

African Ministers calls for end to destruction of heritage in Mali

On the occasion of the Africa celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, we the African Ministers in charge of World Heritage properties gathered at a colloquium in Johannesburg, South Africa, 26th to 28th September 2012, condemn the destruction of heritage sites and objects in Mali, including the city of Timbuktu and the Tomb of Askia. We condemn the destruction of the mausoleums in the World Heritage property.

We also make the following declaration on the situation in Mali:

1. We express our utmost concern on the threats facing the heritage properties in Mali as a result of the on-going conflict; We consider the sites a continental pride and a contribution to World Heritage;
2. We call upon the international community in general, and the African State Parties in particular, to provide the support required at the request of the State Party of Mali, in ensuring that its heritage properties are conserved and protected for present and future generations; and
3. We request all African State Parties to collaborate in preventing the trafficking of cultural objects and manuscripts from Timbuktu and we support the efforts to help Mali protect its heritage. We call upon all parties to the conflict to desist from destroying cultural heritage.

Welcoming:

4. The declaration of the Secretary General of the United Nations of 1 July 2012 supporting the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to assist the people of Mali to resolve the crisis; and

Recalling:

5. Decisions 36 COM 7B.106 and 36 COM 7B.107 of the World Heritage Committee on 2 July 2012 condemning the destruction of World Heritage properties in Mali and appealing for support to ensure that its cultural properties are conserved and protected.

We therefore:

6. Congratulate the State Party of Mali for having immediately expressed its concerns regarding the worsening threats to the World Heritage cultural properties, in

particular to Timbuktu and the tomb of Askia, and for having called upon the international community for assistance in that regard;

7. We support the action taken by the State Party of Mali to work with the International Criminal Court to prosecute perpetrators of the destruction and illicit trafficking of cultural heritage;
8. Commend the supportive efforts and initiatives by the Director General of UNESCO in response to the disastrous occupation of the cultural properties of Timbuktu;
9. Express our gratitude to the international community for the expressions of concern and for the appeals for the cessation of acts of destruction of World Heritage properties in Mali; and
10. Appeal to all Member States of UNESCO and of the African Union to provide financial resource to the Special Fund at UNESCO and also to the African World Heritage Fund in order to improve the support to the Malian heritage at global and continental level.

Finally:

11. Representing our State Parties, we commit ourselves to acting to end the destruction of heritage as a result of conflict and strife wherever it occurs.

Johannesburg, 26 September 2012