

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE FOR EXHIBITION MARKING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE ROERICH PACT
New York, April 2015**

This year the international community marks the 80th anniversary of the Treaty on the Protection of Artistic and Scientific Institutions and Historic Monuments at a time when its spirit has never been more relevant.

Across the world, we see cultural heritage under attack, from Mali to Iraq and Syria. Extremists vandalize museums and historic sites, forbid girls to go to school and kill members of the media -- all symbols that embody freedom of thought and respect for cultural diversity. These assaults strike at the heart of human identity and endeavour.

Signed in 1935, the Roerich Pact paved the way for landmark international legal instruments devoted to the protection of cultural property, both in peacetime and during war -- including the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972, builds on the spirit on the Pact. International criminal law has also made big strides in protecting cultural property. Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to education, art and science, as well as historic monuments, is a war crime in both international and in non-international armed conflict.

This exhibition pays tribute to the ground-breaking Roerich Pact and bears witness to our determination to take its spirit forward. I wish to thank the International Centre of the Roerichs for organizing this inspiring display. I appeal to Governments and people everywhere to come together to safeguard our common heritage and humanity.

19 mars 2015