



Rappresentanza Permanente d'Italia  
OSCE

**AMB. STEFANO BALDI**

**ITALY'S STATEMENT  
AT THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE OSCE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-  
OPERATION GROUP 2021  
"Combating illicit trafficking and protecting cultural heritage in the Mediterranean  
region"**

Vienna, 8 November 2021

Mr Chair,

In addition to the statement of the European Union, I would like to intervene in a national capacity to sincerely thank you for convening this meeting and to thank all the speakers for their interesting presentations and insights on a topic of crucial and shared importance for the whole OSCE region and beyond.

Cultural heritage, in all its tangible and intangible manifestations, defines our identity as individuals and communities. It connects us to one another, fostering collective memory and mutual understanding and dialogue within and between our societies. As a result, it significantly contributes to the resilience and security of our countries and our region.

Mr Chair,

Italy is well known for being at the forefront of international action to protect cultural heritage worldwide and to address the illicit trafficking of cultural property. We host the largest number of UNESCO World Heritage sites and our Carabinieri Unit for the protection of cultural heritage is recognised worldwide as a pioneering institution in this field.

At the international level, Italy promotes and supports multiple initiatives in relevant organisations, such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe. More recently, during the G20 Summit in Rome last week, world leaders emphasised the importance of addressing

threats to irreplaceable cultural resources and protecting and preserving cultural heritage damaged, trafficked or endangered by conflicts and disasters.

Mr Chair,

The issue of illicit trafficking of cultural property is of great significance for all OSCE participating States and Mediterranean partner countries. Indeed, in recent years, we have still witnessed deplorable episodes of destruction and looting of monuments and archaeological sites due to conflicts, terrorist activities, as well as natural and environmental disasters, including in and around the Mediterranean area.

Italy strongly believes that the OSCE, thanks to its comprehensive approach to security, has an important complementary role to play in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property. This has become an increasingly important component of our initiatives to prevent and fight all forms of cross-border illicit trafficking, as well as contrasting corruption and international organised crime, terrorist and money laundering networks, which often use trafficking of cultural property to finance their activities.

Since our OSCE Chairpersonship in 2018, Italy has worked to foster cooperation among Participating States on this issue. We are proud of our support to the extra-budgetary project presented earlier and would like to commend its important results. We welcome the proposal to develop a wider and expanded programme in the coming years and, in particular, the increased focus on outreach and communication, to raise the profile and understanding of these important issues by the general public.

Increased international cooperation in addressing the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage is paramount to address its transboundary dimensions. In line with the Milan 2018 Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean, we hope that today's discussion will further contribute to increased cooperation between the OSCE and our Mediterranean partner countries on this important issue.