Resolution on the destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh

2022/2582(RSP) - 10/03/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 635 votes to 2, with 42 abstentions, a resolution on the destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Cultural heritage has a universal dimension as a testimony of history inseparable from peoples' identity, which the international community has to protect and preserve for future generations.

The resolution highlighted that 1 456 monuments, mainly Armenian, came under Azerbaijan's control after the ceasefire of 9 November 2020 and that considerable deliberate damage was caused by Azerbaijan to Armenian cultural heritage during the 2020 war.

Parliament strongly condemned Azerbaijan's continued policy of erasing and denying the Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in violation of international law and the recent Order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) stating that Azerbaijan must prevent and punish any acts of vandalism and desecration. Parliament urged all states to take the necessary measures to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage sites present in territory under their control. It also deplored the fact that the conflicts in the Nagorno-Karabakh region have led to the destruction, pillaging and looting of common cultural heritage, which has fuelled further distrust and animosities.

The resolution acknowledged that it is part of a wider pattern of a systematic, state-level policy of Armenophobia, historical revisionism and hatred towards Armenians promoted by the Azerbaijani authorities, including dehumanisation, the glorification of violence and territorial claims against the Republic of Armenia which threaten peace and security in the South Caucasus.

In this context, Parliament called on Azerbaijan to fully implement the provisional decision of the ICJ, in particular by refraining from suppressing the Armenian language, destroying Armenian cultural heritage or otherwise eliminating the existence of the historical Armenian cultural presence or inhibiting Armenians' access and enjoyment thereof and by restoring or returning any Armenian cultural and religious buildings and sites, artefacts or objects.

The EU is called upon to:

- incorporate a clause on protecting archaeological and historical sites into the action plans guiding the partnership between the EU and Armenia and Azerbaijan, both of which participate in the European Neighbourhood Policy;

- actively participate in efforts to protect cultural heritage at risk in Nagorno-Karabakh, notably by deploying mechanisms to facilitate UNESCO's factfinding mission. The resolution suggested the use of the EU Satellite Centre (SatCen) to provide satellite images in order to help determine the external condition of the endangered heritage in the region.

In addition, the EU and the Member States are urged to:

- continue supporting the work of international organisations aimed at the protection of cultural and religious heritage;

- continue supporting the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance;

- support civil society organisations in Armenia and Azerbaijan that genuinely contribute to reconciliation.

Lastly, Parliament undermined that the efforts of the international community in safeguarding the cultural heritage are essential to laying the foundations for sustainable peace in the region.