



CHAIRMANSHIP OF CYPRUS
Council of Europe
November 2016 - May 2017
PRÉSIDENCE DE CHYPRE
Conseil de l'Europe



Colloquium

“Initiatives to strengthen international capacities for the protection of cultural property and the prevention of illicit trafficking in cultural goods – the Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property”

CONCEPT PAPER

Strasbourg, 13 January 2017

09:30 – 13:00

Palais, Room 5

Background to the Colloquium:

The Cypriot Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe attaches particular importance to the protection of cultural heritage and the prevention of the illicit trafficking in cultural goods. This issue is also among the priorities of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe is currently preparing a new Convention on Offences related to Cultural Property in its efforts to strengthen the framework of legal protection.

In this regard, the Cypriot Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the Organisation, are organising a Colloquium which will bring together high-level representatives from international organisations and relevant national authorities to discuss building synergies, co-ordinating international co-operation and improving the international framework for the protection of cultural property. The Colloquium is being organised in the framework of the third drafting session of the Committee of Experts on Offences relating to Cultural Property (PC-IBC) which is tasked with the preparation of the new Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property.

Protecting cultural property is a transversal problem which requires a co-ordinated approach between local, national, regional and international actors. This Colloquium will therefore be an important step in exploring innovative approaches to create synergies and develop capacities to effectively protect cultural property from wanton destruction and to combat the trafficking of cultural goods.

The illicit excavation, export and import, acquisition, and sale of cultural property is a lucrative and complex issue often linked to cross-border organised crime. Beyond the fact that the illicit trafficking of cultural goods today constitutes a source of terrorist financing, it is important to consider the enormous damage caused by the destruction of cultural heritage to our shared history and national identities.

Notably, in Iraq and Syria, Daesh has been plundering the region's cultural heritage, deliberately destroying important archaeological sites and profiting from the sale of valuable excavated artefacts.

In response to these events in the Middle East, the international community is reinforcing efforts to effectively combat the destruction of cultural property and to strengthen the national and international legal framework. Building on existing instruments such as the UNESCO Convention of 1970 and the UNIDROIT Convention of 1995, many international institutions are enhancing their activities in this field. For example, in March 2016 Cyprus led a cross-regional Statement in the Human Rights Council on the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts and in September 2016, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously adopted UN HRC Resolution A/HRC/RES/33/20 on cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage.

On the European level, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided in March 2016 that the time is ripe to prepare a new convention on offences relating to cultural property to supersede and replace the 1985 European Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (ETS No.119), which never entered into force. The added value of the new Convention is that it will become the only international treaty focusing on criminal measures and sanctions on illicit activities in the field of cultural heritage, while also providing a complete set of measures to foster international co-operation between States to better prevent and combat the illicit trafficking and the deliberate destruction of cultural property.

Objectives of the Colloquium:

The Colloquium aims to:

- provide a platform to exchange best practices from esteemed professionals and high-level representatives of relevant international organisations working in the field;
- assess the key issues relating to the international framework for the protection of cultural property;
- share views, concerns and approaches of the different stakeholders that participate in the fight against illicit trafficking and destruction of cultural property;
- discuss the benefits and added values of the future Council of Europe Convention;
- facilitate the development of reinforced co-operation and synergies for a strong international framework for the protection and preservation of cultural property.

Schedule: 09:30 – 13:00, 13 January 2017

Participants:

The Colloquium will bring together:

- Government experts
- Policy-makers
- Academic experts
- Representatives of international organisations
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT)
- Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court (ICC)
- European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC)
- Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP)
- Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER)
- Committee on Offences relating to Cultural Property (PC-ICB)