

THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCY FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE (UNESCO) AND ITS ROLE IN THE PRESERVATION OF SERBIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstract: The issue of culture, especially cultural heritage, is important for every person, every nation, and every country. Culture is also important for humanity in general. An important segment of culture and cultural heritage are specialized international governmental and non-governmental organizations and the United Nations Agency for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), which is aimed at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences, and culture. The promotion of peace, which is one of the key goals of this organization, also includes the achievement of sustainable development and human rights by facilitating cooperation and dialogue between nations. This goal should be achieved through the development of education, natural, social and humanistic sciences, and the spread of culture and communication. In contemporary international relations and cultural diplomacy, in particular, UNESCO is one of the leaders in the protection of various cultural values of peoples and countries, especially their tangible and intangible heritage and cultural diversity.

As a focal point for world culture and science, UNESCO gathers almost all members of the United Nations, but also representatives of associates – internationally unrecognized territories. In the discussion that follows,

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the role of UNESCO in the protection of Serbian cultural heritage will be analyzed.

Keywords: UNESCO, Serbia, Kosovo and Metohija, culture, cultural heritage, cultural policy, diplomacy, international relations.

INTRODUCTION

The matter of culture, art, and particularly of cultural heritage is essential for an individual, yet equally so for a nation or a country. Culture, alongside art and heritage, bears universal significance for humankind. International organizations make up an important segment of culture, art, and heritage (Archer, 2011; Dimitrijević & Račić, 2011). Within them, there can be specialized agencies. These agencies can be involved in specialized activities according to their authority or various international activities, like international monitoring and projects of collaboration with a member state. Some international organizations among the specialized agencies are authorized for the preservation and protection of culture, specifically, a nation's material and non-material cultural heritage. One of the mentioned international organizations is the United Nations, which plays a key role in current international relations, especially in cultural exchange and diplomacy (United Nations, 2022a). By analogy, a specialized agency of utter importance within the United Nations is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022a). UNESCO is headed by cultural diplomats, that is, diplomats working in cultural diplomacy as a form of soft power – as opposed to influence (Bound et al., 2007). As professor Nye said, “Soft power is not the same as influence” (Nye, 2005, p. 4; Melissen, 2005). Therefore, acting in the field of culture and using soft power, diplomats help issue far-reaching decisions both in the United Nations and in its specialized agency, UNESCO. Put differently, cultural diplomacy, as a form of soft power, is run by cultural diplomats who focus on the appeal of culture and art in their work (Nye, *Ibid.*, p. 6). Let us keep in mind that cultural diplomacy is an integral part of public diplomacy and, as such, vital to every internationally recognized country that is a member of the United Nations. Official representatives on the property of ambassadors of UNESCO member states and their co-workers are working on culture and cultural heritage – in our case, the cultural heritage of Serbia. Serbian cultural heritage is most prominent in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. Besides its very existence, its recognition is equally important (Rogač, Mijatović, 2014, pp. 178, etc.). This is all the more because of the permanent value of the cultural

heritage of Kosovo and Metohija, which was the same in the past as it is today, and will remain so in the future. The way that cultural heritage is perceived and recognized influences attitudes, positions, and valorization. The cooperation of state officials and cultural workers with UNESCO officials is realized in the fields of 1) education, science, information and communication, as well as in the field of culture (Jović-Lazić & Nikolić, 2011, pp. 302, 307). According to Ana Jovic-Lazić and Marko Nikolić, UNESCO officials also have an important role in the protection and restoration of the cultural heritage of Kosovo and Metohija (*Ibid.*, p. 310). The best and most efficient ways of achieving one's interests in foreign relations and international politics through international organizations are diplomacy and, where allowed, diplomatic lobbying (Vasić 2015a, p. 36). "Diplomats can be involved in lobbying, (without being *de iure* lobbyists) only in international organizations" (Vasić, 2015b, p. 18). Diplomatic participation in international organizations is legal and legitimate, with all international legal rights as well as all conventional, statutory, regulatory, ethical, and professional rights, as well as corresponding duties and obligations. This is what makes the human and professional qualities of diplomatic representatives in such missions vital for success in international politics, with the right instructions from their foreign ministries, in line with the official policies of corresponding governments or parliaments, according to the representatives' mandate. Nowadays, all diplomats are also actively involved in cultural politics within international relations. A study of international cultural relations is necessary for professional, responsible action in cultural diplomacy. Among the theoreticians of international organizations and international relations, there is no consensus concerning a definition of an international organization (Šobe & Martin, 2014). Depending on the author's theoretical perspective, the concept of an international organization is defined from the standpoint of public international law or international politics. The integral elements of every international organization are: 1) States; 2) International conventions; 3) Forums; 4) Operating field of the members; 5) Special status of international legal subjectivity (authority for signing international conventions, using privileges and immunity), not held by the representatives of a trans-national organization. On the criterion of international relations theory and history, as well as that of culturology, different divisions of international organizations are present. Thus, according to the criteria of membership, organizations are distinguished as universal, regional, or particular, with special interests in action. According to the degree of authorization, organizations can be open (immediate

admission to membership) or closed (only certain countries can be admitted to full membership, provided that their diplomats are invited by representatives of the international organization). International organizations can be permanent or temporary, according to the duration. Finally, according to areas of activity, international organizations are divided into general and specialized for a specific areas of activity in international relations. Diplomacy, economic and cultural diplomacy, in particular, bear special importance in current international relations. We are dealing with the latter. Current cultural diplomacy is distinctive in two ways: a) cultural diplomacy is a means, not an aim; and b) diplomats, cultural diplomats especially, achieve their interests by engagement and influence. Based on these principles, it is necessary to define cultural diplomacy in the context of international organizations and international cultural relations. Cultural diplomacy is the strategic, planned, and concrete implementation of diplomats' influence on the decision-makers in the interest of the envoy-state.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS AS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCT FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

It is a historical and universal fact that the United Nations is not only a political but also a cultural human construct. The United Nations is undeniably an important part of contemporary human heritage. It must also be mentioned that the United Nations is the largest international political organization in the modern world. The title United Nations (UN) was first coined by the 32nd president of the United States of America, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in the United Nations Declaration of January 1, 1942, during the Second World War (United Nations, 2022b). The United Nations Charter was signed on June 26, 1945, by fifty official state representatives in San Francisco, California. (United Nations Charter, 1945). Although Polish officials were not present at the San Francisco Conference, their representative signed the UN Charter later as the fifty-first full member state. The United Nations was officially formed as the largest international political organization at the San Francisco Conference on October 24, 1945, when the official representatives of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of France, the Union of Socialist Soviet States, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America verified the Charter. The Charter is the essential legal act of the United Nations. The seat of the United Nations is in New York. Accordingly, we can conclude that the United Nations is the greatest and most important

international political organization in the modern world. Nevertheless, despite some announcements, diplomatic initiatives, and attempts, there has been no thorough reform of this major international organization yet, nor of the Security Council, with new regular or temporary member states (Dimitrijević, 2009).

THE ROLE OF UNESCO IN CURRENT INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR SERBIA

We have already mentioned that, within the United Nations as a dominant international organization, there exist autonomous special agencies. One of those 15 is the Organization of the United Nations for Education, Science and Culture. In the organizational system of the UN, the above-mentioned specialized agency is eminent not only in the field of culture but also in education and science. The basic legal act of UNESCO is the Statute, signed by the official representatives of 37 countries on November 16, 1945, in London. (UNESCO, 2022b). The UNESCO Statute came into force on November 4, 1946, after the official representatives of 20 countries were registered. The seat of UNESCO, as a specialized agency of the United Nations, is located in Paris (France). The current Ambassador of Serbia to UNESCO is Tamara Rastovac Siamasvili (Rastovac Siamasvili, 2022). The active presence of their ambassadors in UNESCO is very significant for every member state. Their presence provides contacts, information exchange, the reassessment of positions on important matters and also influence on the final decisions on the topics, problems and issues that are on the schedule of their sessions. In this manner, the instructions of the corresponding foreign ministries of UN member states, particularly those represented by an ambassador in UNESCO, are carried out. What is the significance of UNESCO in contemporary international relations? Concisely, it is as follows: international recognition of the culture of a member state; International perception and distinction of cultural heritage as cultural capital and cultural industry; international preservation of the existing cultural heritage and protection of the endangered cultural heritage of a member state. The four most important activities in international organizations, specifically in the United Nations and UNESCO, are efforts towards the admission of one's country into full membership, acquiring an observer status or a joined membership, depending on the policy of the executive officials; performing in international cultural politics according to the diplomatic instructions of one's government through the corresponding foreign affairs ministry; activities and lobbying of ambassadors and cultural

diplomats to bring as many as possible of the material and non-material heritage onto various UNESCO lists; diplomatic engagement on the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the UNESCO officials. It is very significant that Serbia is a full-status member of the specialized agency of the United Nations organization for Education, Science and Culture. This status provides that, apart from diplomats and guests on invitation, state officials may also be present. Thus, at the 40th Session of the General Conference of the United Nations organization for Education, Science and Culture in Paris, at the third Plenary held on November 13, 2019, President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić talked about the Sustainable Development Program by the year 2030. In this speech, he talked about cultural heritage in the context of a nation's identity but also that of humanity. "Cultural heritage benefits national identities, while also belonging to the whole of humanity" (UNESCO, 2019). This is particularly true of the Serbian Mediaeval cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, which is endangered (*Ibid.*, p. 2). At UNESCO's General Conference on November 20, 2019, Serbia became a member of its Executive Board (Executive Board, 2022). As regards this, the membership of a full-status country in the UNESCO Executive Board is limited to four years.

UNESCO AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SERBIA

Like other nations in the world, the Serbs also have their own culture and cultural heritage. The specific contribution of the Serbian people and Serbia to the world's heritage, as a full member of the United Nations, is in the cultural property, of which a minor part is under the protection of UNESCO. By April 30, 2022, there were 1154 cultural properties on the UNESCO world heritage list (UNESCO, 2022c). The cultural heritage of full member states of UNESCO is officially divided into four groups: the List of World Heritage; the List of World Heritage in Danger (UNESCO, 2022d); the Tentative List (UNESCO, 2022e); and the World Heritage List Nominations (UNESCO, 2022f). The cultural heritage of Serbia on the UNESCO World Heritage list includes Stari Ras with Sopoćani Monastery; Studenica Monastery; the Medieval monuments in Kosovo: Visoki Dečani Monastery, the Patriarchate Monastery of Peć, Bogorodica Lijeviška Monastery, and Gračanica Monastery. The medieval monuments in Kosovo have been on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger since July 13, 2006. Cultural heritage can be at risk of destruction or misappropriation. A relevant three case-studies on Louvre, Kosovo, and Palmira, were performed by Danijela Nešić, Renata Samardžić, and Dragan Simeunović.

Visoki Dečani Monastery is the only monastery in Kosovo that is under the protection of KFOR soldiers (the Kosovo Force). In addition, it is important to mention that Kosovo is also under the international protectorate of the United Nations, based on Resolution 1244 of the Security Council, instigated on June 10, 1999, in New York (Republika Srbija i Ujedinjene nacije, 2022; UNESCO, 2022g; Nešić et. al., 2022; NATO, 1999; Security Council, 1999). Apart from the four lists of cultural heritage that are mentioned, there is the Memory of the World Register UNESCO (UNESCO, 2022h). The Memory of the World Register officially recognizes three cultural properties of Serbia: the Miroslav Gospel Manuscript from 1180, which was added in 2005 (Gospel, 2022); the Nicola Tesla Archive, which was added in 2003 (UNESCO, 2022i); and the Telegram of Austria-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia on July 28, 1914, added in 2015 (UNESCO, 2022j). Conclusively, there are nine cultural properties in Serbia on the formerly mentioned UNESCO lists. The entire cultural heritage of Serbia should be put into the function of cultural tourism and international cultural exchange.

CONCLUSIONS

Diplomats and cultural diplomacy make an indispensable contribution to culture, cultural heritage, and cultural diversity in the present-day world. One modern, effective tool is diplomatic lobbying at UNESCO. It can be applied in discussions at the General Conferences, which meet every two years to determine UNESCO's programs of action. Also, lobbying is possible during the election of members of the Executive Board, which manages UNESCO's work and appoints every four years a Director-General, who serves as UNESCO's chief administrator. It would not be of little importance to lobby within the coalition of UN agencies and organizations whose goal is the promotion and implementation of the sustainable development goals of the world organization (the United Nations Sustainable Development Group). Any encouragement of the adoption of important resolutions for our country, such as those concerning the protection of cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija (but also cultural exchange and cultural tourism), should become our priority at UNESCO. Thus, as a reminder, Visoki Dečani Monastery in Kosovo and Metohija is the most valuable part of Serbian cultural heritage that is under the protection of KFOR soldiers (Kosovo forces), but officially also under the protection of UNESCO. Kosovo and Metohija are the Autonomous Province of Serbia, which is under the international protectorate of the United Nations according to Security Council Resolution 1244. This monastery represents part of the cultural and

historical identity of Serbia, something that Serbia is known for in the world. As a result, the international guarantees provided by UNESCO for the preservation and promotion of Serbian cultural heritage cannot be overlooked; rather, they must be firm and recognized by all significant international actors.

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