



**Statement on
The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine**

Delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Marit Halsvik Lillealtern at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 21 July 2022

Thank you.

Mr. Chair,

Norway is aligned with the statement made by the European Union but allow me to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

We condemn the continued brutal attacks by Russian forces against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. The most devastating consequence of the Russian aggression is the untold human suffering and loss of life.

Russia is responsible also for other irreparable loss. We are deeply concerned by reports of widespread destruction of cultural heritage sites, religious buildings, theatres, libraries, museums, historical buildings, and memorials. The war is tearing families apart and forcing millions to flee their homes, negatively impacting the social fabric of Ukrainian society. As a result, the intangible cultural heritage of communities in Ukraine is also under threat. Cultural heritage is a legacy we receive from the past, live in the present and pass on to future generations. It is a fundamental part of identity, resilience, and continuity.

In the Moscow mechanism report presented to this Council last week, we read that UNESCO has confirmed the damage of more than 150 cultural sites since the Russian invasion. The number is likely much higher, as described by the distinguished Ukrainian ambassador. The report describes how Russian forces have damaged or destroyed important sites such as the Babyn Yar Holocaust memorial complex in Kyiv,

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the Palace of Culture in Lozova, and an almost 400-year-old church in one of Ukraine's holiest Orthodox Christian sites – the Sviatohirsk Lavra monastery.

As the Moscow mechanism experts point out: The deliberate targeting of cultural property which is not used for military purposes violates international humanitarian law and constitutes a war crime. We also read that a vast amount of art objects has been looted and trafficked, violating both international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The Russian Federation has substantial obligations to mitigate damage and preserve and protect cultural heritage in all areas under its occupation and effective control. In addition to its commitments as an OSCE participating State, it is a state party to both the *UNESCO World Heritage Convention* and the *1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*.

Norway commends the efforts by the Ukrainian government and people to identify, report, and document destruction of cultural heritage. Such records will be essential to ensure effective investigation and hold perpetrators accountable, as well as for future reconstruction. We also commend reported Ukrainian efforts to protect both Ukrainian and Russian cultural heritage in accordance with obligations under international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chair,

We are saddened to learn about the death of British National Paul Urey whilst in the custody of Russian proxies in Ukraine. We call on the Russian Federation to ensure proper care of all prisoners, in accordance with international conventions, and ask for immediate release of detained members of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

Russia bears full responsibility for the enormous consequences of its illegal war. Once again, we call on Russia to immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions to bring an end to the loss of human life and both tangible and intangible cultural heritage that the attacks are causing. Russia must withdraw all its troops and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula.

Thank you.