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PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY– UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE – UNION POUR LA MEDITERRANEE

الجمعية البرلمانية للاتحاد من اجل المتوسط

Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture

RECOMMENDATION

A common cultural heritage and interfaith dialogue as instruments of peace and for the prevention of radicalism

The Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture:

1. Expresses its deep sorrow and concern at the dramatic state of war and instability throughout the Mediterranean region, causing thousands of civilian victims, including many women and children, devastations of cities and lands, and hundreds of thousands of refugees. Conflicts in Libya and Syria, the threat of Daesh, the resurgence of terrorism, and the migration crisis call for a renewed international and regional commitment, including an improved cooperation between Mediterranean countries, to restore the Mediterranean region's ancient identity as the crucible of exchanges and culture;
2. Firmly condemns terror attacks and all forms of terrorism perpetrated by Daesh and by other terrorist organizations that cause many victims regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation. It underlines that terrorism cannot, and must not, be associated with any particular religion, nationality or civilisation;
3. Deems it crucially important to foster cultural and interfaith dialogue as the fundamental means of preventing intolerance, fanaticism and terrorism. In this connection it recalls the "Milan Declaration", drawn up at the Conference on 31 July and 1 August, 2015 at the Milan EXPO, endorsed by the delegations of 83 countries, calling upon "the United Nations and UNESCO to ensure that the principles of intercultural dialogue, the strengthening of tolerance and mutual respect among diverse peoples and cultures are kept in the focus of the international community";
4. Considers that a robust initiative is needed to defend the artistic and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean, which has already been seriously jeopardised by war, and by the destruction and trafficking of works of art by Daesh. It therefore welcomes the UNITFORHERITAGE "blue helmets for culture" initiative, proposed by the Italian Government, to set up a unit within UNESCO and the

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United Nations specialising in safeguarding archaeological sites and works of art in war zones;

5. Welcomes that this initiative was launched on 16 February 2016 in Rome, with the creation of a specialised task force comprising the Carabinieri unit for the protection of the cultural heritage, and the institutes of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, namely the *Istituto superiore per la conservazione e il restauro*, *Opificio delle pietre dure*, *Istituto centrale per la documentazione e il catalogo*, and the *Istituto centrale per la conservazione e il restauro del patrimonio archivistico e librario*;
6. Considers that the destruction of artistic and cultural heritage means for any people the loss of its own memory and of its social and cultural identity as well as a damage to the whole heritage of humankind; believes that through education citizens should again feel ownership of their own cultural heritage and be in the first line of defence for its protection;
7. Urges, therefore, a concerted action against illicit trafficking of cultural property and works of art, notably coming from conflict and post conflict areas in the Mediterranean, also through an active support to the work and initiatives of the monitoring mechanism of UNESCO for the implementation of the UNIDROIT Convention of 1995 and the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (Subsidiary Committee), as well as by creating synergies with the Intergovernmental Committee of the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict;
8. Expresses its conviction that the Internet and the social networks are effective means for promoting freedom of expression and disseminating a discourse based on respect for human rights and opposing violence; nevertheless it draws attention to the need that the social networks do not become a vehicle to spread hatred in all its forms;
9. Points out that the Internet has often become a medium of choice to recruit and radicalise people, and hence deems it essential to activate IT governance measures by promoting synergies with the large corporations that manage the technological infrastructure, particularly “service providers” and “search engines”, in order to disseminate a counter-narrative to debunk terrorist propaganda, and encourage critical thinking regarding violent and radical messages;
10. Underlines the relationship between poverty and lack of education, together with social exclusion, represent the breeding ground for radicalization and ultimately for terrorism;

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11. Stresses that curbing radicalisation is not only a policing and security issue, but a cultural matter, to offer an alternative model to the one offered by those who foment hatred and practise violence, based on mutual respect and tolerance, identifying what most unites us, to foster real integration;
12. Proposes, accordingly, to embark on de-radicalisation programmes, already underway in some countries, which entails strengthening intercultural and interfaith engagement and cooperation with all sections of civil society, by setting up specialised units to establish contact networks involving head-teachers and school teachers, social workers, police officers and neighbourhood policemen, imams, and sports coaches, to identify the early signs of radicalisation and to make it possible to take targeted prompt action, not to criminalise, but to assist and rescue young people in difficulties;
13. Emphasises the importance of constantly working in schools at all levels by promoting citizenship education, to pre-empt and combat radicalisation among young people and points out that constant cooperation between schools, local authorities and Muslim communities is key to combating the drift towards fundamentalism, racism and intolerance;
14. Considers it necessary to emphasise the value of the social and cultural dimension of the Mediterranean, by intensifying cultural exchanges at all levels of civil society and in the institutions, backing up the work of the Anna Lindh Foundation, supporting the work of the Euro-Mediterranean Universities at Portorož / Portorose and Fez, enhancing the student and teacher exchange programmes, including the Erasmus programme, and creating opportunities for cooperation in the fields of culture (theatre performances, audio-visuals, etc.) and the artistic and historical heritage, and by instituting cooperation programmes between local and regional authorities;
15. Mindful of the importance of promoting and building upon the Euro-Mediterranean cultural identity as a key factor for ensuring peace and development, urges the cultural institutions and universities in the member countries of the UfM to create opportunities for fostering better knowledge of the Mediterranean cultural heritage, by organising exhibitions, events and conferences to promote our shared cultural roots and values;
16. Reiterates the need to strengthen, and to give greater visibility to interfaith dialogue to which religious and spiritual leaders have given a fresh boost, in order to explore and overcome the problems connected with our diverse religious and cultural identities, ensure peaceful coexistence within the social fabric and firmly and resolutely reject anything which has to do with violent extremism.