic Cooperation has adopted Reports and Recommendations on cultural heritage issues, including Report and Recommendation 166/2018 on Current and Future Perspectives in the Development of Tourism in the BSEC Region; Report and Recommendation 163/2018 on Enhancing Cultural Cooperation and Multiculturalism in the BSEC Member States; Report and Recommendation 148/2015 on Combatting Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage in the BSEC Region; Report and Recommendation 136/2013 on Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage; Report and Recommendation 80/2004 on Preservation and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage of the BSEC Member states; Report and Recommendation 70/2003 on The Role of Culture in the Development of the BSEC Region; Report and Recommendation 18/1996 on Guidelines on the Program for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage in the Black Sea Region; Report and Recommendation 6/1994 on Protection of the Cultural Heritage of the PABSEC Member Countries; Report and Recommendation 3/1994 on Ratification and Implementation of the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science, and Information, within the framework of which recommendations are given on issues of international cultural cooperation and the protection of cultural heritage.

5. Contributions to the Report were received from the national delegations of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Türkiye and Ukraine. Reference material was also obtained from the official websites of UNESCO, Council of Europe, and other relevant international organizations.

II. THE ROLE OF THE PARLIAMENTS IN PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

6. The Black Sea geo-cultural region, connecting Europe and Asia, West and East, is located at the crossroads of several civilizations. Various cultures, traditions and religions intertwine here, influencing and enriching each other, which gives the Black Sea region its unique place

in the world culture. The ancient and very rich cultural heritage of this region is expressed in tangible (monuments, ensembles, works of art, sculptures, books, etc.) and intangible (music, languages, folklore, traditions) forms that have historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological, artistic and anthropological value. The centuries-old coexistence of the peoples of the Black Sea region, traditional cultural ties and language similarities of the peoples of the region contribute to the strengthening of regional cooperation in the field of cultural heritage protection.

7. According to the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro, Portugal, 27 October 2005), cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time

8. At present, cultural heritage can be assumed as a strategic resource for socio-economic development, an important component in improving the quality of human life and the social system. Moreover, from an economic point of view, the protection of cultural heritage can be seen as a stimulus for economic growth and employment. Every year countries host cultural festivals and events that attract tourists. The preservation and use of cultural heritage contributes to the development of cultural tourism and creates opportunities to strengthen local tourism businesses and the tourism sector. This in turn provides new jobs and generates income that contributes to the overall national economy.

9. The protection of historical and cultural heritage is an important condition for the sustainable development and strengthening prestige of a state in the international community. The material and spiritual values of society are priority areas of the cultural policy of countries. The preservation and enhancement of historical and cultural heritage is an important factor in national identity and statehood, plays a significant role in the formation of civic consciousness and patriotism of the individual, and is involved in almost all areas of socio-economic life.

10. In the countries of the Wider Black Sea Region, a lot of work is being done to restore and reconstruct historical and cultural heritage sites with the aim of maintaining them in proper technical conditions, to acquire new functions and involve in tourism and cultural activities. At the national level, these tasks are covered by state programs and investment projects. In addition, measures to protect historical and cultural heritage, including repair and restoration works, are sponsored by state and private cultural funds. Also, innovative approaches are introduced to the use of heritage for tourist purposes, which not only ensures preservation of cultural heritage sites, but also enhances their revival and creates momentum for sustainable transformation and conversion.

11. Cultural heritage protection serves as a crucial platform for cultural exchange and collaboration, leading to the development of new forms of cultural production and the growth of creative industries. By safeguarding historical traditions and artifacts, countries can engage in cross-cultural dialogue, allowing creative and businesses communities to collaborate in enhancing international cultural events, including celebrations, theatrical performances, festivals, competitions, thematic concerts, games, etc.

12. The objective of preservation of cultural heritage is an important and an integral part of the national security of every state. Historical and cultural valuables are subject to theft or smuggling. At the same time, during armed conflicts, significant amount of cultural heritage

becomes a victim of military action and is at greatest risk of destruction. The protection of cultural heritage also implies elimination of such negative aspects as thefts from museums; illegal excavations of archaeological sites; illegal import and export of cultural goods; illegal transfer of ownership of cultural goods; use of counterfeit documents; trafficking in false or counterfeit cultural goods, etc.

13. The statute of cultural property and the state policy in the field of its protection and conservation are strictly regulated in each country with due regard to their specific nature and interests. Strengthening the protection of cultural heritage requires an effective institutional environment that regulates relations in the field of preservation, use, popularization and protection of cultural heritage. It is also important to activate various initiatives both on the part of the state and business and civil society within the framework of target programs. At the same time, the state system of cultural heritage protection includes the emergence of new and complementary legislative acts, the implementation of various ministry programs, and adoption of comprehensive measures.

14. The interaction between all actors in the conservation process includes the mechanisms for providing territorial protection and control, as well as for the management of cultural heritage. Multifaceted approach to cultural heritage protection is an instrumental in safeguarding and enhancing states' cultural legacy for present and future generations.

15. International cooperation is essential in the realm of cultural heritage protection. Cross-border initiatives and programs enable countries to exchange expertise, resources, and funding possibilities. Through these partnerships, nations can tackle common challenges. The rich cultural heritage of the Wider Black Sea Region countries faces threats from natural and man-made disasters, including earthquakes and climate change. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the protection of cultural heritage and build capacity to promote their sustainable growth and management, encourage eco-friendly tourism, ensure preservation of the environment for future generations.

16. The establishment of legal framework that regulates the national system of conservation, determines the effective work of state and local authorities, museums and cultural organizations. To this end cooperation with different institutions, such as cultural and educational institutions creative unions, professional associations and other specialised non-governmental organizations are.

17. In order to strengthen the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage, it is necessary to review current legislation with the aim of developing a more effective mechanism. In this regard, parliaments play a key role in creating the necessary legal framework for realizing the full potential of cultural heritage and ensuring its protection.

The Role of the Parliaments

18. Parliaments carry out important legislative activities aimed at protecting cultural heritage and improving the legal framework for its preservation. Parliaments establish the legal framework in accordance with the requirements of modern times, taking into account the characteristics of each individual country and the unique national character.

19. Parliaments conduct examination of current legislation in the field of cultural heritage preservation in order to determine effective and non-working norms and to identify those legislative gaps that allow damage to cultural heritage.

20. Parliaments ensure the development of legal tools that allow alternative funding and implementing actions related to cultural heritage with participation of civil society and public-private partnerships.
21. The parliaments monitor the governmental actions to ensure the effective implementation of cultural heritage policies and laws and contribute to the preservation of concrete heritage sites of national and universal significance located on the territory of the respective state. Relevant parliamentary committees work on the exchange of knowledge and experience on an ongoing basis to define strategic objectives and expand efforts to protect cultural heritage.
22. Parliaments need to carefully and effectively define priority areas for socio-economic development, considering the achievement of a balance between sustainable economic development and the protection of cultural heritage.
23. The action of parliaments in the promotion of cultural heritage through raising public awareness is vital. The legislative bodies support the conduction of cultural heritage events, campaigns, and educational initiatives. They foster cultural heritage protection and facilitate dialogue on the issues in this area
24. Parliaments promote the use of the available resources for supporting, enhancing and promoting movable and immovable, tangible and intangible cultural heritage based on an integrated approach, while taking into account the cultural, economic, social, historical, educational, environmental and scientific components.
25. The parliaments facilitate international and regional collaboration on cultural heritage issues. Engagement with international parliamentary bodies and participation in international events of various levels and types on cultural heritage facilitate the exchange of best practices and experience on cultural heritage.
26. Parliaments ratify international treaties and conventions related to cultural heritage, those of the UNESCO, the Council of Europe and other international organisations and align national legislation with international standards.
27. In this direction, it is important to strengthen interparliamentary cooperation both within the framework of various parliamentary assemblies and international organizations, and directly between parliaments, which will make it possible to effectively address important issues of mutual interest.
28. Parliaments of the BSEC Member States closely cooperate with the BSEC Organisation and the BSEC related bodies with the aim to provide necessary legislative support to the multilateral regional projects in the sphere of cultural heritage.
29. Parliaments leverage peoples' and parliamentary diplomacy to promote cultural heritage as a tool for building intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding among the nations. Cultural heritage, by its very nature, transcends national borders and requires a multilateral coordinated approach in the context of achieving long-term and short-term goals.
30. Parliaments mobilise public support to joint cultural heritage and tourism programmes and cultural heritage-related projects given the fact that cultural heritage and tourism are mutually beneficial since, on the one hand, the cultural heritage generates substantial earnings for the tourism industry, and, on the other hand, tourism generates revenue needed for their preservation.

31. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation supports BSEC activities to expand multilateral cooperation in the field of cultural heritage development within the framework of the relevant BSEC working groups.

Situation in the BSEC Member States

32. In the ***Republic of Armenia*** legislative initiatives have been implemented for the protection of the cultural heritage. The Law “On the Preservation and Use of Immovable Monuments of History and Culture and Historical Environment” was adopted in 2023 in the framework of which the concept of the monuments of history and culture, the criteria for including a newly discovered monument in the state list of monuments and removing a monument from the state list were defined. In 2024, the law “On museums” has been adopted, which defines the concepts about museums, the types of museums, the order of replenishment of collections.

33. The 2023-2027 strategy and action plan for the preservation, development and popularization of the culture of the Republic of Armenia was approved by the decision N 1951-L of the Government of the Republic of Armenia dated November 9, 2023. The strategy defines priorities and a vision for the development of culture.

34. According to the strategy, it is ensured: 1. Preservation of cultural heritage and uninterrupted transmission to generations. 2. The formation of an institutional environment for the development of creative spheres and the manifestation of the abilities of creators. 3. Cultural accessibility and inclusiveness. Everyone, regardless of age, origin, religion, has the right to participate in cultural life and is actively involved in high-quality cultural education and services that contribute to the quality of life and well-being. 4. Armenia’s Positioning as a country that carries and creates world civilizational values.

35. The strategy also defines as a priority the increase in the volume of restoration of immovable monuments of history and culture at the expense of both the state budget and funds involved in public-private cooperation. Moreover, within the framework of it, the historical-architectural monuments existing in the territory of the Republic of Armenia defining the different beliefs, religions and cultures are also important, as a constituent part of the general historical-cultural heritage of Armenia.

36. Within the framework of the programs implemented in the field of book publishing, the creation of conditions for the preservation and dissemination of the language, culture, religion, and traditions of the national minorities living in the territory of the Republic of Armenia is important (support for 50 projects of periodicals published in the languages of the national minorities in Armenia is expected during 2022-2027).

37. ***The Republic of Azerbaijan*** is a country with rich and diverse cultural heritage, encompassing centuries-old architectural sites, vibrant folk traditions, and a wealth of archaeological treasures. The Azerbaijani parliament plays a crucial role in ensuring the effective preservation and promotion of the nation's cultural heritage. Through the enactment of comprehensive laws and regulations, the parliament has been instrumental in safeguarding Azerbaijan's cultural assets. The Law on the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments, adopted in 1998, provides a comprehensive legal basis for the identification, conservation, and management of cultural heritage sites throughout the country.

38. The parliament has been proactive in aligning Azerbaijan's cultural heritage legislation with international best practices. By ratifying key international conventions, such as the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,

the parliament has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to upholding global standards in the preservation of cultural heritage. This alignment not only strengthens Azerbaijan's reputation as a responsible steward of its cultural legacy but also opens opportunities for international collaboration and funding in heritage conservation efforts.

39. The Azerbaijani parliament has also played a crucial role in allocating sufficient financial resources for the protection and restoration of cultural heritage sites. Through the annual state budget, the parliament ensures that dedicated funds are earmarked for the maintenance, rehabilitation, and promotion of historical monuments, museums, and cultural institutions. This steady flow of financial support has enabled the relevant governmental agencies to undertake comprehensive conservation projects, conduct archaeological excavations, and implement educational initiatives to raise public awareness about the importance of cultural heritage.

40. By establishing specialized parliamentary committees and working groups, the parliament has created a platform for dialogue and coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. This approach helps to identify the challenges and duly address them in different regions, ensuring that the protection of cultural heritage is tailored to the specific needs at local level.

41. The parliament has played a pivotal role in promoting Azerbaijan's cultural heritage on the international stage. Through parliamentary diplomacy and collaboration with international organizations, the Azerbaijani parliament has successfully advocated for the inclusion of the country's iconic cultural sites, such as the Walled City of Baku and the Shirvanshah's Palace, on the UNESCO World Heritage List. This recognition not only raises the global profile of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage but also secures additional resources and technical support for its long-term preservation.

42. In *the Republic of Bulgaria*, the preservation and management of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage is part of the state policies in the field of culture. These policies are developed and organized by the Ministry of Culture, independently or jointly with other competent bodies, which, in accordance with their functions, improve the existing base of legislative, regulatory measures and support programmes. The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria stipulates that the “state shall take care of the preservation of the national historical and cultural heritage”.

43. The Cultural Heritage Act introduces the definitions of intangible and tangible immovable and movable cultural heritage. The archaeological heritage and its study and search are given a significant place in the Act. The status of the Center for Underwater Archaeology as a state cultural institute in the field of underwater archaeological heritage has been regulated, which searches, studies, identifies, preserves and presents cultural property found under water. The National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage has been designated in the Act as a state cultural institute of national importance, with research and expert functions.

44. Currently, nearly 40,000 pieces immovable cultural property are protected under national legislation, 7 of which are listed on the World Cultural Heritage List, and more than 7 million exhibits are stored in museums and art galleries. This enormous wealth is constantly being supplemented and enriched, which requires a rethinking of the social role of the museum and the growing need to attract the public to the process of preserving this potential in the 21st century.

45. The policy of preservation of cultural heritage is also bound by several strategic documents at national and international level such as: The Governance Programme of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2017-2021, Europe 2020 Strategy and the document "Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020", UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011), National Concept for Spatial Development 2013-2025. Of particular importance is the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century and the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States of February 2017, which set the priority guidelines for the conservation, socialization and presentation of cultural heritage.

46. The National Council for Intangible Cultural Heritage is a permanent body with expert advisory functions. It carries out its activities in accordance with the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is within the competence of the National Council for Intangible Cultural Heritage to discuss problems in the field of intangible cultural heritage, to recommend specific actions and measures for the implementation of the policy in this area, to establish working groups for the purpose of protecting the individual areas of the intangible cultural heritage.

47. The national legislation of *the Hellenic Republic* is in compliance with the EU requirements and regulations governing the protection of cultural heritage. The country is under procession of implementing the Directive 2014/60/EU which is the recast of the Directive 93/7/EEC "on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State" of the European parliament. There are several national laws in the Hellenic Republic regarding illicit trafficking of cultural objects, which are improved by following the specific guidelines of the international Conventions, such as UNESCO 1954 - The Hague Convention, UNESCO 1970 - Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and UNIDROIT Convention on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects.

48. The Law on the Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage sets the conditions for the protection of contemporary cultural goods, foresees penal sanctions and describes the administrative processes for the protection of the cultural heritage. The Law on Measures for the Protection of Cultural Goods and other provisions concerns mainly the introduction of provisions by which the illicit trafficking in antiquities is considered as an aspect of organized crime and the exclusive international jurisdiction of Greek courts is recognized.

49. The Hellenic Republic has signed bilateral agreements with the Republic of Türkiye (4294/2014). Moreover, negotiations are still going on with other countries to proceed with bilateral agreements on the prevention of illicit trafficking of cultural goods. Also, provisions concerning the protection of cultural property and the combat against its illicit trafficking are included in many educational and cultural bilateral agreements.

50. The Directorate of the Management of the National Archive of Monuments, Documentation and Protection of Cultural Goods of the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs is responsible for issues of cultural property, illicit trafficking of cultural goods, documentation of their provenance, claims of repatriations, misappropriation, illegal excavation or removal. The Division of Public Security/Hellenic Police Headquarters of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative construction, operates as a central service responsible for the handling of cases against cultural heritage, monitors the progress of this kind of criminality, and gives directions and instructions for the right application of the legislation and the increase of the police effectiveness.

51. The Counter Criminal Policy 2015-2019 and the Policy for Combating Financial Crimes of the Hellenic Police aim at the reduction of theft and illegal trafficking of cultural objects, the reduction of crimes around archaeological sites, dismantling criminal organizations and effective protection of the storage rooms for objects of cultural heritage.

52. In *the Republic of Moldova*, the protection of cultural heritage is a priority. Recently is adopted policy documents in the field of strengthening the protection of cultural heritage aim at: creating the service for the record and movement of mobile cultural goods, which contributes to the protection of cultural values and the prevention of illegal activities; creating a National Cultural Fund to finance cultural and publishing projects, creating a National Archaeological Register to ensure the record of archaeological monuments and their protection.

53. In the field of cultural heritage protection, the work is underway to prepare a draft Law on the Protection of Historical Monuments, which is aimed at improving the mechanisms for their protection. The process of amending the Law on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage is also underway to improve the effectiveness of measures taken in this area. Three main educational programs are being developed to ensure the training of future specialists in the protection of cultural heritage.

54. For the protection of rich cultural heritage in the Republic of Moldova a number of international programmes and initiatives are carried out, including projects within the European Union, as well as the activities of civil society and volunteer groups. The Creative Europe programme supports the cultural and creative sectors in Europe, including the Republic of Moldova. Within this programme, Moldova has gained access to funding for projects aimed at preserving and promoting cultural heritage. The Europa Nostra programme protects the cultural heritage and nature of Europe and annually publishes lists of the most vulnerable European monuments. This project supports Moldova's efforts to preserve and restore historical monuments of national and European importance.

55. At the same time, within the framework of the Eastern Partnership programme, the Republic of Moldova receives technical and financial assistance for the implementation of various cultural heritage conservation projects. These projects include the restoration of historical monuments, the development of cultural tourism and the promotion of education in the field of cultural heritage protection. In addition, various volunteer groups, including students and cultural professionals, participate in conservation and restoration activities. These volunteer initiatives are essential for mobilizing resources and raising awareness among the population.

56. *The Republic of North Macedonia* is home to a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, including archaeological sites, historical monuments, and intangible cultural assets. Protecting and preserving this heritage is crucial for maintaining national identity, promoting tourism, and fostering cultural pride.

57. North Macedonia has established a comprehensive legal framework to protect its cultural heritage. The Law on Protection of Cultural Heritage provides the basis for heritage protection, conservation, and restoration. The National Strategy for Cultural Development outlines long-term plans for preserving cultural assets and promoting cultural activities. The Ministry of Culture, along with specialized institutions like the Cultural Heritage Protection Office, oversees the implementation of these laws and strategies.

58. Significant efforts have been made to preserve and restore cultural heritage sites, including archaeological sites. Notable sites like Heraclea Lyncestis and Stobi have received attention for excavation and preservation. Regarding the historical monuments, restoration projects for Byzantine churches and Ottoman-era buildings are ongoing. Also, efforts to safeguard traditional music, dance, and crafts through documentation and promotion are carried on.

59. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, such as funding constraints - limited financial resources hinder comprehensive preservation activities, the urbanization development projects sometimes threaten heritage sites, illicit trade and vandalism - illegal excavations and vandalism pose significant risks to cultural artefacts.

60. Enhancing the protection of cultural heritage in North Macedonia and the BSEC Member States is essential for preserving history, fostering national identity, and promoting sustainable tourism. Parliaments have a vital role to play through legislative action, oversight, and regional cooperation.

61. ***In Romania***, the Ministry of Culture is responsible for protecting, conserving, restoring, and promoting cultural heritage. The Ministry's responsibilities also include drafting or, when applicable, endorsing draft normative acts in the field of cultural heritage. Additionally, it proposes cooperation projects and programs with foreign institutions, bodies, or international organizations and nominates historical monuments for inclusion in UNESCO's World Cultural and Natural Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger.

62. At the governmental level, Romania actively participates in the BSEC Working Group on Culture, being part of projects such as: the BSEC Cultural Platform, Byzantine Routes Mapping in Member States, film festivals, TV productions with national TV channels, mobility of artists and artworks in different fields (cultural events, festivals, etc.).

63. Since 2020, Romania is part of BLUEMED project, focused on protecting and promoting underwater cultural heritage through sustainable tourism. Proposed by Greece, and being successful in the Mediterranean area, the project aims to involve BSEC Member States and explores the possibility to expand in the Black Sea region. The project seeks to identify underwater heritage sites for development, with expert assessments and feasibility studies.

64. Within the Romanian Parliament, the interaction with the UNESCO and other parliamentary diplomacy activities involving cultural heritage is conducted by the Joint Permanent Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Commission serves as a mediator between various public and private entities responsible for safeguarding Romania's tangible, intangible, natural, and human heritage. It also plays a key role in promoting the significance of Romania's national heritage of universal value, both domestically and internationally, as well as advancing the objects that are candidates for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

65. Each September, Romania celebrates European Heritage Days, inviting millions of citizens to visit historical monuments and participate in events that showcase cultural heritage across Europe. The theme for the 2024 edition is "*Cultural Corridors: European Routes of Heritage Sites*". These Cultural Routes hold special importance as they preserve, enhance, and strengthen Europe's natural and cultural heritage, contributing to a better living environment and serving as a source of cultural, social, and economic development. They also promote cultural tourism as a form of sustainable growth.

66. **The Republic of Serbia** has adopted a new Law on Cultural Heritage in 2021, which has been in force since 6 January 2023. This Law envisages, inter alia, that the Republic of Serbia ensures the protection and preservation of cultural heritage located in its territory and the protection and preservation of cultural heritage located abroad, if it is of importance to its history, art or culture.

67. The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia keeps records and documentation on immovable property of special importance to the history and culture of the Republic of Serbia that is located abroad and, in cooperation with the competent authorities and institutions in those countries, the Institute ensures their protection and preservation.

68. With the aim of contributing to the preservation, research, protection, sustainable use and availability of cultural heritage, and to the improvement of cultural heritage protection activities and library and information activity and contributing to the digitalisation of cultural heritage in the Republic of Serbia, every year the Ministry of Culture publishes a public call for financing or co-financing projects in the area of protection and digitalisation of cultural heritage in the Republic of Serbia for institutions for the protection of cultural goods at the local level and associations and other legal persons registered in the area of culture and protection of cultural goods. In 2023 in all areas of the competition, a total of 613 projects were supported.

69. Particularly important is the adoption of the Mondiacult Declaration at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - Mondiacult 2022, during which the direction of the development of culture was set, both as part of the UN Agenda 2030 and in the period beyond 2030, with an emphasis on the need to set a special objective for culture. The Declaration places special emphasis on the area of protection of heritage in times of crisis, including extreme climate events and disasters, armed conflict, and the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods, the development of cultural and creative industries through the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural content, while guaranteeing the social and economic rights of artists and cultural workers.

70. The Republic of Serbia is among the first countries in the region to have started implementing the Pilot Project on Implementing Cultural Indicators Linked to Sustainable Development Goals – Culture 2030 Indicators, implemented by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the Institute for Cultural Development Research. The implementation of this project involved UNESCO's cutting-edge methods of researching sustainable development in culture.

71. The conservation of cultural property is the responsibility of the state in accordance with Article 63 of the Constitution of **the Republic of Türkiye**. This responsibility is largely undertaken by the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye. Türkiye has enacted many laws in the field of preserving cultural heritage since the foundation of the Republic, in line with the approach it inherited from the Ottoman Empire. The Law No. 1710 on Antiquities is considered the first example of these laws.

72. Fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property is also an important part of the conservation of cultural heritage. In this context, the Department of Anti-Smuggling was established within the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums of Ministry of Culture and Tourism. One of the three branch offices affiliated to this Department carries out domestic activities, the other carries out international activities, and the last one, Education and Awareness Branch Office, carries out public awareness activities against smuggling.

Continuous research and investigation efforts are being carried out around the world for the return of cultural assets smuggled abroad. A total of 12,139 cultural assets were returned to the country between 2002 and 2024.

73. One of the international programs for the conservation of cultural heritage is the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea Program initiated by the European Union (EU). Türkiye has actively participated in addressing the issues of underwater cultural heritage and tourism within the scope of this Program. The establishment of a joint scientific research group in the Black Sea Region and bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements were agreed upon by Türkiye's proposal but have not yet been implemented.

74. Strengthening of cultural heritage in Türkiye is also related to the international agreements to which it is a party. In this context, Türkiye has become a party to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and "Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe", ratified in 1989.

75. Türkiye actively participates in international and regional cultural heritage conservation programs and provides support to platforms such as Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Group of Twenty (G20), in addition to UNESCO. In order to combat the smuggling of cultural assets, cooperation mechanisms have been established and agreements have been signed through bilateral agreements.

76. The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of *Ukraine* (MCIP) is the central executive body that implements the state policy in the field of cultural heritage protection. Currently, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine is focusing on active digitalisation of the cultural heritage protection sector, cooperation with national governments of other countries (including the BSEC Member States) to attract financial, technical and professional assistance to minimise and overcome the consequences of Russian armed aggression on Ukraine's cultural heritage.

77. The State Register of Immovable Monuments of Ukraine was launched to digitise and store information on cultural heritage sites in Ukraine, provide public access and enter geodata, which in future, when interacting with other state registers, will minimise the risks of carrying out construction or other work without the consent of the cultural heritage protection authorities. The register greatly simplifies the procedure for registering immovable cultural heritage, and, due to its openness to the public, enhances the possibility of public control over illegal works on monuments.

78. In addition, museum collections of paintings, artefacts, antique weapons, jewellery, documents, etc. are currently being digitised. The Ukrainian government also prioritises the implementation of international monument protection legislation with an appropriate level of preservation of the national monument protection system. Due to limited financial resources and the need for a sufficient level of functioning of cultural heritage protection bodies, the MCIP is currently implementing useful provisions and norms of international agreements, conventions and the experience of other countries without destroying the national system of cultural heritage protection bodies. Measures are being taken to implement the Council of Europe's Nicosia Convention on the misappropriation of cultural property.

79. As of 25 June 2024, the total number of damaged cultural heritage sites since 24 February 2022 is 1085. Of these, 121 are of national importance, 884 are of local importance, and 80 are newly discovered. 715 libraries (138 destroyed, 577 damaged) and 113 museums (13 destroyed, 100 damaged) were damaged. With the aim to restore and preserve cultural

heritage monuments, the MCIP constantly communicates and actively cooperates with various international organisations such as UNESCO, Aliph Foundation, World Monuments Fund and other foundations, charities, and public organisations that provide targeted assistance to cultural heritage sites.

80. Considering the world practice, thanks to the support and methodological assistance of the professional environment of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), Ukrainian experts, together with the support of the MCIP, prepared the Emergency Red List - Ukraine in 2022 in the form of an electronic booklet, which is available on the official ICOM website. This booklet defines the categories of material and spiritual cultural objects of artistic, historical, ethnographic and scientific significance that are at greatest risk.

III. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

81. The updated BSEC Economic Agenda “BSEC Economic Agenda Towards a Sustainable Future of the wider Black Sea area” adopted by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States at the Meeting held on 15 December 2023 and particularly Goal 8: Development of Tourism, Protection of Cultural Heritage and Promotion of Modern Culture, aims to promoting the BSEC Region as a leading tourist destination. It recommends establishing an interdisciplinary network of scientists and experts, in order to promote research and digitalization of cultural heritage of each BSEC Member State, as well as the use of artificial intelligence, augmented reality/virtual reality and creating a virtual library reflecting the cultural heritage in the BSEC Region. It supports the promotion of the exchange of knowledge and expertise among professionals in conservation and restoration of cultural heritage and organizing training courses in this field in the territories of the BSEC Member States, as well as conservation, restoration, and maintenance projects of the architectural heritage in the territory of the BSEC Member States.

82. One of its main objectives of the BSEC is further developing cooperation in combating illicit trafficking of cultural property belonging to the archaeological, historical, ethnographical heritage and the arts, inter alia through exchange of information to facilitate the return and restitution of cultural property that is illegally removed from its country of origin, in accordance with the national legislations of the BSEC Member States and relevant international instruments, including UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970).

83. The general objective of the Action Plan of the BSEC Working group on Culture 2021-2023 is to contribute to the development and strengthening of cultural cooperation and dialogue, aiming to boost the role of culture and cultural policies in the BSEC Region, based on promotion of mutual understanding, respect for diversity, rights, and equal dignity between peoples through intercultural dialogue and concrete initiatives; working towards shaping a better understanding and interaction of the Black Sea distinct regional cultural identity by developing joint strategies, projects, and programs to enhance the spirit of dialogue; giving priority to the cooperation in the prevention of illicit trafficking of cultural property belonging to the archaeological, historical, ethnographical heritage and the arts, inter alia, through exchange of information to facilitate the return of lost or illegally exported cultural values in accordance with the national legislations of the BSEC Member States and relevant international instruments.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

84. UNESCO plays a leading role in the protection of cultural heritage through its conventions, programs, and initiatives, including listing and protecting World Heritage Sites, promoting intangible cultural heritage, and responding to emergencies affecting cultural heritage. At the level of normative action, UNESCO has elaborated different treaties to protect the cultural goods: the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its two protocols (1954 and 1999), and the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972).

85. The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) also play an important role in the protection of the cultural heritage in all its dimensions.

86. Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) foresees safeguarding and respect for cultural property, special protection for certain properties, establishment of a distinctive emblem (the Blue Shield). The UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995) provides a uniform approach to the restitution of stolen or illegally exported cultural objects, as well as the return of stolen cultural objects, compensation for bona fide purchasers, international cooperation.

87. UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) is the first international legal framework for combating illicit trafficking of cultural property in peacetime, which envisages combat with the illegal trade of cultural property. UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) aims to identify and protect cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value. The key provisions aim the Establishment of the World Heritage List, international assistance for heritage protection, national responsibility for heritage conservation.

Council of Europe (CoE)

88. The Council of Europe plays a significant role in the protection of cultural heritage through various conventions and initiatives. It recognizes the potential of cultural heritage as a driver for sustainable development and social cohesion, integrating heritage protection with broader socio-economic goals. Through the facilitation of collaboration and information exchange among member states, it enhances the overall effectiveness of heritage conservation efforts.

89. The European Cultural Convention (1954) is the main document that promotes cultural cooperation among European countries and safeguard cultural heritage. It encourages the exchange of cultural information, protects cultural property, and promotes awareness and education regarding cultural heritage; The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention, 1985) aims for the protection of the architectural heritage of Europe, through legal protection of monuments and sites, fostering conservation policies, promoting public awareness, and encouraging international cooperation.

90. The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised) (Valletta Convention, 1992) prevents illicit excavation and trading, promotes archaeological research, and ensure public access to archaeological sites and findings. The Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2005) recognizes

the importance of cultural heritage for society and individual well-being. It emphasizes the role of cultural heritage in fostering social cohesion and sustainable development, promotes democratic participation in cultural heritage governance, and recognizes heritage as a resource for economic development and quality of life.

European Union (EU)

91. The European Union plays a crucial role in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage through various policies, funding programs, and initiatives. The EU integrates cultural heritage protection into broader policy frameworks, such as regional development, research and innovation, and social inclusion. It provides significant financial resources to member states and cultural organizations for heritage preservation, fostering innovation and capacity building. The European Union's comprehensive approach to cultural heritage protection demonstrates its commitment to preserving Europe's diverse cultural heritage while promoting sustainable development and social cohesion across the continent.

92. European Agenda for Culture promotes the cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, support culture as a catalyst for creativity, and ensure culture's contribution to the EU's external relations. It encourages collaboration among member states on cultural policy, supports initiatives to protect cultural heritage, and integrates culture into other policy areas.

93. Creative Europe is a funding initiative that supports Europe's cultural and creative sectors. It provides funding for projects that protect and promote cultural heritage, including heritage conservation, digitalization, and capacity-building initiatives. Horizon Europe funds research and innovation projects related to cultural heritage, including preservation technologies, heritage-led regeneration, and the impact of climate change on heritage sites.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

94. Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in shaping identities and traditions within countries and regions. Each country has its own unique cultural heritage that includes languages, customs, rituals, architecture and art. This heritage reflects the history and values of the people, influencing their national identity and cohesion. In a broader context, countries within a region often share historical connections, trade relations, and cultural exchanges that shape a collective regional identity. Festivals, culinary traditions, and shared history contribute to the regional heritage. The cultural heritage of regions is recognized and preserved on a global scale through initiatives like UNESCO's World Heritage, acknowledging their significance not just locally or nationally, but universally. This in turn helps to promote cultural understanding and protect them for future generations. Interconnectedness of cultural heritage illustrates how local, national, and global traditions intertwine, highlighting the importance of preserving and appreciating cultural heritage at all levels.

95. The Black Sea region is a rich tapestry of diversity with a rich history of shared traditions, and culture fostering mutual understanding and cooperation among different peoples. The culture of any nation is a living organism that preserves the memory and traditions of its ancestors. The accumulation and preservation of cultural values is the basis for the development of society and civilization. Cultural heritage flourishes and multiplies when people take care of their cultural identity. Any loss of cultural heritage and loss of cultural values is irreparable and inevitably affects all areas of life, leading to the impoverishment of societies in general. Preservation of cultural heritage is the most important task of society and the state. Therefore, each person is obliged to care for the preservation of cultural heritage, to protect historical and cultural monuments. In this regard, parliamentarians and parliaments should do everything necessary to ensure the protection of historical and cultural heritage, as

well as promote the preservation and development of cultural and national identity, restoration of historical and cultural heritage, and their popularization.

96. Considering the importance of cultural cooperation and the preservation of cultural heritage and with the aim of maintaining mutual understanding and respect among peoples, the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in Culture, Education, Science and Information was concluded in 1993. This multilateral treaty lays the international legal basis for cooperation between the states of the Black Sea region in the field of culture and the protection of cultural heritage. Within the framework of the Black Sea Convention, states promote joint projects in various fields of culture.

97. Cultural heritage is also a vital factor in economic development, attracting tourism, supporting cultural industries, and fostering heritage preservation activities. It is necessary to highlight the enormous role of tourism development as a sector of the economy, which gives an impetus to the enhancement of cultural heritage and its potential. In this regard, legislators should promote the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage within the framework of more inclusive socio-economic development programs. To this end, it is necessary to intensify work with the BSEC Organization and with bodies associated with the BSEC in order to achieve maximum involvement of the potential of culture in the general development processes in the region.

98. By developing and adopting laws, parliaments ensure the implementation of generally accepted principles for the protection of cultural heritage and promote the strengthening of regional cooperation in the field of enhancing the protection of cultural heritage, taking into account the growing international trend of direct linkage of cultural cooperation with broader development goals.

99. National cultural policies and efforts to preserve cultural heritage ensure priority cultural and humanitarian development as a basis for economic prosperity. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen the role of parliaments in enhancing the protection of cultural heritage and mobilize the joint efforts of governments and civil society organizations to preserve, accumulate, increase and pass on the rich heritage to new generations, as well as to continue the process of interaction and mutual complementarity of cultures in the Wider Black Sea Region.