

The Hague/Berlin, 14 March 2022

**To the urgent attention of all members of the
World Heritage Committee:**

**Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Mali,
Mexico, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and
the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand and Zambia**

Re: Chairmanship & location of the 45th session of the WHC

Dear Members of the World Heritage Committee,

Referring to the forceful statement made by UNESCO on 3 March following the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Resolution on Aggression against Ukraine, and prior to the special session of the Executive Board of UNESCO to be held on 15 March, I write to you on behalf of Europa Nostra, the European Voice of Civil Society committed to Cultural Heritage, which has a long-standing dialogue and collaboration with UNESCO and its World Heritage Centre and Committee, to convey to you our urgent appeal concerning the Chairmanship and location of the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention. All heritage stakeholders, public and private, at all level of governance, from local to European and international, were looking forward to celebrating this Golden Jubilee with a renewed commitment to ensuring the highest possible level of safeguard for cultural and/or natural sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, alongside our shared overall commitment to ensuring a sustainable future for the cultural and natural heritage in all parts of the world. We were also looking forward to gathering at the end of June in the World Heritage City of Kazan upon the invitation and under the chairmanship of the Russian Federation.

Instead of a joint celebration of the cultural heritage of humanity, since 24 February we are witnessing a brutal invasion by Russia's army of an independent and sovereign country in Europe, with massive destruction of historic cities in Ukraine, the loss of numerous human lives, including among the civilians and children, and also with serious damage to invaluable cultural and natural heritage in this country due to deliberate attacks by Russia's army. These are deplorable acts which violate the provisions both of the 1954 The Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in event of Armed Conflict, and of the 1972 World Heritage Convention (especially its article 6).



**EUROPA
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**The European Voice of
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to Cultural Heritage**

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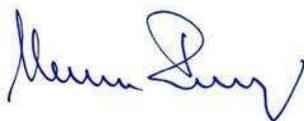
Currently, many international, European, national and local bodies, public and private, are seeking to join voices and forces to provide the much-needed support to heritage custodians in Ukraine who are struggling to save what still can be saved. Europa Nostra is keen to contribute to this massive mobilisation of international community in solidarity with Ukraine.

We strongly believe that in such circumstances, and in line with the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 2 March, the Russian Federation must withdraw as Chair of this year's World Heritage Committee. It is more than obvious that this country has lost every legitimacy and credibility to fulfil this important responsibility. As a consequence, the World Heritage Committee should take, as soon as possible, the only right decision to ask one of its Vice-Chairs to take over the chairmanship of this year's session of the World Heritage Committee and to relocate this session to Paris, at the headquarters of UNESCO or any other suitable alternative location.

We are fully aware that our view is shared by many international and national bodies, including a large number of Member States of UNESCO which are also State Parties to the World Heritage Convention. We therefore trust that members of the World Heritage Committee, and its Bureau will act in accordance with our appeal.

In this way, we shall collectively ensure the safeguard of the letter and the spirit of the World Heritage Convention, and this in the year marked by the 50th anniversary of its adoption.

Yours sincerely,



Hermann Parzinger
Executive President

Copy:
Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO

Enclosure:
[Europa Nostra statement of 25/2 expressing solidarity with Ukraine](#)

