Resolution on the destruction of cultural sites perpetrated by ISIS/Da'esh

2015/2649(RSP) - 30/04/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 552 votes to 42, with 53 abstentions, a resolution on the destruction of cultural sites perpetrated by ISIS/Da'esh.

The text adopted in plenary had been jointly tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA and EFDD groups.

Parliament **strongly condemned the intentional destruction of cultural, archaeological and religious sites perpetrated by ISIS in Syria and Iraq**. Madame Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, described these systematic attacks against cultural heritage as 'cultural cleansing'.

The European Union (EU) and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) were invited to:

- take appropriate action at **political level**, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2199 of 12 February 2015, in order to put an end to the illegal trade in cultural property from the territories of Syria and Iraq during periods of conflict in those territories;
- use **cultural diplomacy** and intercultural dialogue as a tool when it comes to reconciling the different communities and rebuilding the destroyed sites;
- implement **security measures at the EU's external borders** to prevent cultural goods from Syria and Iraq from being smuggled into the Union;
- to involve the European Union **Satellite Centre** in Torrejón, which supports the decision making of the Union in the context of the CFSP by providing material resulting from the analysis of satellite imagery, for the purpose of monitoring and listing archaeological and cultural sites in Syria and Iraq and preventing further lootings;
- develop **awareness-raising campaigns** in order to discourage the purchase and sale of cultural goods coming from illicit trade from war areas;
- strengthen the **Eurojust and Europol** units devoted to supporting the ongoing investigations, prevention and exchange of intelligence regarding illegal trade in cultural goods.

For its part, the Commission was called on:

- to devise a coordinated approach for combating that illegal trade, working together with those responsible at national level in the investigation services and in close cooperation with UNESCO and other international organisations such as ICOM (International Council of Museums), ICOM's International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS), Europol, Interpol, UNIDROIT (International Institute for the Unification of Private Law), the WCO (World Customs Organisation), ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property);
- to set up a **rapid and secure exchange of information** and sharing of best practices between the Member States to effectively combat the illicit trade in cultural artefacts illegally removed from Iraq and Syria;
- to provide stronger support to **ICOM's** International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods, which has produced an emergency red list of Syrian and Iraqi antiquities at risk;

- improve the functioning of the informal network of law enforcement authorities and expertise competent in the field of cultural goods **(EU CULTNET)**, created by the Council Resolution of October 2012.

Parliament recommended putting in place **European training programmes** for judges, police and customs officers, government administrations and market players more generally in order to enable those involved in combating illicit trade in cultural goods to develop and improve their expertise.

Lastly, Members called on the EU to take the necessary steps, in collaboration with UNESCO and the International Criminal Court, to extend the international law category of **crimes against humanity** so that it encompasses acts which wilfully damage or destroy the cultural heritage of mankind on a large scale.