

**Международная
общественная организация
«МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ
ЦЕНТР РЕРИХОВ»**

Специальный консультативный статус
при ЭКОСОС ООН,
ассоциированный член ДОО ООН,
коллективный член Международного
Совета музеев (ИКОМ),
член Всеевропейской федерации по
культурному наследию «EUROPA NOSTRA»,
ассоциированный член Международной
Организации Национальных Трестов



**International
Non-Governmental Organization
«The INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE of the ROERICHS»**

Special consultative status
with UN ECOSOC,
associate member with UN DPI,
Institutional member of International Council
of Museums (ICOM),
member of pan-European Federation
for Cultural Heritage EUROPA NOSTRA,
associate member of International
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**Ms. Audrey Azoulay
Director-General
UNESCO**

**Mr. Ernesto Ottone
Assistant Director-General
for Culture
UNESCO**

Dear Ms. Azoulay,

Dear Mr. Ottone,

The International Centre of the Roerichs (Moscow, Russia) jointly with other international non-governmental organizations and cultural figures writes to you in view of the urgent necessity to protect the cultural heritage of Nagorno Karabakh.

As it is well known on November 9, 2020 the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation announced in a joint statement the agreement on a total ceasefire and cessation of hostilities in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. We welcome this accord which gave the opportunity to stop the bloody armed conflict.

We also welcome the proposed technical support by the Director-General of UNESCO on 18 November and the possibility for a preliminary field mission by UNESCO (with the agreement of all concerned parties) in order to draw up an inventory of the most significant cultural assets, as a prerequisite for effective protection of the region's heritage.

We would like to propose the inclusion of a further objective of the aforesaid UNESCO preliminary field mission (or of other possible international field mission under the aegis of UNESCO), namely – the assessment of the condition of the cultural property and, specifically, **whether at present in the respective territories the places of worship and museums are operating, whether they have managed to preserve their personnel – priests, monks, museum workers.**

In those cases where prior to the commencement of the military activities the cultural heritage site (place of worship or museum) has been operating, it is possible to consider its protection real and effective only if its status of an operating (active) cultural heritage object is preserved in the future. This in turn requires the protection of the personnel of the cultural heritage object (priests, monks, museum workers) and ensuring the access of visitors to such cultural heritage. *There is no doubt that this should be the approach to the protection of cultural heritage sites of all concerned parties in Nagorno Karabakh and its neighbouring regions.* At present however, there is a particular danger for the cultural heritage sites of the Armenian middle ages period in case a field mission and experts are not given access for work and considering the fact that the control of a number of territories is being transferred from Armenia to Azerbaijan.

In this regard we suggest to assign to the experts-participants in such an UNESCO mission in Nagorno Karabakh the task of elaborating proposals in relation to the status of the personnel of these cultural heritage sites (priests, monks, museum workers), the conditions and procedures for ensuring their protection, their access to the cultural heritage sites and their work therein, as well as the possibility for the access to these sites by the population. These expert proposals subsequently could be presented to all concerned parties in Nagorno Karabakh with a view of including them in an agreement between them that could ensure the effective protection of the cultural heritage objects.

We are confident that the effective work on the protection of cultural heritage sites and their personnel, the ensuring of the preservation of their activity and of the access of the population to them **could provide the most important basis for resuming dialogue and building future good-neighbourly relations of all the parties in Nagorno Karabakh, and thus it could best serve the cause of peace and cooperation.**

The International Centre of the Roerichs, established by Svetoslav Roerich in 1991, systematically carries out activities aimed at implementing the Roerich Pact ideas in life. The Roerich Pact – Treaty on the Protection of Artistic and Scientific Institutions and Historic Monuments, signed in Washington D.C. (USA) on 15 April 1935 – provides for the unconditional protection of historic monuments, museums, scientific, artistic, educational and cultural institutions and their personnel both in

times of armed conflict and in peace-time. The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is based on the principles of the Roerich Pact and refers to it. The basis of the Roerich Pact is the idea of its initiator Nicholas Roerich about *Peace through Culture*.

The International Centre of the Roerichs, which has Special consultative status with the UN ECOSOC, and is an Associate member with the UN DPI, Institutional member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), member of the pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage Europa Nostra, is ready to offer its experts for work with the UNESCO field mission in Nagorno Karabakh, as well as to assist in drawing in experts of other international non-governmental organizations which have relevant experience. (The International Centre of the Roerichs is ready to provide two experts in the field of international law and the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict in particular, and there is a further pool of experts in different fields of expertise we can draw on if necessary).

We also propose to consider the possibility of undertaking in the region – under the aegis of UNESCO jointly with other international, national, non-governmental and governmental institutions and organizations – systematic cultural and educational activity aimed at raising the awareness of the Nagorno Karabakh population of the significance of cultural property protection.

Dear Ms. Azoulay, Mr. Ottone, we hope that as a result of the joint work under the aegis of UNESCO there could be elaborated a proposal to all the concerned parties that could enable them to reach an agreement in relation to the cultural heritage objects of Nagorno Karabakh. Such an agreement could provide the possibility for the effective protection of these objects and for lasting peace in the region.

Yours sincerely,

Yuri Temirkanov



President of the International Centre of the Roerichs

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