



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

PROMOTING THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

Key messages

To strengthen international action for the protection of cultural heritage in conflict-affected areas, Italy has combined high-level advocacy with direct support for a collective response. This has helped secure international commitments, for example through UNESCO and the UN Security Council. Key to Italy's success is its credibility and domestic expertise, along with a sustained effort to seize opportunities in key multilateral fora.

Keywords

Crises, fragility and humanitarian assistance | Global goods and challenges | Institutional arrangement

Key partner

Italy

Challenge

Armed conflict endangers the world's cultural heritage, as past experiences such as in Syria or Mali have shown. In addition to the more generalised damage caused by conflict, parties to a conflict also often target cultural heritage to demoralise the community and illustrate their supremacy. Conversely, preserving and restoring cultural heritage can be a factor in reconciliation and peacebuilding. However, international attention, collaboration and resources to protect cultural heritage in areas of conflict and crisis needed to be strengthened.

Approach

Italy pursued a dual approach of international advocacy and action.

- **Italy has seized opportunities for high-level advocacy.** It did so as host of Expo 2015, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2017 and through its presidency of the G7 where it organised the first G7 meeting of ministers of culture on the need to ensure the protection of cultural heritage in crises. As a strong advocate for the protection of cultural heritage within UNESCO, Italy supported UNESCO's Unite4Heritage Campaign and actively promoted the adoption of a UNESCO

General Conference statement on “Protecting Culture and Promoting Cultural Pluralism: The Key to Lasting Peace”.

- **To support international action, Italy has drawn on its comparative advantage.** The Comando Carabinieri Tutela Patrimonio Culturale (Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage) combines military, policing and cultural expertise and has been deployed in Kosovo¹ and Iraq. Italy provides financial support for protecting cultural heritage and creative industries in Iraq, Lebanon, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Cuba and elsewhere. It also hosts the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). Italy has signed a memorandum of understanding with UNESCO on establishing an Italian United4Heritage Task Force and a specialised training centre in Turin.

Results

By placing the issue on the international agenda, Italy in conjunction with other states has secured commitments and international support in key fora. At Expo 2015, Italy facilitated a joint declaration of ministers of culture and representatives of 83 countries condemning the use of violence against cultural heritage. Italy co-drafted, along with France, the first Security Council resolution dedicated to this issue. It was also the sponsor of a UNESCO resolution on a cultural component in peacekeeping missions. These efforts are bearing fruit: the first report to the Security Council (2017) illustrates that many states have launched initiatives to protect cultural heritage in conflict situations.

Through ICCROM, Italy has promoted an integrated and multi-hazard risk management approach to heritage. This has also led to a greater understanding of the direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural heritage. [Guidance](#) is available in five languages, together with videos on [protecting heritage from COVID-19 outbreaks](#) and [secondary hazards](#), and on [how to support heritage-based livelihoods](#) during the pandemic.

Lessons learnt

Critical elements for Italy’s success were:

- **sustained engagement** over time and in multiple fora where Italy has played a leading role
- **support for and through UNESCO, the leading multilateral organisation for the protection of cultural heritage**, in addition to a long-standing collaboration with specialised intergovernmental organisations that promote the conservation of all forms of cultural heritage
- **a multi-stakeholder approach**, involving government (Ministry of Culture), regional and local authorities, universities and research centres, and civil society organisations
- **high credibility of Italy’s advocacy**, providing not only funding but also personnel for the protection of cultural heritage
- **significant domestic expertise**, enabling Italy to build its advocacy and proposals on practical insights and tested approaches
- **collaboration with France as another leading advocate**, although efforts at times ran in parallel.

Further information

Foradori, Giusti and Lamonica, *Reshaping Cultural Heritage Protection Policies at a Time of Securitisation: France, Italy, and the United Kingdom*, <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/reshaping-cultural-heritage-protection-policies-time-securitisation-france-italy-and>.

Foradori, *Protecting cultural heritage during armed conflict: the Italian contribution to 'cultural peacekeeping'*, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/modern-italy/article/protecting-cultural-heritage-during-armed-conflict-the-italian-contribution-to-cultural-peacekeeping/B730B0DE5419CFC463853B52463C64D1>.

UNESCO, *Armed Conflict and Heritage*, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage>.

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OECD resources

OECD (2019), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Italy 2019*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b1874a7a-en>.

OECD, *Conflict, fragility and resilience*, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience>.

OECD, "Engaging in fragile contexts", *Development Co-operation Fundamentals*, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=1154_1154188-e83x8ymqam&title=Engaging-in-fragile-contexts.

To learn more about Italy's development co-operation see:

OECD, "Italy", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/37f92091-en>.

Note

1. This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

Last updated: 28-06-2021