



28 June 2017 – Syria has an incredibly rich cultural heritage which has suffered considerably since March 2011, with growing evidence of destruction of its most important monuments, looting and destruction of its movable cultural heritage and rupture in the practice and transmission of its intangible heritage. One year after its conference 'Culture under Attack: Protecting Heritage for Peace', the UNESCO Liaison Office in Brussels organized a follow up event 'Heritage in Danger: UNESCO actions in Syria' to present the results of a UNESCO project dedicated to the safeguard of cultural heritage in Syria.

Under the flagship of the [#Unite4Heritage campaign](#) launched by UNESCO Director-General in 2015, the event hosted speakers both from UNESCO and the European Union.

In his opening remarks, Lazare Eloundou Assomo, UNESCO Deputy-Director World Heritage Centre, highlighted the important partnership between UNESCO, the European Union and the Government of Flanders to raise awareness of the value of cultural heritage, but also to carry out concrete actions to safeguard and reconstruct cultural heritage when it has been damaged. "Touching and destroying cultural heritage is like losing your lungs, and without lungs, you

cannot live", he warned. The strong link between cultural heritage and humanity was also underlined by Silvia Costa, Member of the European Parliament and author of the report 'Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations', "When a cultural heritage symbol is destroyed, humanity is hit", she said, adding that "culture is the 4th pillar of sustainable development", besides environmental, social and economic.



In her presentation, Cristina Menegazzi, UNESCO Project Officer for Syria, explained how UNESCO aims to address the protection of cultural heritage to avoid its growing and irremediable loss. She highlighted the various initiatives UNESCO is undertaking to safeguard Syrian cultural heritage such as technical advice and assessment missions as well as awareness raising activities on the importance of cultural heritage and illicit trafficking. Because of its place at the heart of the Syrian people's identity and the country's economy, its value for the whole of humanity and its importance as a resource for reconciliation and for reweaving the country's torn social fabric, Cristina also stressed the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage such as traditional music, "when the local population is concerned, they get passionate" this in turn is "a sign of dignity for the people living in Syria". The UNESCO Project Officer for Syria also recalled that, besides Syria, UNESCO is active in other countries in the region such as Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Egypt and Afghanistan.

