DECLARATION ADOPTED DURING THE INFORMAL MEETING OF EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CULTURAL AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

PARIS, 3 MAY 2019

The Participants,

gathered at the informal meeting of European Union Member State ministers responsible for Culture and ministers responsible for European affairs, organized by the French Ministry of Culture and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, with the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and in the presence of the European Commission,

- Expressing their solidarity with France following the fire at Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral on 15 April 2019, and affirming that this difficult moment is one shared by all Europeans;
- Underlining their deep commitment to Europe's exceptional historical and cultural heritage, which is the fruit of our shared history and the visible symbol of the continuous ties and exchanges between our peoples, our artists and our craftspeople;
- Recalling the importance of protecting and transmitting this heritage which is part of our European identity, especially since it plays a fundamental role in the European collective spirit and memory as well as fosters a sense of belonging to a shared European culture;
- Reaffirming the desire to defend a Union that preserves our cultural heritage, expressed by the leaders of Member States and the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission during events to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Treaties of Rome on 25 March 2017;
- Reaffirming the goal to encourage the preservation and promotion of heritage, by fostering a holistic approach to safeguarding European heritage and supporting the use of modern technologies and the exchange of best practices among Member States, as mentioned in the European Framework for Actions on Cultural Heritage presented by the Commission on 5 December 2018 and endorsed in the Bucharest Declaration of the culture ministers of EU Member States on 16 April 2019;
- Acknowledging the momentum created by the European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018, thanks to the involvement and cooperation between a large number of heritage stakeholders, including civil society organisations, and recalling that one of the strategic objectives of the new European Agenda for Culture, adopted by the Commission on 22 May 2018, is cultural heritage protection;
- Recalling that, on 27 November 2018, the Council adopted the 2019-2022 Work Plan for Culture, which makes sustainability in cultural heritage one of its top priorities; recognising the existence of professional and scientific networks at European level, such as E-RIHS, the European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science;
- Taking into account that one of the major priorities of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union is to build on the legacy and the dynamics engendered by the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 to ensure its long-term impact for our societies and

future generations; also taking into account all the acquis of actions, programs and documents adopted by the European Union in the field of protection of cultural heritage;

- Acknowledging the significance and growing role of digital technologies, as emphasised by the EU Member States' Declaration adopted on 9 April 2019, for Digital Day 2019 on Cooperation on advancing digitisation of cultural heritage;
- Underlining the relevance of developing a European response adapted to the threats and challenges facing our cultural heritage;
- Reaffirming the internationally recognized rules and principles for conservation and restoration, and the contributions made by international, governmental, non-governmental and professional organisations, particularly UNESCO and the Council of Europe, to preserve cultural heritage through high-quality interventions;

To preserve our shared European heritage and better protect endangered heritage, are determined to:

1. **Make quick progress towards the formation of a European network on heritage expertise available in the EU, to provide advice and support, upon request by the Member State concerned, in relation to the identification, protection and/or restoration of endangered European heritage**

- The participants welcome the depth and breadth of skills and knowledge on preserving heritage within the EU, as well as their complementarity; they express the need to better organise this expertise to ensure that Europe is capable of tackling the challenges it faces in protecting its heritage;
- They recognize the need for a European pool of knowledge which will enable Member States to provide assistance to each other upon request in order to support the safeguarding of endangered heritage in Europe and facilitate scientific documentation, conservation and protection of heritage as well as possible interventions in crisis situations;
- Within this framework, they are committed to creating a European network to safeguard heritage, which will facilitate the sharing of best practices and make expertise easier to access, to enable a Member State expressing such a request to better manage specific situations of endangered heritage. The network should build on the existing structures and expertise and should work in close liaison with key international partners such as UNESCO or the Council of Europe, as well as professional federations and civil society organizations within the aforementioned field;

2. **Provide Europe's young people with opportunities to get involved in heritage conservation and restoration efforts**

- The participants recall the importance of the cultural aspect to the European Union and the need to closely involve young people in safeguarding and transmitting European cultural heritage from one generation to the next in order to help raise awareness of a European identity embedded in this shared heritage, and avoid the risk that specific skills and knowledge are forgotten;
- They also encourage the involvement of young Europeans in ongoing heritage documentation, conservation and restoration projects and thereby the promotion of their mobility within the

European Union by fully exploiting the existing European instruments, especially the European Solidarity Corps, the Erasmus+ programme and their successors. The European Solidarity Corps would enable targeted solidarity missions (e.g. individual or team volunteering, traineeships or jobs). The Erasmus+ programme would promote the acquisition of a wide range of heritage professional skills, craftsmanship and technical knowledge how through mobility projects and partnerships across borders between educational institutions in vocational education and training, as well as between higher education institutions.

3. Mobilizing existing financial resources for issues related to the safeguarding of endangered heritage

- The participants note the great diversity of existing resources to finance the safeguarding of heritage including national, regional and local public financing, private generosity, joint projects with leading institutions for the financing of heritage restoration, and the use of relevant EU programmes and funds such as the ERDF, Creative Europe, Horizon 2020, the Urban Agenda for the EU as well as the finance and expertise of the European Investment Bank.
- The participants agreed without prejudice to national and European budgetary procedures to further consider how to facilitate mobilization of EU programmes and funds, and ensure they can play a full part in safeguarding endangered heritage.
- They call for mainstreaming heritage conservation in relevant EU policies and invite stakeholders to step up dialogue, also on regional and national levels, to foster greater collaboration.