

The Czech Commission for UNESCO urges members of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO to ensure that the Russian Federation honours its obligations under international law

Distinguished members of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO,

Amid the war started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, the Czech Commission for UNESCO urges you most strongly to use your position and do whatever you can to make the Government of the Russian Federation honour its obligations arising from the international instruments to which the Russian Federation is a State Party, including those undertaken within the framework of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The duty to promote respect for the international obligations stemming from the Russian Federation's UNESCO membership is explicitly mentioned in the Statutes of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO.

As a UNESCO Member State, the Russian Federation is obliged to respect the UNESCO Constitution in its entirety. Article I of the Constitution says that the purpose of UNESCO is to *“contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion”*.

In addition, the Russian Federation has become a State Party to, ratified and agreed to respect the following UNESCO conventions: Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention and the First Protocol thereto (1954), Convention on the Means of

Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), and the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). Many of the obligations undertaken by the Russian Federation in the above instruments of international law are relevant to the current conflict started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine: to preserve Ukraine's documentary, cultural and natural heritage, to cease attacks against civilians and civilian targets, to protect journalists in conflict zones and to respect the children's right to education, among other concerns.

National UNESCO commissions are set up to promote UNESCO's values and principles in each Member State. Every member of a national commission is under the moral obligation to respect these values. The Czech Commission for UNESCO firmly believes that it is never too late to stand up against the horrors of war, to work for conflict resolution through a dialogue and other peaceful means, and to rebuild relations with the international community.

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