

Conference "Fostering European Cooperation for Cultural Heritage at Risk".

Dubrovnik - Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**27-28 February 2020: Mr Bruno Favel, Head of Department for European and International Affairs,
General Directorate for Heritage, Ministry of Culture (France)**

Dear Ministers, dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly pleased to be here with you today in Dubrovnik, ancient Ragusa, a Mediterranean city that has been influencing the whole region for centuries and is dear to my heart. I remember with emotion Jean D'Ormesson's appeal in 1991 to "*save this city of peace, culture and history*", a few days after the destruction by snipers of some of the historic monuments of the old city. And I am pleased to note that Croatia has succeeded in restoring this city, as evidenced by its touristic success, which is also another form of danger to the heritage.

This idea of protecting cultural heritage against natural and human risks is quite recent. For a long time, natural disasters and wars were perceived as a fatality that it was impossible to fight against. During the "Age des lumières" they realized that the worst enemies of the heritage could be men and that the destruction and degradation of cities, monuments, archives and works of art are more often due to wars, negligence, vandalism and greed than to the fury of nature. In France, I remember Victor Hugo's cry "*war on the demolitionists!*" and the book "*Notre Dame de Paris*" in 1831, denouncing the destruction or restoration works that disfigured sometimes heritage.

The legal system for the protection of historic monuments was gradually built up from the 19th century onwards in Europe, according to the principles of the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl: conservation, restoration and enhancement. The principles of protection and preservation of heritage from the ravages of human action are also integrated in international texts such as the Athens Charter (1930) and in the preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO in 1948, after the terrible conflict that devastated the world.

In face of natural hazards, the first practices were : avoidance strategies. The relocation of the Abu Simbel temples in 1968 to avoid them of being flooded by the Nil river, the terrible floods in Florence, or the fight against Venice sinking into the soil of its lagoon. After earthquakes, hurricanes and floods, the impact of climate change on heritage is now being added.

In recent years, the denunciation of war crimes and crimes against humanity with regard to heritage has become increasingly vigorous. During civil wars, religious factional groups target archaeological heritage and all forms of heritage. We are thus witnessing systematic deliberate destruction or illicit trade in many countries (Libya, Mali, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan, Syria, ...).

Since 1991, the Directorate General for Heritage of the Ministry of Culture has been conducting cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNESCO, in order to develop an integrated strategy for French intervention at international level, in the field of crisis management, risk prevention and crisis recovery.

Thus, cultural heritage is beginning to be recognized as an essential element for resilient societies and to be better integrated into studies on disaster risk reduction. However, awareness upstream, i.e. in the field of risk prevention, remains low, despite the increase in the frequency and violence of natural hazards and the awareness that has been growing since the early 2000s.

I will give you some examples of natural disasters, following which the Ministry of Culture, at the request of its partners, sends French teams to participate in restoration work:

- 1999: storms and floods in France and the Danube countries: more than a hundred French monuments were damaged, including the park of Versailles and the cathedral of Strasbourg.
- 2001: floods in the north of France
- 2002: Flooding of the Danube in Dresden (Germany) and Prague (Czech Republic)
- 2003: earthquake in Bam, Iran, destroying the city and the ancient earthen citadel.
- 2005: Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, which destroyed part of the city's heritage.
- 2007: Flooding of Franja's Partisan Hospital in Dolenji Novaki, Slovenia
- 2008: Sichuan earthquake destroys Protestant buildings
- 2009: Aquila earthquake in Italy and landslide in Cologne, Germany
- 2010: terrible earthquake in Haiti that gave rise to an ambitious multi-disciplinary action programme for the conservation of built heritage, inventory, restoration, museums, archives.
- 2015: violent earthquake in Nepal destroys most of the temples in Kathmandu, whose reconstruction is now being monitored by the World Heritage Committee.

Fires too, often due to negligence:

- 15 April 2019: Notre Dame de Paris
- 2003: Fire at the Château de Lunéville in France.
- 1996: Fire at La Fenice in Venice, Italy.
- 1994: Fire of the Brittany Parliament in Rennes, France.
- 1992: Windsor Palace fire in the United Kingdom
- 1988: Fire in the historic centre of Lisbon, Portugal.
- 1972: Fire in the Cathedral of Nantes France

Let us now turn to the destruction of heritage caused by armed conflicts, which are also becoming more and more numerous and widespread:

- 1991 : siege of Vukovar
- 1993: destruction of the Mostar Bridge and the nearby Sarajevo Library. Heritage reconstruction, entrusted to the art historian Léon Pressouyre, also consisted in reconciling the antagonistic communities through Serbian and Bosnian heritage.
- 2001: destruction of the Bamiyan's Buddhas in Afghanistan by the Taliban, only the site remains: empty, as a testimony of this brutal act.
- 2012: destruction of the cultural heritage of northern Mali and the launch of an action plan by UNESCO from 2013, in which France is associated.
- 2013: Libya: the necropolis of Cyrene, the old quarters of Tripoli, sites in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania are affected.
- 2015, beginning of the devastation in Syria, Iraq, Yemen:
 - o In Syria: Aleppo souk destroyed, Umayyad mosque in Damascus damaged, Krak of the Knights ransacked, Europos-Dura archaeological site looted, Al Lat lion in Palmyra destroyed...
 - o In Iraq: invasion of Qaraqosh, destruction of the mausoleums of Der es zor (mausoleum of the Armenian genocide) and the Byzantine church, destruction of the Mosul museum, the city of Hatra, the archaeological site of Nimroud, the monastery of Saint Elijah near Mosul, looting of archaeological sites...
 - o In Yemen, the heritage of Sana'a, listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, is being destroyed by terrorist actions and aerial bombings.

Facing this destruction, the European community immediately mobilized in 2015: Declaration of the 47 European Ministers of Culture and the *Appel de Namur*. The international community also mobilized early 2015: UN resolution; conference of 150 Ministers of Culture from around the world in Milan; then at the end of 2016, the Arab Emirates-France conference, bringing together the international community, to save the heritage of Mali, Yemen, Iraq and Libya, and to prepare the ALIPH Fund which is set up in Geneva in 2018.

Lastly, I should like to recall the declaration of the Ministers of Culture and European Affairs, meeting in Paris on 3 May 2019, in the presence of European and international institutions, following the fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. It seems important to me to insist on the second point of this declaration which aims to give European youth the opportunity to get involved in conservation and restoration efforts (+ creation of a European network on heritage skills and mobilisation of existing financial resources for the safeguarding of heritage in danger).

As heritage is increasingly affected by human conflicts and natural violence, it is therefore necessary to develop awareness and prevention actions among professionals, elected officials and local populations. It is necessary to better manage emergency situations and to plan the governance to be put in place in conjunction with the European and international communities.

I would like to conclude by proposing three perspectives:

- **Urgency:** resilience has to be built, the culture of risk is not yet integrated into our European societies, technological societies, that do not think they are vulnerable. We must act on mentalities, build a culture of risk that is neither alarmist nor only theoretical. We must learn lessons of the past and continue the political momentum being built up over the last few years. It takes time, but this Conference is an important step in this process at European level.
- **Governance:** the European community must collectively build governance (perhaps even on a global scale?) to strengthen the resilience of heritage in the face of all these risks. It is therefore necessary to encourage :
 - Cooperation between specialized local, national and European organizations
 - Transversality: mobilizing actors from the different sectors and disciplines concerned
 - Articulation of all levels of responsibility (local, national, European, etc.)
 - The management of the temporality between pre- and post-conflict, between prevention and reconstruction
- **Mobilisation** of the European community: broadening reflection and raising awareness, especially among young people. If, as a result of climate change, the disaster is increasingly likely to strike anywhere on the planet and is beginning to become a reality for citizens, the response must also be global.