

The Oriental Republic of Uruguay

Positions for the Peacebuilding Commission

I. **Peacebuilding Efforts in Response to Censorship, Libricide, and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage**

The Oriental Republic of Uruguay is appalled by acts of destruction of cultural heritage. There are a number of examples that show the devastating effects that the destruction of cultural sites have on a society and their heritage. These include the recent bombing of the Baal Shamin Temple; in the Syrian city of Palmyra--a listed United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) site; the destruction of Hatra by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-- an independent kingdom that had prominence in the trade on the Silk Road;. There was also the destruction of Nineveh of ancient Assyria--one of the world's first empires that controlled a vast stretch of the ancient world between 900 and 600 B.C.¹ Radical organizations, such as ISIS and Al Qaeda have also caused detrimental damage to cultural sites such as the Buddhas of Bamiyan in 2009, in which they stated that Muslims should be proud of smashing idols because it gives praise to Allah for their destruction². According to these radical groups, these acts of demolition of important cities and artifacts are all a part of a "cultural cleansing".

Radical Organizations have also promoted acts of libricide in an effort to censor the world and its people about pivotal and defining marks in human history. Uruguay believes that the actions of "destroying libraries and books constitute crimes against devastating culture."³ In 2015, ISIS ransacked the Mosul Library and destroyed over 100,000 manuscripts and books dating as far back as 5,000 B.C. as part of the ISIS's cultural cleansing. Not only are artifacts being destroyed, they are also stolen and sold on the black market to gain additional funding which could be used to by ammunition and weapons.⁴

Currently, there are no existing mandates to combat libricide, censorship or the destruction of cultural heritage sites and ancient artifacts. The Peacebuilding Commission's agenda focuses on Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and the Central African Republic.⁵ Uruguay insists that the Commission work with Iraq and Syria to rebuild and protect important artifacts, sites, and libraries that contain books that link the world to its past. In addition to this, Uruguay would recommend that Member States to start funding UNESCO, as Uruguay has supported UNESCO since 1947. Uruguay could also join, along with other Member States, Heritage for Peace or The Association for the Protection of Syrian Archeology. All of these organizations listed above are working in some form in the Middle East to protect heritage sites and artifacts.⁶ Similar to how Japan and Switzerland have offered to rebuild the Buddhas of Bamiyan,⁷ Member States should also be encouraged to support the reconstruction of destroyed sites and artifacts. Uruguay could also adopt important artifacts for their protection, like India proposed to the Taliban when they began to destroy Buddhist sculptures. Uruguay greatly urges other Member States with close historical or religious ties to the artifacts and scripts in question to propose protecting the artifacts by hosting them in their own country.

¹ Andrew Curry. "Here Are the Ancient Sites ISIS Has Damaged and Destroyed," *National Geographic*, September 2015

² "Giant Buddha Statues 'blow up'" *BBC News*, March 2001

³ "El Problema Ideologico de la Sleccion-eliminacion-destruccion De Libros Y Bibliotecas" *Instituto de Información Científica y Tecnológica*. 2005

⁴ Robin-Early, Nick. "Syria's Historical Artifacts Aren't Just Being Destroyed by ISIS, They're Being Looted" *The Huffington Post*. March 13, 2015.

⁵ "United Nations Peacebuilding Commission." *UN News Center*.

⁶ Nagle, Sarah. "Preserving Cultural Heritage: A Worldwide Cooperative Effort." *University of Illinois*. 2014

⁷ "Buddhas of Bamiyan." *Meros*.

II. Effective Financing for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

The Oriental Republic of Uruguay began its partnership with the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2009 and has since developed and maintained numerous peacebuilding efforts worldwide; the majority through its multifaceted participation in support of fellow Member States in need of peacebuilding assistance. Throughout the history of the programs existence, Uruguay has been a leading figure in contributing to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs). Uruguay has allocated nearly 20 percent of its defense forces towards the UNPKOs and has therefore gathered experience in the implementation of highly complicated situations in conflict worldwide through these operations. As of 2010, Uruguay has dedicated roughly 2,300 soldiers to areas in need of conflict resolution.⁸

Within the structure of the peacebuilding process of the UN, Uruguay sees the Peacebuilding Commission as a crucial tool in ensuring timely and continuous support to Member States during pivotal stages of their development, while also recognizing their specific needs and situations; acting upon them accordingly. Uruguay would look favorably on the reinforcement of a review process administered by the Advisory Group of Experts—as it is outlined in Resolution 1645—in order to ensure that the workings of the Commission are efficient.⁹ The review process would offer an opportunity to strengthen the Commission’s performance in the financial department by having the Experts inform the body on any crisis or concern within their geographic area of expertise that would need the financial assistance of Member States.¹⁰ It would also improve the Commission’s role as an adviser to both the Security Council (SC) and the General Assembly. Uruguay considers the Peacebuilding Commission’s lack of expected funding as a major concern and an aspect that requires an immediate solution to. The Commission should be able to rely on foreseeable monetary resources, which is why Uruguay supports the recommendation of the Advisory Group and that this enforced branch of the Commission be assigned a percentage—of which will be decided on a later date—of the overall budget for peacekeeping operations.

When dealing with funds—especially when set aside for the purpose of preventing conflict and innocent lives—it is an absolute necessity to maintain a level of trust through transparency. Uruguay urges the body to establish a banking privacy law bound to the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). This privacy law would require all Member States to use solely the PBF when monetarily aiding a fellow Member State requesting assistance in their peacebuilding efforts. The Advisory Board of Experts would have the responsibility of reviews which Member States are contributing to the fund and how much is being deposited and withdrawn from the fund. This method for transparency could equally become a method for creating accountability. It would encourage both transparency and adherence to PBC policies if documentation on their activities within the body are easily accessible to the head of the PBC and the Advisory Group.

Uruguay would also like to bring the role of women into discussion. Women play a key role in building and maintaining peace in both developing Member States and developed Member States. For this reason, we implore that the recruitment of women to political leadership roles within United Nations peacebuilding programs and strategies be a priority for this body. Uruguay believes it to be of utmost importance that the Peacebuilding Commission incorporates a gender perspective into all of its regulatory and promotion activities, in collaboration with groups such as UN Women.

Uruguay holds an outstanding record in providing peacebuilding assistance to fellow Member States and continues to be a leader in the promotion of gender equality—both domestically and internationally.¹¹ Uruguay’s experience and knowledge in peacebuilding should be taken into

⁸ “Maintain and Consolidate Peace in the World.” *Uruguay: United Nations: UN Security Council*. 2016-2017.

⁹ “Resolution 1624” *United Nations Security Council*. 2005

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ “Global Peace Women Uruguay Honors Women Leaders” *Global Peace Foundation*, June 2016

consideration as the suggestions provided above in establishing an effective financing plan for the PBC are discussed by the body.