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Ensuring lasting protection against destruction and deterioration for the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of humanity

***Explanatory memorandum submitted by the co-Rapporteurs
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1. We all still remember the terrible images of the Daesh terrorist group as they intentionally pillaged Iraqi and Syrian cultural heritage. These images shocked us all, as they depicted the irreparable destruction of our cultural heritage and therefore of our history. But attacks by armed groups on cultural heritage is only one threat among others that could lead to the destruction and deterioration of heritage. Having identified the key challenges, the draft resolution aims to make recommendations which, given the range of threats that exist, allow for the effective and sustainable protection of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of humanity.
2. On a topic as broad and rich as that of heritage, it was important to draw on the expertise of many organizations. In addition to input from UNESCO, we also sought the views of many non-governmental organizations; those who shared their views with us included the Red Cross, the Blue Shield and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). We have also called on experts working in the field, who were able to assess the relevance of our recommendations by comparing them with their own experience. Most of the changes suggested by others were included in the text of the resolution. Lastly, the rich preliminary discussion held at the 133rd IPU Assembly in Geneva¹ also enabled us to adjust certain provisions. For example, we particularly emphasized the importance of including young people and raising their awareness about cultural heritage.
3. These consultations quickly made us realize that heritage is a much broader concept that we had first imagined: at the outset, we tended to focus on tangible cultural heritage, and neglected the lesser known intangible or underwater cultural heritage. It was therefore particularly important that the draft resolution reflected the diversity of cultural heritage: without which, it would not be possible to ensure that heritage in its entirety could be protected.
4. Some recommendations relate to ones already made by UNESCO or other organizations, which directly or indirectly work on a daily basis to protect heritage. However, it did not seem relevant to recall all the conventions, recommendations and other documents which already contribute to ensuring the effective and sustainable protection of heritage. The purpose of this text is therefore not to be descriptive, but rather to be unambiguously analytical. We have opted to focus on those texts where the number of ratifications leaves something to be desired, and on measures which, even though they are not new, are still, in our view, too little known to have the impact that they should or could have.

¹ Based on the preliminary note that gave rise to the resolution: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-f/133/2cmt-DESTEXHE.pdf>.

5. One challenge identified was that of globalization. However, none of the final recommendations relate to globalization. Therefore, while some effects of globalization raise questions - including cultural homogenization, which harms the diversity of our heritage - it is nonetheless the predominant system of our societies. We cannot make an impact on something which governs all aspects of our lives to such an extent. However, if the recommendations which relate to raising awareness are implemented, they could certainly lead to a greater appreciation of the importance of preserving our tangible and intangible heritage and so, of promoting cultural diversity.

6. During the preliminary discussion held in Geneva, IPU Member Parliaments contributed a large number of observations. Many delegations highlighted the good practices in their countries that ensured the protection of their heritage. The aim of this resolution is to disseminate, promote and foster these good practices. Furthermore, some observations were related to the desire to impose certain lifestyles on communities, which required action from the IPU. In this regard, one of the recommendations focuses on a consolidated study of the impact of town planning projects on the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Awareness-raising activities will undoubtedly play an important role in helping people to gain better insight into the need to protect communities. In addition, it is crucial that incentives are created to register the heritage that needs to be protected on the UNESCO World Heritage List: this will enable part of a country's intangible heritage to be covered and so enjoy an adequate level of protection. Other comments related to including young people in the sustainable protection of heritage: that is why one of the recommendation calls for the protection of cultural heritage to be included in school curricula in a cross-cutting manner. Similarly, the promotion of events and awareness-raising campaigns should also be accessible to a young audience and therefore have an impact on their perception of heritage and the issues surrounding it.

7. We recognize that the implementation of our recommendations will depend largely on governments and their civil services. However, it is for parliaments to establish an appropriate legislative framework, including by ratifying and implementing relevant legal instruments. That framework will enable us to set the goals that should be achieved, to allocate the necessary budgets, and to monitor the quality of the action that our governments take. Parliaments can also play a specific role in raising awareness and communicating our heritage protection goals. The draft resolution seeks to emphasize the specific responsibility of parliaments.