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联合国教育、
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**Address by Francesco Bandarin,
Assistant Director-General for Culture
on the occasion of the Seventh Meeting of the Committee
for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of
Armed Conflict.**

UNESCO, 20 December 2012

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to UNESCO for the Seventh Meeting of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. It is a pleasure to see the Members of this committee, Member States, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and observers concerned with our shared cultural heritage. Let me thank all of you -- participants and observers alike -- for your cooperation in pursuing UNESCO's mission to protect cultural property both during peacetime and in the event of armed conflict.

Before commenting on the work that you will undertake during this meeting, please allow me to provide a brief overview of the main activities carried out this year to protect cultural property during armed conflict.

As we all know, the armed conflicts in Mali and Syria proved to be critical events with serious consequences. The global response raised awareness of the urgent need to protect cultural property during both peacetime and wartime as well as the relevance of the 1954 Hague Convention and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols.

The Secretariat has undertaken several actions internally, in liaison with other stakeholders, and at the level of the United Nations Secretariat, to protect cultural property in Mali from both illicit trafficking and the consequences of armed conflict. For example, the Secretariat collaborated with INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and specialized French and Italian police forces to raise awareness of the threat of the illicit trafficking of cultural property, as well as to take measures to prevent it.

Further, the UNESCO mission to Mali dispatched in May of this year prompted emergency measures for the preservation of World Heritage sites. Shortly thereafter, an important decision was taken during the 36th session of the World Heritage Committee to change the fate of Malian World Heritage sites.

The Committee decided to inscribe Timbuktu and the Tomb of Askia on the List of World Heritage in Danger. It also requested border States Parties (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) to cooperate in a joint conservation strategy for World Heritage sites in Mali, and to reinforce the combat against the illicit trafficking of cultural objects.

Then, following the Committee's request, the Director-General established a Special Fund to assist Mali in its efforts to support the safeguarding of its cultural heritage. Ms Bokova also granted US \$140,000 in emergency funds to be used by our Bamako Office for measures to safeguard cultural property.

The Secretariat has also worked closely with the Malian authorities to encourage them to become party to the Second Protocol. Thanks to these efforts, Mali became party to this agreement on 15 November 2012. Three weeks later, on 7 December 2012, the Malian National Commission for UNESCO submitted to the Secretariat a request for assistance from the Fund related to emergency measures concerning certain Malian cultural property. Following the consideration of this request first

by the Bureau of the Committee, and then by the entire Committee, the Committee expressed its support for this request.

The Secretariat coordinates its actions with the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who agreed to lend his personal assistance in preventing the illicit trafficking of cultural objects to Syria's and Mali's neighbouring countries. In addition, the Secretariat works with other United Nations agencies in carrying out recent Security Council Resolutions regarding Mali and Syria. Resolutions 2056 (5 July 2012) and 2071 (12 October 2012) referred to the protection of cultural property during armed conflict, and Resolution 2056 particularly appealed to Parties to comply with international humanitarian law. Resolution 2043 (21 April 2012) established, among other things, a monitoring mission in Syria.

UNESCO continues to work together with the UN, as well as the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and all other partners concerned, to fully integrate its action into the United Nations' humanitarian response to those crises.

In summary, the sad events of this year demonstrated that a coordinated global response can be quickly mobilized to assist in the protection of cultural property during armed conflict. The work of this meeting can contribute to these efforts by adopting practical measures to streamline existing processes, and increase possible synergies, to deliver better results and enable broader implementation of the Second Protocol.

Committee members,

Your heavily charged agenda over the next two days starts with a discussion on the improvement of the procedural aspects of the granting of enhanced protection. This will be followed by an examination of the synergies between the Second Protocol and the World Heritage Convention, and a debate on a fundraising strategy. It will be proposed that the next item to be considered is the granting of financial assistance to Mali. El Salvador will then provide an update on its use of the financial assistance from the Second Protocol Fund, and, finally, the protection of cultural property in occupied territory will be examined.

This meeting represents yet another important step toward increasing international collaboration and enabling wider implementation of the Second Protocol.

I wish you every success in your deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.