



Seventy-fifth session

Agenda item 15

Culture of peace**Resolution adopted by the General Assembly
on 21 January 2021***[without reference to a Main Committee (A/75/L.54 and A/75/L.54/Add.1)]***75/258. Promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites***The General Assembly,*

Reaffirming the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹ in particular the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,²

Reaffirming also the commitment to the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution [36/55](#) of 25 November 1981, as well as the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution [47/135](#) of 18 December 1992,

Recognizing the importance of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace,³ which serve as the universal mandate for the international community, particularly the United Nations system, for the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence that benefits humanity, in particular future generations,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions [72/17](#) of 1 December 2017, [72/130](#) of 8 December 2017, [73/328](#) and [73/329](#) of 25 July 2019 and [74/145](#) and [74/164](#) of 18 December 2019, and Human Rights Council resolution [16/18](#) of 24 March 2011, which urge all Member States to take all appropriate measures to counter hatred, hate speech, stigmatization, incitement to violence, negative stereotyping of persons based on their religion or belief, intolerance and other acts of violence, by encouraging

¹ Resolution [217 A \(III\)](#).

² See resolution [2200 A \(XXI\)](#), annex.

³ Resolutions [53/243 A](#) and B.



understanding, tolerance and mutual respect in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief,

Recalling also its resolution 55/254 of 31 May 2001, entitled “Protection of religious sites”, and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993,⁴ which emphasize the need to counter intolerance and related violence based on religion or belief, including the desecration of religious sites,

Taking note with appreciation of the Statement on the protection of religious properties within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, adopted in 2010, which supports Member States in the development of general guidance regarding the management of religious heritage,

Acknowledging that religious sites are representative of the history, social fabric and traditions of people in every country and community all over the world and should be fully respected as such,

Taking note with appreciation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites: In Unity and Solidarity for Safe and Peaceful Worship developed by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations,

Expressing deep concern at the instances of intolerance and discrimination and acts of violence occurring in the world, including cases motivated by discrimination against persons belonging to religious minorities, in addition to the negative projection of the followers of religions and the enforcement of measures that specifically discriminate against persons on the basis of religion or belief,

Reaffirming the primary responsibility of States to protect the population throughout their territories,

Recalling that States have the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights, including the human rights of persons belonging to religious minorities, including their right to exercise their religion or belief freely,

Expressing deep concern that cultural property, including religious sites and ritual objects, is increasingly targeted by terrorist attacks and outlawed militias, often resulting in distortion, complete destruction, as well as theft and illicit trafficking, and condemning such attacks,

Reaffirming that addressing the destruction of tangible and intangible cultural heritage needs to be holistic, encompassing all regions, contemplating both prevention and accountability, focusing on acts by State and non-State actors in both conflict and non-conflict situations, and terrorist acts,

Mindful that approximately 20 per cent of the properties inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage List have a religious or spiritual connection,

Strongly deploring all attacks on and in religious places, sites and shrines, which are in violation of international law, in particular human rights law and international humanitarian law, including any deliberate destruction of relics and monuments,

Recognizing that the open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interreligious, interfaith and intercultural dialogue, at the local, national, regional and international levels, can play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence,

⁴ A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

Condemning any advocacy of hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether it involves the use of print, audiovisual or electronic media, social media or any other means,

Reiterating that terrorism and violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group,

Recognizing the leading role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the work of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in promoting intercultural dialogue and their contribution to interreligious dialogue, as well as their activities related to the culture of peace and non-violence and their focus on concrete actions at the global, regional and subregional levels,

1. *Calls for* strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and for the diversity of religions and beliefs, and strongly deplores all acts of violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief and such acts directed against their places of worship, as well as all attacks on and in religious places, sites and shrines that are in violation of international law;

2. *Condemns* all acts or threats of violence, destruction, damage or endangerment, directed against religious sites as such, that continue to occur in the world, and denounces any moves to obliterate or forcibly convert any religious sites;

3. *Invites* all Member States, the United Nations system, regional and non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders to support, as appropriate, the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites and to increase their understanding of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes, also called the Fez Plan of Action, and the Plan of Action on Hate Speech, and other initiatives promoting tolerance and mutual understanding;

4. *Invites* the United Nations Secretary-General to convene a global conference involving United Nations entities, Member States, political figures, religious leaders, faith-based organizations, media, civil society and other relevant stakeholders that aims to contribute to spearheading political support for specific actions to take the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites forward;

5. *Expresses its concern* that incidents of racial and religious intolerance, discrimination and related violence, as well as of negative racial and religious stereotyping, continue to rise around the world, and condemns, in this context, any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and urges States to take effective measures, consistent with their obligations under international human rights law, to address and combat such incidents;

6. *Reaffirms* the positive role that the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information can play in strengthening democracy and combating religious intolerance, and reaffirms further that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities, in accordance with article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

7. *Emphasizes* that freedom of religion or belief, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of association are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and stresses the role that these

rights can play in the fight against all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief;

8. *Expresses deep concern* at the continued serious instances of derogatory stereotyping, negative profiling and stigmatization of persons based on their religion or belief, as well as programmes and agendas pursued by extremist individuals, organizations and groups aimed at creating and perpetuating negative stereotypes about religious groups, in particular when condoned by Governments;

9. *Reaffirms* the essential need to strengthen international, regional and subregional cooperation aimed at enhancing the national capacity of Member States to prevent and effectively suppress attacks on places of worship;

10. *Deplores* damage to the cultural heritage of countries in situations of crisis, conflict and post-conflict, in particular recent attacks on world cultural heritage sites, calls for an immediate end to such acts, and reminds States parties to the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and to the two Protocols thereto⁵ of the provisions contained therein to safeguard and respect cultural property and to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of and any acts of vandalism directed against cultural property;

11. *Calls for* the United Nations to continue to develop strategies, educational initiatives and global communications campaigns and tools aimed at strengthening the protection of religious sites and cultural heritage, fostering mutual respect and understanding, enhancing media awareness and countering religious intolerance and hate speech;

12. *Invites* all Member States to enhance education and capacity-building to counter incitement to violence through fostering the messages of unity, solidarity and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, raising awareness and mutual respect towards promoting the culture of peace, non-violence and non-discrimination, and promoting understanding among people of all cultures, religions and beliefs, as well as the importance of peaceful coexistence;

13. *Requests* the United Nations Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders, and decides to continue consideration of the question of promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites under the item entitled "Culture of peace".

*50th plenary meeting
21 January 2021*

⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vols. 249 and 2253, No. 3511.