



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

Hundred and ninety-fourth session

# 194 EX/32

PARIS, 3 April 2014  
Original: English

Item 32 of the revised provisional agenda

## **FOLLOW-UP BY UNESCO OF THE SITUATION IN THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA (UKRAINE)**

### **SUMMARY**

This item has been included in the revised provisional agenda of the 194th session of the Executive Board at the request of the Ukraine. An explanatory note together with a draft decision submitted by this Member State are attached.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 5.

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**  
**Follow-up by UNESCO of the situation in the**  
**Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine)**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution, affirming the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The resolution also underscored that the referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on 16 March 2014, having no validity, could not form the basis for any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or of the city of Sevastopol.

Starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2014 the Autonomous Republic of Crimea has continuously been subject to growing presence of military forces of the Russian Federation, preceding and following an illegal referendum and purported annexation of a part of a Ukrainian territory.

1. In this period groups of journalists and individual representatives of mass media have been victims of threats, physical assaults and kidnapping, all actions which not only hinder them from performing their jobs but also infringe their human rights and fundamental freedoms..

The **freedom of expression** of individuals in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea appears to have also been infringed by the decisions to disconnect all Ukrainian channels, depriving people of the sources of information. The peninsula is currently facing severe curtailment of information. According to the Institute of Mass Information, 62 cases involving possible abuses of freedom of speech occurred in a two week period.

2. The ever growing presence of Russian military forces is having a negative impact on Crimean **cultural heritage**. E.g. the World Heritage site “*Ancient city of Tauric Chersonese and its chora*”, is in close proximity to Sevastopol where the Russian Black Sea fleet is deployed. Four other cultural sites on the Tentative List of Ukraine have currently frozen all activities with regard to their further inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The reported massive transfer of priceless cultural objects from Crimean museums to the Russian capital is alarming and we remind Russia of its obligations under international law related to cultural property.

3. All activities with UNESCO in different fields of its competence are currently blocked or stopped in Crimea, Ukraine:

- UNESCO category II center – “Artek”, contributing to sharing goals and ideals of the Organization among youth. The relevant Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and UNESCO to prolong the mandate of the Centre will only be possible after liberation of Crimea.

- Expert work in the framework of the **2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage** is blocked as well as of the Centre of Oceanology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine – active participant for decades within the **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission**.

4. Of utmost importance under the temporary occupation of the peninsula, is the necessity to ensure functionality of schools in Crimea – including those with Ukrainian and Qirim-Tatar learning languages and to ensure equal access to **education** of all students in Crimea, Ukraine.

UNESCO should follow closely the development of the situation in Crimea in the above mentioned fields of its competence in order to be able to assess the challenges and threats under the growing militarization of the peninsula. Freedom of expression, protection of cultural heritage and equal access to education of residents of Crimea should be in the focus of the Organization, so that appropriate actions could be taken, if needed.

### **PROPOSED DECISION**

5. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

*Mindful* of the fundamental principles of UNESCO contained in the preamble to its Constitution and all relevant human rights instruments,

*Reaffirming* UNESCO's essential role in ensuring education for all, in protecting the cultural, historical and natural heritage of humanity, and in facilitating the free flow of ideas,

*Recalling* United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/68/262, adopted on 27 March 2014,

1. *Takes note* of the information presented by Ukraine with regard to the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine) in the main fields of UNESCO competence;
2. *Expresses deep concern* that the growing presence of Russian military forces poses serious threats to equal access to education and freedom of expression for the residents of Crimea, and places Crimea's cultural heritage in danger,
3. *Invites* the Director General to follow-up on the situation in Crimea in the fields of UNESCO's competence and report back on the latest developments to the Executive Board during its 195<sup>th</sup> session.