



Rappresentanza Permanente d'Italia  
OSCE

## **ITALY'S STATEMENT AT THE OSCE SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETING ON COMBATING ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING IN CULTURAL PROPERTY**

Vienna, 21 November 2023

Mr Chair,

in addition to the statement of the European Union, I would like to intervene in my national capacity to express my sincere thanks to you for convening this meeting and to 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 one another, fostering collective memory and mutual understanding as well as dialogue within and between our societies. As a result, it significantly contributes to the resilience and security of our countries and our region.

The issue of illicit trafficking of cultural property is therefore of great significance for all OSCE participating States and partner countries, including in the Mediterranean region. Enhanced cross-border cooperation is required to tackle such a multifaceted crime and this is an area where the OSCE can and should play an active role.

Mr Chair,

in recent years, we have witnessed deplorable episodes of destruction and looting of monuments and archaeological sites due to conflicts, terrorist activities, as well as natural and environmental disasters.

The impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is a case in point. Italy is strongly committed to supporting the reconstruction of Ukraine and to putting our extraordinary architectural skills and know-how in the protection and restoration of Ukrainian cultural heritage severely destroyed by the war.

To this end, last October we launched the Laboratory on the reconstruction of Ukraine, an initiative of Triennale Milano and MAXXI Museum in collaboration with the Italian Ministries of Culture and of Foreign Affairs and of International Cooperation, with the aim to bring together Ukrainian authorities, national and international cultural institutions and business and to support the urban and architectonic regeneration of Ukrainian cities and cultural heritage, starting from Odessa and the Transfiguration Cathedral.

Italy is indeed 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 - as we heard today - our Carabinieri Unit for the protection of cultural heritage is widely recognised as a pioneering institution in this field.

Mr Chair,

Italy strongly believes that the OSCE, thanks to its comprehensive approach to security, has an important complementary role to play in the prevention and fight of all forms of cross-border illicit trafficking, including trafficking in cultural property.

Since our OSCE Chairpersonship in 2018, Italy has worked to maintain this issue high on the OSCE agenda and to foster cooperation among participating States and partners for cooperation. We are proud of our support to the relevant extra-budgetary project and of its important results achieved so far.

We hope that today's discussion will further contribute to advancing our cooperation on this important issue.