

## Rules and Principles of the Blue Shield

The 2016 Blue Shield Statutes stipulate there should be rules and principles governing the conduct of national committees (article 3.2 of the Blue Shield 2016 Statutes), and the terms under which Membership of the Blue Shield may be granted, suspended or terminated (articles 3.3, 4.4, 4.5. and 4.6 of the Blue Shield 2016 Statutes). These are laid out here.

A Member of the Blue Shield is defined in the 2016 Statutes as the Founding Organisations (ICOM, ICOMOS, IFLA, and ICA) and all national committees. This term is capitalised to distinguish it from individual members of national committees.

National committees under construction are considered prospective Members and may take part in Blue Shield meetings but may not vote.

### 1. What is the Blue Shield?

#### i. Mission

The Blue Shield is an organisation that is

*committed to the protection of the world's cultural property, and is concerned with the protection of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster."*

(Article 2.1, Blue Shield 2016 Statutes)

We are a non-governmental, non-profit, international organization committed to the protection of heritage across the world. This includes museums, monuments, archaeological sites, archives, libraries and audio-visual material, and natural heritage. We have national committees operating across the world, with more joining all the time. The national committees are coordinated by an international Board – Blue Shield International, which consists of representatives of the four founding organisations (ICOM, ICOMOS, IFLA, and the ICA), four members elected from the national committees, and an elected President. The Blue Shield was formed in 2014 by the merging of the International Committee of the Blue Shield and the Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield.

The Blue Shield network is underpinned by international law – in particular, the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols of 1954 and 1999, which are considered to be part of international humanitarian law (IHL). IHL, also known as the Law of War or Law of Armed Conflict, is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict on people and property. This primary

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context is also informed by a number of other international legal instruments, by the international cultural protection agenda as set by the UN and UNESCO, and by international initiatives regarding environmental disaster such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The key goals of the Blue Shield are laid out in the Blue Shield 2016 Statutes. They are to:

- protect cultural and natural heritage – tangible and intangible – from the effects of conflict and environmental disaster;
- promote the ratification of, respect for, and implementation of, the 1954 Hague Convention and its two Protocols;
- raise awareness of the importance of protecting heritage in emergency situations;
- promote and provide relevant training (to heritage professionals, the armed forces, other emergency responders, and those involved in preventing the illicit trafficking of looted objects);
- promote community engagement with and participation in protecting cultural property (CP);
- encourage co-operation with, and between, other relevant entities involved in emergency situations.

(Article 2, Blue Shield 2016 Statutes)

The Mission, aims, goals and remit of the Blue Shield are set out in detail in the Blue Shield Approach.

## 2. Objectives of a National Committee

Arising from its mission and its goals, the Blue Shield delivers its commitment through national committees and its international Board. National committees must:

### i. Promote the aims and mission of the Blue Shield

All national committees must promote the mission, aims, and goals of the Blue Shield in its country in order to raise national awareness of the threats to cultural heritage, and methods of protection.

### ii. Conduct activities in line with the six key areas of activity

At a national level, Blue Shield's commitment and mission is delivered through six key areas:

1. Proactive protection and risk preparedness;
2. Emergency response;
3. Stabilisation, post-disaster recovery, and long-term/ongoing support activities;
4. Legal compliance, policy, and their implementation;

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5. Capacity building activities, and education and training in support of the Blue Shield's Areas of Activity;
  6. Co-ordination - *of* Blue Shield members and *with* partner organisations.

Additional guidance on types of activities to be carried out by Blue Shield committees under these six key areas of activity are detailed in [Appendix 2](#) of the [Process for Accreditation \(document 1\)](#). National committees should build towards the delivery of these goals through the development of realistic Strategic Plans and short, medium, and long-term targets. Once the committee is accredited, Blue Shield International will provide a Strategic Planning template to assist this process.

### **iii. Conform to the ethics, approach and principles of the Blue Shield**

National committees should aim to conform to the ethical framework and principles outlined here.

### **iv. Conform to national legislation**

Where relevant and/or appropriate, the national committee should conform to national legislation in order to guarantee legal operation within its own country and within the international mission of the Blue Shield. It is not a formal requirement for a committee to be registered under national legislation.

Even if a committee is not registered as a legal entity, it should still draw up statutes detailing its structure, membership and terms of operation, which should be supplied to Blue Shield International for approval.

### **v. Work with Blue Shield International**

National committees will be supported by Blue Shield International to achieve their goals as far as possible and / or needed. In cases where armed conflict affects a national committee and prevents adherence to the goals, activities, and ethical principles of the Blue Shield, then an affected national committee should work with the Blue Shield International Board to attempt to protect cultural property to the best of their combined abilities.

## **3. Ethics, Approach, and Principles**

### **i. Legal Context**

While the primary context of the Blue Shield is the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols (1954, 1999), which relate solely to the protection of tangible property during armed conflict, we also offer support and assistance after conflict when armed forces may still be deployed, and in situations that do not meet the criteria for an official armed conflict, but where heritage destruction may still be occurring. In addition, as many of the organisations involved in reacting to natural and human-made environmental disasters are the same as those involved in armed conflict, the Blue Shield also works to mitigate the impact of such environmental disasters on the cultural and natural heritage.

Given the wide-ranging nature of the work of the Blue Shield, it is informed by: international treaty law; customary international law relating to CPP; customary international humanitarian law (CIHL) relating to the Laws of Armed Conflict (LOAC) more specifically; humanitarian/human rights law;

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UNESCO strategies and declarations; disaster reduction frameworks; and regional legislation (as listed in the Blue Shield Approach and the Blue Shield International website).

However, when the armed forces are deployed to protect cultural heritage in times of armed conflict, international laws are interpreted within the wider principles of LOAC, which includes the concept of military necessity. LOAC requires armed forces to take special care to try and protect cultural heritage in armed conflict, but acknowledges that in some cases its destruction may be necessary.

## **ii. The place of heritage**

The Blue Shield believes that the protection of cultural property is essentially inseparable from the protection of people and their human rights, in particular in the context of international humanitarian law, which pertains exclusively to armed conflict. In this context the lives of active combatants, and of those who are no longer willing or able to fight, are no less paramount than the lives of civilians caught up in conflict zones. It is in this context that the Blue Shield upholds the principles of necessity, proportionality, and humanity, which lie at the heart of IHL.

## **iii. The Strasbourg Charter**

The Blue Shield's commitment to protect cultural property is framed in the context of the ethical principles set out in the 2000 International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) Strasbourg Charter (included at the end of this document). The charter devised the basic principles of the ICBS and its Members and was adopted in Paris on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2001. These tenets have now been adopted by the Blue Shield. The basic principles are:

### **Joint actions**

The Blue Shield seeks to share information and knowledge with international partners from both heritage and non-heritage areas, as well as government bodies, in order to coordinate and mobilise cross-sectorial joint actions that will better protect cultural heritage against natural and human-made disasters and the effects of armed conflict.

Cultural property protection (CPP) in any situation, complex or not, needs close collaboration between the cultural heritage community, international and national governmental organisations; non-governmental organisations (NGOs); Civil Society Organisations (CSOs); heritage organisations; disaster risk reduction teams; humanitarian aid organisations; other relevant authorities and emergency services; local communities and volunteer groups; universities and other research centres; relevant private institutions; and supra-national and national armed forces, fire services, police, and customs (hereafter 'all potential partners').

The complex emergency situations in which the Blue Shield might operate requires close collaboration between the cultural heritage sector, relevant international and national government agencies, armed forces, other uniformed services, and other official voluntary NGOs. To be effective this partnership should be established long before any emergency, complex or otherwise, begins.

If cultural property protection relating to armed conflict, peacekeeping missions, or environmental disaster is to be effective, there should be an effective partnership between the Blue Shield and the

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armed forces. In order for this to happen, everyone involved in cultural property protection, from heritage professionals to national and coalition armed forces, must work together. These parties must educate and train their members for their potential roles in cultural property protection in both armed conflict (where they have particular legal responsibilities) and environmental disaster (when they are called upon frequently to help as first responders following disasters).

### **Independence**

Blue Shield is a self-governed, non-profit, and non-governmental organisation operating independently on all matters of its mission. It provides its own expertise and seeks to work with partners in order to share information and coordinate joint actions.

### **Neutrality**

Blue Shield may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature. It shall maintain autonomy in order to always act according to its principles and mission.

The Blue Shield is a neutral organisation: our mission is the protection of heritage. As such we will try to assist any genuine initiative by any nation state or warring faction to work towards this goal. It is not the place of the Blue Shield to assess the status of the conflict or give a moral determination of its conduct: the Blue Shield respects the principles of international humanitarian law under which we operate, and encourages others to do likewise.

### **Professionalism**

Blue Shield gathers and collaborates with experts from professional bodies and commits its missions and action to them. It ensures that its experts provide the necessary experience and knowledge that is required for preparedness for and response to natural and human-made disasters. Therefore, it aims to train experts and develop their skills to better act before, during, and after disasters.

### **Respect for cultural identity**

Blue Shield respects the cultural identity of all humankind and seeks to protect all cultural heritage without bias.

### **Work on a not-for-profit basis**

Blue Shield and its Members are not seeking profit. Work should be conducted either on a voluntary basis, or on a not-for-profit basis.

## **4. Logo, Strapline and Emblem**

Members of the Blue Shield agree to adopt the Blue Shield logo and organisation strapline – *Protecting Heritage in Crisis* – to represent their national committee. Members agree to abide by the [Logo Guidance and Conditions of Use](#) (Document 5) issued by Blue Shield International.

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The Blue Shield logo is the blue shield cultural property emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention<sup>1</sup>, set within a lighter cerulean blue circle encompassed by a royal blue circle, symbolising both Blue Shield's roots and wider remit.



**The Blue Shield Logo.**

The emblem is a protective symbol used in armed conflict to indicate protected cultural property, designated under the 1954 Hague Convention. Its use is legally restricted under international law, which is given effect under national law. Blue Shield is granted the authority to use the emblem in their logo and other materials by the relevant national government department. National Committees should ensure they are familiar with the national legislation in their country. As the emblem is a protective symbol, the Blue Shield logo may not be trademarked or subject to copyright.

Any reports of misuse of the Blue Shield logo or the cultural property emblem should be forwarded to the Red Cross, who will follow up in line with their procedures for misuse of signs and emblems protected under IHL. You can report misuse of protected emblems on the Red Cross website here: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/emblem##>

As far as possible, the Blue Shield logo should always be used with text indicating which committee it refers to, unless it is impossible to include letters. Exceptions of this type include social media profile pictures, and pin badges.

The Blue Shield logo may not be altered or revised, except to translate the organisation strapline as required.

Members also agree to abide by the guidance issued by Blue Shield International and UNESCO regarding the use of the Blue Shield emblem identified in the 1954 Hague Convention, in conformance to their own national legislation where appropriate. This guidance is available on the Blue Shield International website.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Blue Shield emblem of the Convention, see the document: [The Blue Shield Emblem – Guidance for Use](#) available on the Blue Shield International website, or see the [UNESCO website](#).



## The Strasbourg Charter



International Committee of the Blue Shield

### Charter of the International Committee of the Blue Shield

In order to protect endangered cultural heritage the International Committee of the Blue Shield was created in 1996 by the four non-governmental organisations which represent professionals active in the field of archives, libraries, monuments and sites, and museums.

Within the framework of the Hague Convention (1954) for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, ICA (International Council on Archives), ICOM (International Council of Museums), ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), and IFLA (International Federations of Library Associations and Institutions) have taken up the emblem of the Convention as its symbol.

The four organisations are working together to prepare for and respond to emergency situations in case of armed conflict or natural disaster that could affect cultural heritage.

They respect the following principles<sup>2</sup>:

- Joint actions
- Independence
- Neutrality
- Professionalism
- Respect of cultural identity
- Work on a not-for-profit basis

Adopted in Strasbourg on 14 April 2000.

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<sup>2</sup> Approved by the International Committee of the Blue Shield at its meeting in Paris, 8th June 2001