PROTECTING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF MALI
“Protecting culture means protecting people, giving them the strength and confidence to rebuild and to look into the future.”

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO
(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

PROTECTING AND RESPECTING
THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF MALI

This mission is part of the mandate of MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali), created in April 2013 by the United Nations Security Council (Resolution 2100)

Cultural heritage includes:
• sites
• objects
• living heritage (cultural practices and events that belong to local communities)

Cultural heritage must be protected in the same way that you would protect hospitals and civilians.

Military, police and civil personnel of MINUSMA
Help Mali to protect its cultural heritage

By protecting Mali’s cultural heritage in its entirety, in its entirety, you are contributing to the safeguarding of the identity and traditions of the population and of future generations.
Respecting Mali’s cultural heritage is also to respect the cultural practices and events of the local people.

Cultural heritage is protected by national and international law.

ATTACK, DESTRUCTION, THEFT, LOOTING OR TRAFFICKING:
ANYONE WHO DOES NOT RESPECT CULTURAL HERITAGE CAN BE PROSECUTED AND PUNISHED FOR HIS ACTIONS.
Over the course of this difficult period for Mali, cultural sites, objects and practices have been especially at risk.

Cultural sites deliberately attacked and destroyed
• 14 mausoleums destroyed in Timbuktu...

Cultural objects looted and stolen
• More than 4,000 manuscripts from Timbuktu burned or stolen...

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF MALI’S CULTURAL HERITAGE?

PART OF MALI’S CULTURAL HERITAGE CUT OFF

CULTURAL PRACTICES WEAKENED

IN THIS CRISIS SITUATION, BE PARTICULARLY ATTENTIVE: THERE IS A REAL RISK THAT OBJECTS WILL BE ILLEGALLY SOLD IN MALI OR BEYOND ITS BORDERS.

Living heritage (cultural practices and events) harshly affected
• ceremonies linked to the restoration of mosques and mausoleums and other earthen monuments suspended
• practice of musical instruments forbidden
• inter-community meetings aimed at reconciliation and peace cancelled …
1 IDENTIFICATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

What is a cultural site?

It could be:
- a religious building (mosque, mausoleum, church…)
- a cemetery
- anthropogenic buttes or mounds (archaeological sites…)
- a museum
- a library/archives
- a monument
- sacred or forbidden places and sites

Certain cultural sites in Mali are particularly important for heritage and are included on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, a register of cultural property having exceptional universal value. These sites are:
- Old Towns of Djenné
- Cliff of Bandiagara (Land of the Dogons)
- Timbuktu
- Tomb of Askia

These last two sites were placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2012.
Many more sites are also important for Mali’s cultural heritage, some of which are located in the region where your mission will take you. For example, you might encounter:

- the historic city of Es-Souk and rock carvings in the Kidal region
- the archaeological site of the Kankou Moussa Mosque in Gao
- the archaeological site of Djenné-Djeno
- the archaeological site of Gao-Saney near Gao

Your experience and competence as military, police and civil personnel of MINUSMA can be very helpful to the protection of these cultural sites. You must consider archaeological sites, monuments and museums as sensitive zones which may attract greed and affect individuals and their identity.
How do you recognise a cultural site?

Pay attention to the clues indicating the presence of a cultural site: fences, signs, commemorative plaques, emblems, etc. However, some sites might not have such indications.

Qu’est-ce qu’un objet culturel?

What is a cultural object?

It could be:
- a manuscript
- a statue
- furniture
- jewellery
- clothing or fabric
- a musical instrument
- basketwork
- pottery...

ATTENTION: CULTURAL OBJECTS CAN BE VERY IMPORTANT AND PRECIOUS EVEN IF IN POOR CONDITION OR WITH AN INSIGNIFICANT APPEARANCE.
What is living heritage?

It could be:
- a traditional ceremony or ritual (religious or otherwise)
- an artistic event (song, dance…)
- know-how related to a particular craft connected to a community

RESPECTING CULTURAL SITES

As cultural sites comprise important elements of Mali’s heritage, your role is to respect them and ensure that they are respected.

For the safeguarding of cultural sites, it is forbidden for anyone to:
- deface the site (making drawings, graffiti, leaving trash…)
- move or take away elements from the place (objects, stones, etc.)
- dig or make excavations

During your mission, you absolutely must not:
- settle on a site
- use a site within the scope of a military operation (for example as an observation post)
- use a site within the scope of a police operation, for instance as a check point
Cultural property and discovered objects are the property of the Malian government. Therefore, in all matters related to Mali’s cultural heritage, it is important to co-operate with the local authorities.

It is illegal to:
- search for or dig for objects at cultural sites
- buy, sell, exchange or export stolen or looted cultural objects
- collect and export cultural objects without the permission of Malian authorities

Under Malian law, only the Malian authorities can:
- authorise archaeological excavation
- regulate the prospecting, marketing and export of cultural property

Malian law (Decree no. 299/PG RM of 19 September 1986) premises exportation of cultural goods upon authorisation from the National Museum of Mali. You must go to the museum with the object(s) which you have purchased to obtain this authorisation. It is granted after an expert concludes that the object does not have importance for the heritage of the nation. New objects without any air of age are excluded from this application for authorisation.

Warning: The exportation of archaeological objects is forbidden. Therefore, don’t buy them.

HELP TO PROTECT MALIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE WHEN BUYING OBJECTS, FOR INSTANCE AS SOUVENIRS. IF YOU HAVE A DOUBT ABOUT THE ORIGIN, DO NOT BUY.

1. Seated feminine figure, Jomogoni, wood © National Museum of Mali
3. Ram, terra cotta, Natamatao archaeological site © National Museum of Mali
POLICE FORCES

Inspection operations can be very important for discovering illicit trafficking activities.

Even during routine operations, your competence as police forces may be essential in the fight against this trafficking.

For example, during inspections of:

- **sites and monuments**
  Pay attention to people exhibiting unusual or inappropriate behaviour, especially if they do not have permission to be at the site.

- **shops or warehouses**
  Pay attention to contents in storage, even in boxes. Sometimes, stolen objects stay in the same location for a long time, until they find a buyer.

- **private homes**
  Even if you are there for a different reason, do not forget to be alert to the presence of cultural objects. These objects may be illegally stored and detained.

- **vehicles or individuals**
  Here, you might find cultural objects that have been transported from one place to another.

For example, during inspections of vehicles, to detect trafficking of cultural property, pay attention to the behaviour of people:

Any suspicious conduct might reveal an attempt to hide stolen property or downplay the property’s importance.

IN ANY CASE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE OFFICIAL EXPERTS, THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE, AND THE MALIAN POLICE.

4 RESPECTING LIVING HERITAGE

Living heritage is an important element of Mali’s cultural heritage.

ATTENTION: SOME CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS AND SOME COMMUNITY PLACES REQUIRE CERTAIN CONDUCT THAT MIGHT NOT BE THE SAME THAT IS REQUIRED WHERE YOU COME FROM.

- Don’t hesitate to ask the local people for information about cultural practices and events in order to ensure proper respect.
- Ask for permission before photographing people, touching objects or entering into sacred places.
- With the goal of respecting local cultural practices, it is highly recommended to:
  - **Not photograph cultural** practices or events without the people’s permission
  - **Not take part in an event** or a practice if you are not authorised
  - **Not enter sacred places**
THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Cultural heritage is protected by:

- Decree 275 of 1985 on the regulation of archaeological excavations
- Law 86-61 AN-RM of 1986 on the profession of trading in cultural property
- 1970 Convention for the Fight against the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property
- 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
- 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

FAILING TO COMPLY WITH MALIAN LAW AND INTERNATIONAL LAW CONSTITUTES A CRIME THAT IS PUNISHABLE BY SANCTIONS ESTABLISHED BY LAW. BY HELPING TO PROTECT MALI’S CULTURAL HERITAGE, YOU ARE PROTECTING A PART OF HUMANITY’S HERITAGE.

HAVE YOU WITNESSED LOOTING, THEFT, DAMAGING, DEPIPING, TRAFFICKING, OR ANY OTHER DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR TOWARD CULTURAL PROPERTY?

ARE YOU UNSURE ABOUT WHAT CONDUCT TO ASSUME IN THE SCOPE OF YOUR MISSION?

DO NOT HESITATE TO WARN AND INFORM OR ASK FOR THE ADVICE OF YOUR SUPERIORS SO THAT THEY CAN CONTACT THE LOCAL CULTURAL AUTHORITIES.

HELPING THE PEOPLE OF MALI TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE IS PART OF THE MISSION THAT HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO YOU. FOR THE SUCCESS OF YOUR MISSION AND FOR THE REPUTATION OF YOUR UNIT AND YOUR COUNTRY, YOUR DUTY IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THIS CULTURAL HERITAGE IS NOT SUBJECTED TO ILLEGAL ACTIVITY.
Cooperating with Malian governmental institutions, police forces, customs, and military forces can help ensure the protection of Mali’s cultural heritage.

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This brochure was completed with the support of the Secretariat of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999).