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(U.S. Helsinki Commission)**

**Congressional Briefing  
Ukrainian Culture in Wartime**  
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Statement of  
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I made my first visit to Ukraine in the late 1980s, and in 1990, when leading a Smithsonian American music and cultural exchange project, I witnessed in Kyiv the spirit and excitement in the freedom movement as Ukraine sought its independence from the Soviet Union. It was, to be sure a heady, if uncertain time, with Ukrainians confidently re-investing in the touchstones of their national identity—in the Ukrainian language, traditional foods, fashion, art, and symbols of its history.

I am an anthropologist with almost five decades of Smithsonian service to America's and the world's cultural heritage, and am not an expert scholar in Ukrainian history, culture, or art. I've not had much professional involvement in matters Ukrainian until recently. That involvement is traced back to the Smithsonian's cultural response to the devastating Haitian earthquake in 2010. Influenced by the fine work of Corine Wegener, a museum curator and former U.S. Army "monuments woman," I, as Smithsonian Under Secretary, started an initiative that has responded to cultural crises caused by conflicts in Mali, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and now Sudan and Ukraine, and by natural disasters across the continental United States, in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, The Bahamas, Nepal and most recently in Maui Hawaii.

In Haiti, more than 200,000 died and its infrastructure was debilitated. But following the lead of our Haitian colleagues we came to realize the importance of culture as a source of strength, identity, and resilience in the face of disaster. Art, sculptures and murals, historical archives and libraries, preserved artifacts, significant buildings and sites—all provided important touchstones that gave people a sense of their collective identity, a resolute pride in the historical accomplishments of their forebears, and most of all, a sense of meaning and purpose. National, regional, even local treasures embodied the cultural DNA of their society, encapsulating the will to survive and the resilience of a people, and providing key elements, themes, values and stories that would drive future creativity and re-building. We at the Smithsonian led a multipronged, multi-organizational, multi-million-dollar effort to save more than 35,000 artworks, archives and artifacts, stabilize and improve numerous cultural facilities, train more than 100 Haitian conservators, and establish a cultural conservation center in Port-au-Prince.

Ihor Poshyvailo, a Ukrainian folklorist was a Fulbright scholar in residence at the Smithsonian who observed this effort and learned from it. As we at the Smithsonian realized, we were likely to see cultural heritage increasingly endangered by conflicts and natural disasters. We, along with the Prince Claus Fund and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), began to train international cultural heritage experts in disaster and conflict response. Poshyvailo became a trainee, and then a trainer and a strong advocate for disaster planning, preparation and response.

## **Monitoring and the damage to Ukraine's cultural heritage**

Visiting the Smithsonian again in 2014, Poshyvailo presented what was happening in Crimea and the Donbas, and during a 2020 visit accentuated his warnings about Russification in occupied territories and the threat to Ukraine's cultural heritage. We listened. In 2021, the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative, led by Wegener, and the Virginia Museum of Natural History formed the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab headed by Hayden Bassett to start looking at Ukraine, as well as other conflict regions in more granular ways. In January 2022, just a month before the Russian invasion, one of our colleagues, Damian Koropecyk, published a paper in the *Small War Journal* documenting how Russian monuments—more than 90 of them, and themed around the 2014 conflict, World War II, the Russian Empire, Stalin, and Russian heroes—were being built in public spaces in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Partisans in these regions were marking public space—territory—as distinctly and presumably in the minds of monument builders, permanently Russian.

The Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab had already begun to build a database of cultural sites in Ukraine, following a procedure we had developed in Syria and Iraq. Supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation, the Smithsonian, along with the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Penn Cultural Center at the University of Pennsylvania Museum identified the location of cultural heritage sites at risk in Syria and Iraq and used satellite imagery to monitor damage and destruction by ISIS over the course of several years. The idea was to monitor damage and destruction, but also explore patterns and discern ISIS' strategy. Now, again the Smithsonian's Katharyn Hanson joined with Bassett, and with colleagues Brian Daniels from the Penn Cultural Center, Jacob Aronson and Deniz Cil from the University of Maryland Center for International Development and Conflict Management to focus on Ukraine. We have identified the location for some 28,710 cultural sites in Ukraine—monuments and memorials, museums, archives, libraries, performing arts centers, cemeteries, places of worship, archaeological sites and significant historical buildings. Poshyvailo reminded us that this was a fraction of the more than 150,000 sites in Ukraine, but they represented the largest and arguably most significant sites.

Now imagine each of those thousands of sites as blue dots on a map of Ukraine. With the Russian invasion in February 2022, we started to monitor those sites via satellites. The Smithsonian uses remote sensing data from a variety of sources, primarily the U.S. government's commercial satellite imagery. Some of our remote sensing data comes from NASA's thermal anomaly data; these satellites use infra-red signals to detect kinetic events—heat signatures, explosions and fires. Imagine those as red dots. Our University of Maryland colleagues created a computer program to

separate out agricultural burns, and then we look for where the red dots—indicating bombing, shelling, missile strikes and the like—overlap with the blue dots. When and where they do, we can then focus on possible damage to cultural sites and view satellite imagery. We examine before and after photographic images to see evidence of damage and destruction; we look for evidence of collateral damage to surrounding buildings and areas, and of course we can see how isolated a site is.

We then seek confirmation through various accounts—legitimate news sources, eyewitness accounts, and onsite documentary reports by our colleagues in Ukraine.

Days after the Russian invasion, Poshyvailo, who had become the director of the Maidan Museum in Kyiv and his colleague, Vasyl Rozhko, head of the Tustan State Historical and Cultural Reserve near Lviv and former head of the museum division of the Ministry of Culture, co-founded the Ukrainian Heritage Emergency Response Initiative (HERI). The mission was to organize civil society cultural workers to help cultural institutions stave off and respond to damage, and to document its impacts. HERI has grown to a network of 25 Ukrainian institutions and collaborative partnerships with the Smithsonian, ICCROM, UNESCO, Cultural Emergency Response (CER, grown out of the Prince Claus Fund) and other international cultural organizations. Early on, Poshyvailo and his HERI team visited scores of cultural sites, documenting damage and providing immediate aid.

Given the need to do more formal and systematic onsite documentation, HERI spun off the Heritage Monitoring Lab (HeMo), led by Rozhko. HeMo had a core team of about 30, and has now expanded to a network of more than 100 experts and nine institutions. To date, HeMo teams have visited some 850 cultural sites and facilities to methodically document damage to internationally accepted standards including the use in some cases of laser scanning and photogrammetry. They have stabilized buildings, and where they can, salvage art, artifacts, written records and related items. HeMo also works to document Russian looting of museums and has developed a database for some 2,000 museums using among other sources information compiled by the Smithsonian and its Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab.

To date, the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab has documented possible damage and destruction at 2,122 cultural sites, with confirmation for more than 450. Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative researchers with colleagues at the UPenn Cultural Heritage Center and University of Maryland, along with Ukrainian colleagues compose detailed site reports posted online at the Smithsonian's digital archival repository. I offer for the record attached to this statement our latest summary "Potential Damage to Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Sites Report Coverage: 24 February 2022 to 30 April 2024."

We categorize each cultural site and then record the number of cases for that category. Currently we have 950 cases of damage to memorials and monuments—45% of the total. Places of worship—including cemeteries constitute 633 cases or 30%. Museums, libraries and archives follow with collectively 331 cases or 16%, heritage buildings at 102 cases and 5%, and archaeological sites at 20 cases or 1%. There are 13 cases of damage to performing arts centers constituting less than 1%. But in that number are devastating attacks, such as the bombing of the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre in Mariupol in March 2022 that not only destroyed

the facility but killed hundreds of people taking shelter therein—including many children—to the horror of many across the planet.

The highest number of potentially damaged sites is as one might expect in the Mariupol, Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, but mapping the cultural sites reveals just about every region of Ukraine has suffered some damage or destruction. Our researchers have also analyzed the data to discern patterns. For example, we examined building damage in Donetsk. In a database of 61,543 buildings the research team found that cultural buildings had more than a 20% chance of being damaged compared to a 13-14% chance for any other civilian building—including hospitals. This leads us to believe with some confidence that cultural buildings were deliberately targeted in the region's cities.

Of the more than two thousand cases recorded across Ukraine, all are significant but a few cases of destruction early in the invasion were especially poignant for me. One was the Ivankiv Local History Museum which contained a collection of iconic paintings of Ukrainian and world-renowned folk artist Maria Pymachenko. Ivankiv was along the route of that long Russian army column heading toward Kyiv at the outset of the war. It burned to the ground just days after the invasion. From the satellite imagery a week before the invasion, one can see the snow-covered roof and surrounds. After the invasion and burning, the satellite imagery allows one to peer into the museum itself and see its walls, as the roof is gone. Significantly, there is no evidence of damage to nearby and surrounding buildings—prompting one to ask—was the museum targeted?

Another example came a few weeks later with the severe damage inflicted on the Chernihiv Children's Library. The library was in a historic building—one of Ukraine's first museums known as the Tarnovskyi. A classic neo-Gothic style building, the museum was opened in 1902 and originally held important collections of Ukrainian antiquities and history. It had survived previous wars and had been converted into a library for youth. Onsite documentation indicated a compromised, collapsed and failing structure with books and shelves strewn about.

Certainly, one of the more egregious cases was that of the Hryhoriy Skovoroda Literary and Memorial Museum. Skovoroda was an iconic figure of the 18<sup>th</sup> century—a philosopher, poet, composer, linguist and teacher regarded as one of the exemplars of Ukrainian culture. He travelled extensively and died in a small village currently known as Skovorodynivka near Kharkiv and close to the Russian border. In early May 2022, we at the Smithsonian were asked by the Ukrainian Minister of Culture and Information Policy to see if we could use satellite imagery to determine whether information drifting in from the war front was true—that the museum had been shelled and destroyed. The museum was housed in an isolated historical building on the estate where Skovoroda had died. We tried for several days to garner satellite imagery, but cloud cover made that impossible. Photographic images started to come in at the same time the cloud cover dissipated—indeed the building was destroyed. But a statue of Skovoroda amazingly survived and was saved.

An art and history museum, a children library, a philosopher's memorial—what possible strategic value were these targets? We know of no evidence indicating the use of these buildings as stationing Ukrainian troops or being used as military defenses or fortifications.

## **So, the question is why?**

Russian leader Vladimir Putin has wrongly made culture both a justification and an object of war with Ukraine.

Putin claims that Ukrainians lack the history, culture and identity worthy of a national state separate from Russia. In his revealing 2021 essay “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” Putin argued that Russians and Ukrainians are “one people,” sharing a common Slavic background, a common source language—Old Russian, a common motherland, and a common Eastern Orthodox religion. His basis for legitimate statehood is the millennia-old ancient Rus ethno-polity that shared these characteristics and covered a vast territory. He designates Ukraine by its anachronistic and now disparaging term, Malorussia, “little” or “lesser” Russia and by Novorossiia, or “new” Russia that included the territories like Crimea Tatar state conquered by the czarist empire in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Putin selectively draws upon a mythologized ancient past, periods of the czarist Russian Empire and the Soviet era to make his case that Russians and Ukrainians are one people in spirit, heart, kinship and history, conveniently denying crucial cultural realities. He writes and speaks little of the Ukrainian language, the country’s art and its history, the centrality of Kyiv as the seat of the ancient Rus state, the 19th-century flowering of Ukrainian culture and nationalism, the post-World War I Ukrainian republic, the Ukrainian independence movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s and its reaffirming Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Euromaidan Revolution in 2013-2014—all of which represent an undeniable Ukrainian identity that is centuries in the making. He also leaves out Ukraine’s cultural complexity ignoring the amalgam of its diverse ethnic and religious strains—not only ethnic Russians and adherents to Eastern Orthodoxy, but also Cossacks, Turkic Crimean Tatars, Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Romanians, Germans, Poles, and Italians and inhabitants of Jewish, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant faiths. Basically, Putin sees Ukraine’s Russian identity historically denigrated by outside forces motivated to keep Russia weak. Among those forces he asserts are the Poles and Lithuanians, the Austro-Hungarians and the Germans, Catholics and Latinizers, misguided Soviets, Ukrainian elites, and the West, including the United States. Modern Ukraine, he declares is fratricidal, built on hate of Russia. Thus, in his view, Russian advances, annexations and invasions are defensive—a way of maintaining a people and motherland others are trying to rip apart.

In 2014, Putin pursued his program by supporting ethnic Russian separatists in the Donbas forcibly taking the Crimean Peninsula a region with a complex ethnic history and one of displacement under the Soviet Union. Then in 2022 he launched a full-scale war to take over the whole country.

The attacks on cultural heritage sites are not just random, nor do they represent collateral damage. Rather, they suggest a targeted attack on Ukrainian history, culture and identity, a means toward Putin’s ends—the destruction seems to be a deliberate attempt to obliterate the physical evidence of Ukrainian history and culture. His forces apparently figure they can simply bomb away the country’s cultural heritage as a means of erasing Ukrainian identity.

That strategy has its ironies. There has been of course a long and rich inter-mixture of Russian and Ukrainian history, commonalities and interchanges that go back centuries. Collections in

Ukrainian museums include paintings by artists who identified as Russian as well as Ukrainian. Early on in the invasion, as the Kharkiv Art Museum was being shelled, curators noted that among other treasures they were saving were Russian paintings endangered by Russian bombs.

But it is not only destruction being visited on Ukrainian cultural sites and institutions. There's also looting and thievery. Recall Putin's declaration of the Russian annexation of Kherson oblast at the end of September 2022. Just about a month later, Russian crews arrived at the Kherson Regional Art Museum with two large trucks and a van and removed thousands of items from the museum's collection. We have satellite imagery showing the trucks at the museum, and onsite photographs captured the removal and loading of artifacts and artworks—corroborating staff accounts. The trucks then departed for a museum in Crimea. In Putin's view he was perhaps taking what he declared to be his, but given the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property—both of which Russia, Ukraine, the U.S. and most nations have ratified, the destruction and the looting of cultural heritage provide evidence for running afoul of international law.

It is not the Smithsonian's job nor in its purview to decide or adjudicate claims of cultural war crimes. That is for other U.S. and international bodies to determine. But our monitoring and documentation and that of our Ukrainian colleagues can be used in an evidentiary way in such investigations and determinations.

### **Responding to the threat, damage and destruction**

At the onset of the Russian invasion, many thought that Kyiv could fall within a matter of days and that there might be a need to immediately evacuate Ukraine's most prized national collections. Evacuation is something that many countries have considered in wartime—as indeed did the United States during World War II, with the Library of Congress sending the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution to Fort Knox in Kentucky, and the Smithsonian sending significant collections to a National Park Service facility in Luray, Virginia. In this case such evacuation out of the country was not seriously considered—as Ukrainian forces courageously held off and repelled the Russian advance.

With the onset of the Russian invasion Ukrainian cultural officials, leaders and workers started to do what they could to protect facilities and collections. Statues were sandbagged, buildings boarded up, paintings and rare volumes packed up. We at the Smithsonian were immediately in touch with Poshyvailo, and through the HERI network received calls from Ukrainian colleagues requesting immediate assistance—they needed plywood and other materials to protect buildings and facilities as well as packing materials, boxes, bubble wrap and crates to carefully remove and store important art works, historical artifacts, archives and scientific specimens.

Within days of the start of the invasion, the international cultural heritage community came together to support Ukrainian colleagues. The Smithsonian stepped forward as did many in the international community—particularly the ALIPH Foundation, which organized large scale purchases and extensive shipments of supplies and materials and committed millions of dollars to improving facilities for the storage and preservation of collections. Large credit is due to ALIPH's

scientific director at the time—Maja Kominko and to Polish organizations which stepped forward quickly gathering and transporting needed materials to Ukraine. As of today, ALIPH has supported the preservation efforts of nearly 400 Ukrainian organizations. The Smithsonian used its federal funds and grants from Bank of America, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Omidyar Foundation to purchase materials and supplies, and has worked with CER and the Kościuszko Foundation and its partner, the Folkowisko Foundation to get them into Ukraine and distributed by HERI and others. Many other museums and cultural institutions in Europe also mobilized and helped. The effort had its challenges. Many organizations lost power and needed portable generators. Given the bombing and shelling of cultural facilities, fire extinguishers were a big need at the outset—and at one point I thought our various groups trying to organize aid exhausted the supply in Europe.

The fact that people in the international cultural community were able to come together and get aid, resources and supplies together and to those in need so quickly was incredible. But the real heroes and heroines were of course the Ukrainians who had to take care of their families while at the same time risking their lives to protect the treasures of Ukraine's history, art and national identity. Imagine the effort and time it takes to say board up your house and pack up the scores or hundreds of keepsakes in your home so as to protect and evacuate them. Now imagine doing it for thousands or tens of thousands of items—priceless and irreplaceable artworks, books, archival records, historical artifacts and other national treasures, and doing it in just days or hours. That was what directors, curators, librarians, archivists, conservators and others faced in Ukraine. And thanks in good part to the efforts of Poshyvailo and his HERI team—which has managed to deliver some 274 tons of supplies and materials to 420 museums and cultural institutions—they did an amazing job.

One of the Smithsonian's major partners in the effort to protect Ukraine's cultural heritage is the National Research and Restoration Center (NCR) headed by Svitlana Strelnikova. The organization is under the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy and is staffed by some one hundred conservators who are responsible for the national collections. They are headquartered in Kyiv and have branch operations in other major cities. They needed supplies and equipment to take care of millions of items in museums spread across Ukraine. But they had a problem. Many of those collections in sites of heavy battle and bombardment were quickly packed and sent into storage in disparate, safer areas around the country. The Center's vehicles were needed for civil defense purposes. So how to arrange for conservators to visit and care for those now dispersed collections without transportation?

We tried finding vans at U.S. embassies and consulates in Europe that could be devoted to moving conservators around the country to take care of the collections, but to no avail. We looked at getting vehicles donated, buying used vans, even ordering new ones. Basically, vehicles from around Europe were being used to help the war effort and the ferrying of displaced persons from the hot zones to regions and countries of refuge. Then, I got a lead from the State Department. They put me in touch with Uber, which was providing vehicles to move refugees. An empathetic Matt Devlin at Uber arranged to help on the culture front and provide 8-person, 10-person, and larger passenger vans to shuttle conservators, their equipment and supplies around the country to check on collections stored in villages, churches, basements and other non-conventional spaces. To date, Uber has provided almost a thousand free trips, traversing tens of thousands of miles. Conservators have visited more than 360 cultural sites and museums, inventorying collections, doing condition

reports, stabilizing collections and caring for the treasures of Ukrainian art and history. More than 2,600 objects have been treated for damaged and restored—among them Prymachenko paintings, a monument to Taras Shevchenko, graffiti and murals by British artist Banksy, the Italian artist TVboy, and the French artist Christian Gemi. The NCRR helped conservators at the Odesa National Art Museum prepare almost 200 works of art for evacuation. Smithsonian conservators at the Lunder Center also advised on that effort.

And these trips and the work accomplished are not for the faint of heart. When Ukrainian forces would take back Russian controlled territory, the conservators would go in pretty quickly and pass bombed-out tanks and destroyed buildings to get to collections and enable their preservation. These conservators—women and men—are in the thick of the war and are serving their country.

Toward the end of 2022, with Ukraine forces fending off and repelling the Russian advance, the situation stabilized a bit. Supply needs shifted. As collections were stored in unconventional places, like underground in damp basements and in village storehouses, there was a need for de-humidifiers to prevent mold and actions to prevent insect infestation. Facing winter, Ukrainian conservators sought advice from Smithsonian and international conservators. How best to store and preserve manuscripts when a building is bereft of electricity and heating or any climate control? Concerns shifted from short term packing and storage of collections to more long-term sustainable stabilization.

From the onset of the invasion, the Smithsonian joined with international partners such as UNESCO and ICCROM to hold training sessions for Ukrainian conservators and museum directors on protecting and preserving collections endangered by the war and perilous conditions. Conservators from the Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Libraries and Archives and others participated in sessions with hundreds of Ukrainian participants. In the early stages of the war, communication with Ukrainian colleagues was by email, telephone and Zoom sessions. This has continued. But as the situation stabilized and Covid dangers also subsided, training sessions, meetings and conferences have also proceeded in person. Ukrainian partners have joined various meetings in Europe. The UPenn Cultural Center held in-person meetings with HeMo's forensic documentation teams in Philadelphia.

The scope of cultural heritage protection work has also broadened.

In 2023 the Smithsonian, which with the U.S. Army trains "monuments men and women," hosted six officers from the Ukrainian defense forces alongside U.S. and other NATO military officers to learn how to comply with the requirements of the Hague Convention and other international treaties concerning the treatment of cultural heritage in conflict situations. This includes understanding and documenting cultural heritage looting, damage and destruction as possible war crimes. The Ukrainian team spent time training at the Smithsonian in Washington and then at Fort Liberty in North Carolina before returning to Ukraine—where, we understand, the Ministry of Defence has indeed established a unit to undertake this work.



## **What has the Smithsonian done about increasing public awareness about Ukrainian cultural heritage in wartime?**

The Smithsonian has had a number of exhibitions that showcase Ukrainian history and culture. The National Museum of American History produced a fascinating exhibition of Ukrainian currency and coinage that illustrates the continuity of symbols of national identity over the centuries.

Soon after the invasion, the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum placed on exhibit a collection of Ukrainian stamps from 1918-1920 when Ukraine was an independent state. With the cooperation of the head of Ukraine's Postal Service Igor Smelyansky, the museum also acquired stamps and first day covers issued during the war. Ukrainians have creatively issued stamp art to inspire morale at home and attention abroad. One of the museum's acquisitions includes First Day covers signed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and First Lady Olena Zelenska commemorating how early in the war Snake Island border guards bravely confronted a Russian battleship by depicting one with a raised middle finger.

In 2023, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival included a concert by Ukrainian Village Voices an ensemble from New York City. Several groups from Ukraine: Bozhychi, Katya Chilly, Mariya Kvitka, and Shchuka Ryba journeyed to Washington to give a special July 4<sup>th</sup> Independence Day concert entitled "De Libertate: Songs of Freedom and Hope" on the National Mall. Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States Oksana Markarova introduced the program. In an especially poignant moment, soldier Taras Kompanichenko, a singer and bandura player, joined the performance by video from the front line of the war.

The Smithsonian has also produced podcasts and webinars, participated in conferences, and otherwise cooperated with various media features—whether on the PBS News Hour or stories by network news or newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* or *USA Today*, to provide information about the effort to protect and preserve Ukrainian cultural heritage. I had the honor during U.N. General Assembly week in September 2022 of joining Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenska and Ambassador Markarova at the Ukrainian Museum in New York, hosted by its director and today's fellow panelist Peter Doroshenko, to discuss work and findings presented at today's briefing.

With the cooperation of the State Department, the Smithsonian also hosted several Ukrainian Fulbright scholars. One of these worked with the Cultural Rescue Initiative and helped its research team with satellite imagery assessments and analyses.

Additionally, the Smithsonian has continued to work with the State Department-led interagency Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee on the preservation and protection of Ukrainian heritage in light of the *Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act* passed by Congress and signed by the President in 2016. We also work with other U.S. agencies on the monitoring and protection of Ukrainian scientific documentation and collections and are actively involved with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science through the Smithsonian Science Education Center to provide curriculum materials—in Ukrainian—for student's instruction.

Of course the Smithsonian's efforts are only one part of the picture. Numerous organizations in the United States, in Europe and around the world and online have been doing their part to inform the public and policy makers about the war's impact on Ukrainian cultural heritage. This has been done through conferences, webinars, podcasts, exhibitions, written articles, television programs and documentary features—and here today for the U.S. Helsinki Commission. Most importantly, it has been Ukrainians themselves in the forefront, driving the effort, who have the expertise and experience and who have exhibited the professionalism and courage to do the work on the ground and tell the story. Poshyvailo, Rozhko and their teams have mounted physical and virtual exhibitions in Ukraine and internationally and held conferences to examine the status of cultural heritage in wartime working closely with UNESCO, World Monuments Fund, Smithsonian, Cultural Emergency Response, ALIPH, Blue Shield and numerous other organizations. Photo-journalists, documentarians and filmmakers have highlighted the war's impact on Ukrainian culture in works such as *Erase the Nation* and *Culture vs. War*, and the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra's performances and tours to the Metropolitan Opera in New York and the Kennedy Center in Washington have done much to appraise the public of how Ukrainians are fighting for their identity and freedom. And here in Washington, Ambassador Markarova and her staff have been remarkable in representing the situation in a clear, rational, and evidentiary way, accompanied by the passion it deserves and the sense of humanity it invokes.

### **In the aftermath-**

At some point the war will end and Ukraine will face a massive rebuilding effort. Obviously major international funding will be needed for the power grid, roads, bridges, rail lines, housing, hospitals and schools. Rebuilding the cultural infrastructure will also be part of that. Cultural heritage can play an important role in post-conflict recovery in the rebuilding of civic life and contributing to the cultural and creative economy. Doing that needs planning and support, and I expect that we and others will continue to help our Ukrainian colleagues in that immense task which is likely to persist for a very long time.

A major part of that effort means continuing to protect and preserve Ukrainian cultural facilities and collections now. They are still daily threatened and endangered, both by bombs and shells, but also lack of climate control, mold, pests, and insufficient care and resources. To effectively do their work, our Ukrainian partners need to document and care for cultural resources now—because once lost, valued art, important artifacts, crucial archives cannot be replaced. Numerous documentation, preservation, conservation, digitization and 3D scanning projects are underway. But they all require equipment and personnel, logistic and financial support.

And it is not only things that need support. People—artists, musicians, culture bearers, those in the building arts, scholars, curators, archivists and others—the keepers of the living culture will also need help in restoring their lives, making their way, and contributing mightily to a vibrant and flourishing Ukrainian future. Contemporary civic life and booming economies are built upon cultural industries—food, fashion, tourism, performances, festivities, museums, media, digital productions and the like. If a post-war Ukraine is to prosper it will be important to plan for and encourage the creative use of its cultural heritage. Indeed, that heritage has been an object of war; that heritage has been targeted and damaged; and that heritage—embodying their identity and the

basic freedom to embrace it is precisely what Ukrainians have fought for and defended—and is indeed an undeniable, invaluable, and crucial resource for the country’s future.

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Richard Kurin began his Smithsonian career working on America’s Bicentennial celebration in 1976. He is currently the Smithsonian’s Distinguished Scholar and Ambassador-at-Large, focused on special initiatives and institutional representation. He previously served for more than a decade as Under Secretary overseeing all of the Smithsonian’s national museums, scientific research centers and educational programs. Prior to that, he was the Director of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage for twenty years, producing major cultural and educational programs including the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival and national celebration events for the openings of national museums and memorials. He worked with UNESCO to develop the 2003 Convention on safeguarding living cultural heritage that has been ratified by 180 countries. He founded the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative after Haiti’s 2010 earthquake and has worked to save cultural heritage endangered by natural disasters in Nepal, Puerto Rico, Texas and Maui, and by human conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Mali, Afghanistan and currently Ukraine and Sudan. He has served as Smithsonian liaison to the White House Historical Association and the U.S. President’s Committee for the Arts and Humanities, and as a member of the U.S. Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee, the Federal Interagency Panel for World Heritage, and the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. An anthropologist with a PhD from the University of Chicago, Kurin has taught at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, authored six books, is an elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council Arsht-Rockefeller Resilience Center.