

# The Blue Shield Emblem: Guidance for Use

## 1. What is it?

The blue shield is a symbol of protection that identifies cultural property to be protected in the event of armed conflict and those responsible for protecting it, defined under international law. The [1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#) describes the emblem and lays down conditions for its use.

More information about the emblem is available on the [website of UNESCO](#).

Please note the distinction between the blue shield emblem, and the Blue Shield logo. The emblem is as described above, but it also forms the centre of the logo of the global network – the Blue Shield organisation, seen in the heading of this document.

## 2. Purpose of the blue shield emblem

The primary purpose of the blue shield emblem is to facilitate the recognition of cultural property in both peacetime and in the event of armed conflict.

This emblem may be used as a visible sign in times of armed conflict of the protection given:

- cultural property under international law (with the exception of cultural properties under special and enhanced protection, which have different emblems);
- the personnel engaged in the protection of cultural property;
- the persons responsible for the duties of control in accordance with the Regulations for the Execution of the Convention;
- the identity cards mentioned in the Regulations for the Execution of the 1954 Hague Convention.

The blue shield emblem can also be presented three times together to identify the following:

- immovable cultural property under special protection;
- the transport of cultural property under the conditions provided for in Articles 12 and 13 of the 1954 Hague Convention;
- improvised refuges, under the conditions provided for in the Regulations for the Execution of the Convention.

The blue shield emblem may also be used to indicate cultural property under enhanced protection. To distinguish it from other uses of the blue shield, cultural property under enhanced protection is indicated by a blue shield with a red border.

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### 3. What does it look like?

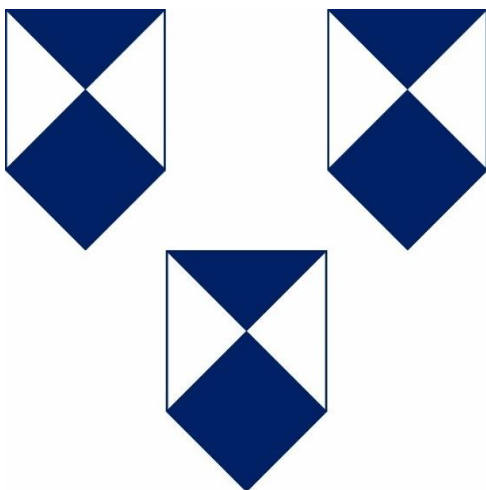
According to the [1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#) (Ch V, Article 16), the blue shield is a “*shield, pointed below, persaltire blue and white (a shield consisting of a royal-blue square, one of the angles of which forms the point of the shield, and of a royal-blue triangle above the square, the space on either side being taken up by a white triangle).*” This indicates cultural property under general protection.

Appendix 1 contains style guidance for the colours of the emblem. However, the 1954 Hague Convention and its emblem are realised through national laws: the authoritative guidance for the design of the blue shield emblem in any particular country will be that country’s national law.

Cultural property of movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, designated for protection under the 1954 Hague Convention.<sup>1</sup>



If the emblem is “*repeated three times in a triangular formation (one shield below),*” this indicates cultural property under special protection.



Centres containing monuments and other immovable cultural property of very great importance designated for special protection under the 1954 Hague Convention.

Cultural property being transported may be placed under Special Protection, and is also indicated by this symbol

The 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention creates an enhanced protection mechanism, which aims to strengthen the protection of limited number of cultural sites in times of armed conflict. Although the Protocol does not require States Parties to mark their cultural sites inscribed on the International List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection with a special

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<sup>1</sup> The 1954 Hague Convention does not directly indicate that the sides of the emblem should be any colour. However, to ensure visibility of the emblem against a white background, the Blue Shield organisation recommends that the emblem follows the structure of the Enhanced Protection Shield, adopted by the [6th Meeting of the Parties to the Second Protocol of 1999 to the Hague Convention](#), which uses blue sides.

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emblem, in order to ensure the recognition and identification of cultural property under enhanced protection, particularly during the conduct of hostilities and to ensure the effectiveness of the provisions of the Second Protocol, the [Guidelines for the Implementation of the 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#) encourages using the distinctive emblem for cultural properties under enhanced protection.



The distinctive emblem takes “*the form of a shield, pointed below, persaltire blue and white (a shield consisting of a royal-blue square, one of the angles of which forms the point of the shield, and a royal-blue triangle above the square, the space on either side being taken up by a white triangle), which is outlined by an external red band that is detached from the Blue Shield.*”

According to the [1999 Second Protocol](#) to the 1954 Hague Convention, cultural property may be placed under enhanced protection provided that it is cultural heritage of the greatest importance for humanity and meets certain conditions. Although not specified in the Protocol, this emblem was agreed on at the [6th Meeting of the Parties to the Second Protocol of 1999 to the Hague Convention](#), who are responsible for the implementation of the Protocol.

Copies of all three of the emblems can be downloaded from the Blue Shield International website. Their use is subject to the guidance in this document. For further information and guidance, please contact UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage/contacts/>

#### 4. Conditions of use

This section is intended to give only a brief overview of the conditions of use, along with some suggested guidance by Blue Shield International.

Excerpts from the [1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#) relating to the emblem for general and as special protection are in Appendix 2. UNESCO has drawn up detailed guidance on *The Distinctive Emblem for cultural property under enhanced protection and modalities for its use*, which is reproduced in Appendix 3. All use of the emblems must comply with the law and the guidance.

The rules for use of the protective emblem in armed conflict are very precise: there should be no additions.

- It must be clearly displayed in a large format on protected buildings, such as museums.
- Emblems on armbands and vests for protected personnel must be clear and stand alone.

A deliberate attack on a person or a building carrying a protective emblem is a war crime under international law if there is no military necessity for the attack. During an armed conflict, the use of the emblem in any other cases than those mentioned above, and the use for any purpose whatever of a sign resembling the distinctive emblem, is forbidden.

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Some national laws allow the use of the emblem in peacetime for purposes such as education and awareness raising. In keeping with these laws, Blue Shield International recommends the following conditions of use<sup>2</sup>:

- The emblem must not be used or displayed in any way that could damage its reputation and status as a protective emblem.
- If the emblem is used in peacetime for purposes such as education and awareness raising, it must not be used or displayed in any way that is likely to result in confusion regarding the protective purpose of the emblem for identifying immovable or movable cultural property; cultural property undergoing protected transportation; and/or the personnel engaged in the protection of cultural property.
  - It must be comparatively small in size and may not be placed on armlets or on the roofs of buildings.
  - The emblem must not be displayed in a way that could inaccurately be perceived as affording protection to any object on which the emblem is displayed.
  - When used to identify people, or on corporate materials or objects, the emblem must be small (i.e. normally no larger than a passport-sized photograph).
- If associated with an organisation, the emblem must at all times, wherever practicable, be accompanied by the name or initials of the relevant organisation. For example, the Blue Shield logo contains the blue shield cultural property emblem and so is subject to the same restrictions as the emblem (see *Blue Shield Logo – Guidance for Use*).
- The emblem must not be displayed in any way that could create an inaccurate impression of association with people, places, names, organisations and/or other entities.
- In any literature or document depicting the emblem, including in digital form, a note or footnote should be included, unless impracticable or unnecessary, stating the following (or wording to similar effect): "The cultural emblem is a protective symbol used during armed conflicts and its use is restricted by law".
- Use of the emblem should follow international and national laws governing its use.

## 5. The blue shield emblem and national and international law

The blue shield emblem is described in the [1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#), which also lays down conditions for use (Appendix 1). The emblem is a protective symbol identifying protected cultural property or those engaged in its protection during armed conflict, and its use is restricted under international law. As such, the design of the emblem, and all conditions for its use are defined in the national law for each country, which represents the authoritative guidance.

The Convention states that – where relevant – the emblem should replace that of earlier cultural heritage protection conventions<sup>3</sup> (Article 36).

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<sup>2</sup> These conditions are adapted from the PERMISSION FOR USE OF THE CULTURAL EMBLEM, in the UK document - Department of Culture Media and Sport (2017) *Protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict. Implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, its Protocols and the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act 2017*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protection-of-cultural-property-in-the-event-of-armed-conflict>

<sup>3</sup> These earlier Conventions are: the Conventions of The Hague concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (IV) and concerning Naval Bombardment in Time of War (IX), whether those of 29 July, 1899 or those of 18 October, 1907; and the Washington Pact of 15 April, 1935 for the Protection of Artistic and Scientific Institutions and of Historic Monuments (Roerich Pact).

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Misuse of the emblem is prohibited under article 17 of the 1954 Hague Convention, and under customary international law according to the International Committee of the Red Cross:

*Rule 61. The improper use of other internationally recognized emblems is prohibited.*

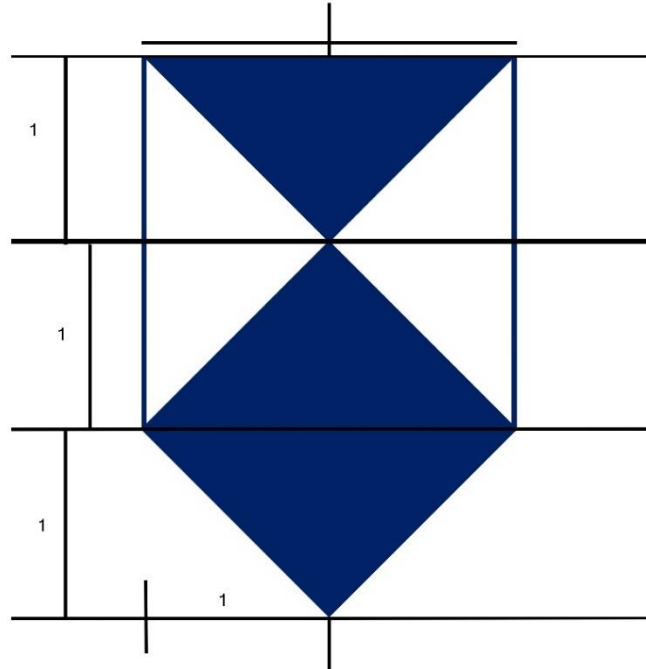
Use of the emblem may also be restricted under national legislation. Those wishing to use the emblem should ensure compatibility with the legislation of the relevant country.

Any reports of misuse of the Blue Shield logo or the cultural property emblem should be dealt with in accordance with the domestic legislation of the country in which the misuse occurred. In many countries, the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society may already monitor misuses of protective emblems used under International Humanitarian Law (such as the red cross emblem), and it may have procedures in place to correct the misuse or to forward the matter to the relevant authorities. For example, see the British Red Cross's emblem protection page: [www.redcross.org.uk/emblem](http://www.redcross.org.uk/emblem). It may be helpful for National Blue Shield Committees to contact their National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society to co-ordinate their emblem protection efforts.

## Appendix 1 - Colours and style guidance



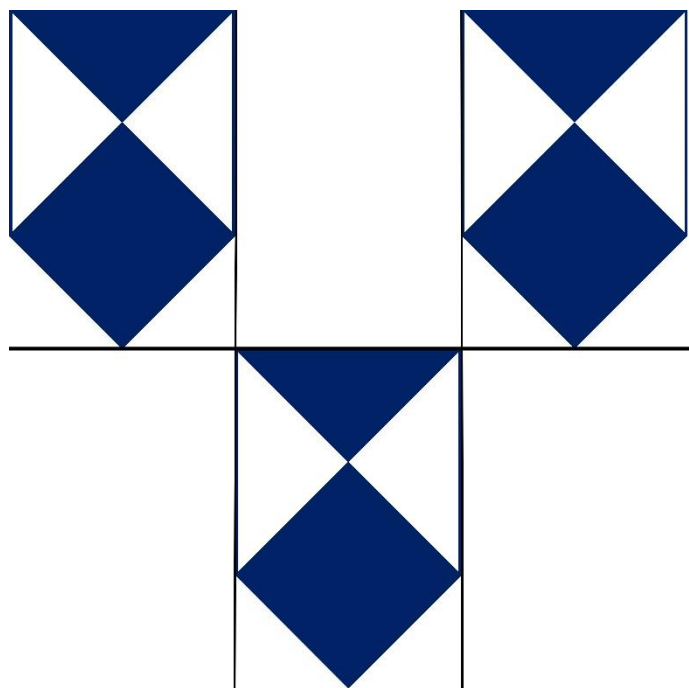
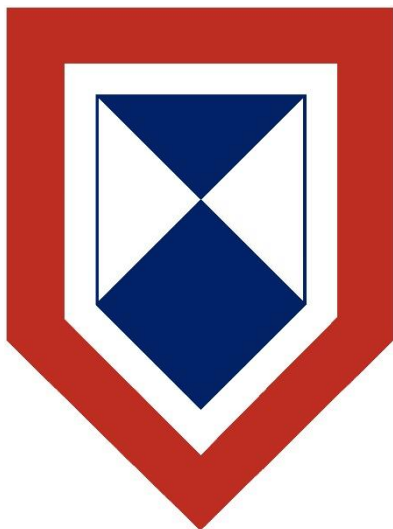
**The Blue Shield Emblem**



Layout and structure of the **Blue Shield Emblem**

**The Enhanced Protection Emblem**

The three blue shields indicating **Special Protection**, cultural property in transport, or an improvised refuge



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**Royal Blue:**

- (Shield, shield sides – all)

Colour Name: RGB #002776

Pantone: 280

RGB Hexdecimal

/ Hex Value: 002776

RGB (0 ÷255): 0, 39, 118

RGB %: 0, 15.3, 46.3

(RGB = Red, Green, Blue)

CMYK %: 100, 67, 0, 54

(Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black)

HSV: 220°, 100, 46

HSL: 220°, 100, 23

CIE-L\*ab: 19.1, 22.8, -48.2

XYZ: 4, 2.8, 17.5

**White**

- (Shield, Enhanced Protection outer shield)

Colour Name: RGB #FFFFFF

Pantone: None

RGB Hexdecimal

/ Hex Value FFFFFFFF

RGB 0÷255 255, 255, 255

RGB % 100, 100, 100

(RGB = Red, Green, Blue)

CMYK % 0, 0, 0, 0

(Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black)

HSV 0°, 0, 100

HSL 0°, 0, 100

CIE-L\*ab 100, 0, -0

XYZ 95.1, 100, 108.9

**Red (moderate amaranth)**

- (Enhanced Protection symbol outer shield)

Colour Name: RGB #BD222D

Pantone:

RGB Hexdecimal

/ Hex Value: BD222D

RGB (0 ÷255): 189, 34, 45

RGB %: 74.1, 13.3, 17.6

(RGB = Red, Green, Blue)

CMYK %: 0, 82, 76, 26

(Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black)

HSV 356°, 82, 74

HSL 356°, 70, 44

CIE-L\*ab 41.5, 59.5, 34.5

XYZ 22, 12.2, 3.7

***These definitions are for reference only and may vary slightly from one jurisdiction to another.  
Always consult national laws for the official design of the cultural property emblem(s) used by a  
particular country.***

## Appendix 2 – Excerpts from the 1954 Hague Convention relating to the emblem

The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) is available on UNESCO's website: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13637&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13637&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). The following excerpts relate to the emblem and its use.

### Article 6. Distinctive marking of cultural property

*In accordance with the provisions of Article 16, cultural property may bear a distinctive emblem so as to facilitate its recognition.*

### Article 10. Identification and control

*During an armed conflict, cultural property under special protection shall be marked with the distinctive emblem described in Article 16, and shall be open to international control as provided for in the Regulations for the execution of the Convention.*

### Chapter III. Transport of cultural property

#### Article 12. Transport under special protection

*1. Transport exclusively engaged in the transfer of cultural property, whether within a territory or to another territory, may, at the request of the High Contracting Party concerned, take place under special protection in accordance with the conditions specified in the Regulations for the execution of the Convention.*

*2. Transport under special protection shall take place under the international supervision provided for in the aforesaid Regulations and shall display the distinctive emblem described in Article 16.*

#### Article 13. Transport in urgent cases

*1. If a High Contracting Party considers that the safety of certain cultural property requires its transfer and that the matter is of such urgency that the procedure laid down in Article 12 cannot be followed, especially at the beginning of an armed conflict, the transport may display the distinctive emblem described in Article 16, provided that an application for immunity referred to in Article 12 has not already been made and refused. As far as possible, notification of transfer should be made to the opposing Parties. Nevertheless, transport conveying cultural property to the territory of another country may not display the distinctive emblem unless immunity has been expressly granted to it.*

*2. The High Contracting Parties shall take, so far as possible, the necessary precautions to avoid acts*



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*of hostility directed against the transport described in paragraph 1 of the present Article and displaying the distinctive emblem.*

## **Chapter V. The distinctive emblem**

### **Article 16. Emblem of the convention**

*1. The distinctive emblem of the Convention shall take the form of a shield, pointed below, persaltire blue and white (a shield consisting of a royal-blue square, one of the angles of which forms the point of the shield, and of a royal-blue triangle above the square, the space on either side being taken up by a white triangle).*

*2. The emblem shall be used alone, or repeated three times in a triangular formation (one shield below), under the conditions provided for in Article 17.*

### **Article 17. Use of the emblem**

*1. The distinctive emblem repeated three times may be used only as a means of identification of:*

*(a) immovable cultural property under special protection;*

*(b) the transport of cultural property under the conditions provided for in Articles 12 and 13;*

*(c) improvised refuges, under the conditions provided for in the Regulations for the execution of the Convention.*

*2. The distinctive emblem may be used alone only as a means of identification of:*

*(a) cultural property not under special protection;*

*(b) the persons responsible for the duties of control in accordance with the Regulations for the execution of the Convention;*

*(c) the personnel engaged in the protection of cultural property;*

*(d) the identity cards mentioned in the Regulations for the execution of the Convention.*

*3. During an armed conflict, the use of the distinctive emblem in any other cases than those mentioned in the preceding paragraphs of the present Article, and the use for any purpose whatever of a sign resembling the distinctive emblem, shall be forbidden.*

*4. The distinctive emblem may not be placed on any immovable cultural property unless at the same time there is displayed an authorization duly dated and signed by the competent authority of the High Contracting Party.*

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## Regulations for the Execution of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict

### **Chapter II. Special protection**

#### **Article 11. Improvised refuges**

- 1. If, during an armed conflict, any High Contracting Party is induced by unforeseen circumstances to set up an improvised refuge and desires that it should be placed under special protection, it shall communicate this fact forthwith to the Commissioner-General accredited to that Party.*
- 2. If the Commissioner-General considers that such a measure is justified by the circumstances and by the importance of the cultural property sheltered in' this improvised refuge, he may authorize the High Contracting Party to display on such refuge the distinctive emblem defined in Article 16 of the Convention. He shall communicate his decision without delay to the delegates of the Protecting Powers who are concerned, each of whom may, within a time limit of 30 days, order the immediate withdrawal of the emblem.*
- 3. As soon as such delegates have signified their agreement or if the time limit of 30 days has passed without any of the delegates concerned having made an objection, and if, in the view of the Commissioner-General, the refuge fulfils the conditions laid down in Article 8 of the Convention, the Commissioner-General shall request the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to enter the refuge in the Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection.*

### **Chapter III. Transport of cultural property**

#### **Article 17. Procedure to obtain immunity**

- 1. The request mentioned in paragraph 1 of Article 12 of the Convention shall be addressed to the Commissioner-General for Cultural Property. It shall mention the reasons on which it is based and specify the approximate number and the importance of the objects to be transferred, their present location, the location now envisaged, the means of transport to be used, the route to be followed, the date proposed for the transfer, and any other relevant information.*
- 2. If the Commissioner-General, after taking such opinions as he deems fit, considers that such transfer is justified, he shall consult those delegates of the Protecting Powers who are concerned, on the measures proposed for carrying it out. Following such consultation, he shall notify the Parties to the conflict concerned of the transfer, including in such notification all useful information.*
- 3. The Commissioner-General shall appoint one or more inspectors, who shall satisfy themselves that only the property stated in the request is to be transferred and that the transport is to be by the approved methods and bears the distinctive emblem. The inspector or inspectors shall accompany the property to its destination.*

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## Chapter IV. The distinctive emblem

### Article 20. Affixing of the emblem

1. *The placing of the distinctive emblem and its degree of visibility shall be left to the discretion of the competent authorities of each High Contracting Party. It may be displayed on flags or armlets; it may be painted on an object or represented in any other appropriate form.*

2. *However, without prejudice to any possible fuller markings, the emblem shall, in the event of armed conflict and in the cases mentioned in Articles 12 and 13 of the Convention, be placed on the vehicles of transport so as to be clearly visible in daylight from the air as well as from the ground. The emblem shall be visible from the ground:*

*(a) at regular intervals sufficient to indicate clearly the perimeter of a centre containing monuments under special protection;*

*(b) at the entrance to other immovable cultural property under special protection.*

### Article 21. Identification of persons

1. *The persons mentioned in Article 17, paragraph 2(b) and (c) of the Convention may wear an armlet bearing the distinctive emblem, issued and stamped by the competent authorities.*

2. *Such persons shall carry a special identity card bearing the distinctive emblem. This card shall mention at least the surname and first names, the date of birth, the title or rank, and the function of the holder. The card shall bear the photograph of the holder as well as his signature or his fingerprints, or both. It shall bear the embossed stamp of the competent authorities.*

3. *Each High Contracting Party shall make out its own type of identity card,, guided by the model annexed, by way of example, to the present Regulations. The' High Contracting Parties shall transmit to each other a specimen of the model they are using. Identity cards shall be made out, if possible, at least in duplicate, one copy being kept by the issuing Power.*

4. *The said persons may not, without legitimate reason, be deprived of their identity card or of the right to wear the armlet.*

## Appendix 3 – Guidance for Use of the Enhanced Protection Emblem

**Exert from the UNESCO document:** *Guidelines for the Implementation of the 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict 2016*, available at: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/1999-SecondProtocol\\_Guidelines\\_2015\\_E.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/1999-SecondProtocol_Guidelines_2015_E.pdf)

### III.E The Distinctive Emblem for cultural property under enhanced protection and modalities for its use

94. *Without prejudice to the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention and the Regulations for its execution relating to the marking of cultural property under general protection and to the marking of cultural property under special protection, a distinctive emblem (hereinafter the “Distinctive Emblem”) is created for the exclusive marking of cultural property under enhanced protection.*

95. *“Marking of cultural property under enhanced protection” means marking as defined *ratione materiae* in paragraph 103 of these Guidelines.*

96. *The considerations related to the visibility of the Distinctive Emblem guide the Parties in their choice of modalities for placing of the Distinctive Emblem.*

#### Modalities for using the Distinctive Emblem

97. *The Distinctive Emblem should be used in accordance with the modalities for its use, as set out below. Under these Guidelines, the expression “modalities for using the Distinctive Emblem” covers the basic principles relating to the Distinctive Emblem, the modalities for its use and measures protecting it from misuse.*

#### Basic principles relating to the Distinctive Emblem

98. *The Distinctive Emblem is intended to ensure the recognition and identification of cultural property under enhanced protection, particularly during the conduct of hostilities, in order to ensure the effectiveness of the provisions of the Second Protocol and, more particularly, to contribute to the effectiveness of Article 12 on the “Immunity of cultural property under enhanced protection”. The Distinctive Emblem is also intended to ensure legal certainty with regard to criminal responsibility of belligerents in order to ensure reasonable implementation of Article 15 (1) of the Second Protocol. Under these Guidelines, “reasonable implementation” means establishing as criminal offences under domestic criminal law of the Parties serious violations of the Second Protocol as set forth in Article 15 (2) of the Second Protocol.*

99. *The marking of cultural property under enhanced protection is declaratory of the enhanced protection granted for cultural property pursuant to a decision taken by the Committee. The marking*

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of cultural property, while contributing to the effectiveness of enhanced protection, has no constitutive effect.

100. On account of its use for protective purposes and in order to ensure its visibility, the Distinctive Emblem – without prejudice to the use of other relevant emblems, in particular the World Heritage emblem, to mark cultural property – should be affixed alone without any other logo and/or emblem, due consideration being taken of a combatant’s field of vision when directing an attack, be it from the land, sea or air, during hostilities.

101. The Distinctive Emblem must be used in accordance with the relevant rules of international humanitarian law and the modalities *ratione materiae* and *ratione temporis* for its use specified in these Guidelines. All use of the Distinctive Emblem that is inconsistent with observance of the prescribed rules should be considered to be misuse.

102. When the Committee grants enhanced protection for cultural property under the normal procedure, it encourages the Party that has jurisdiction or control over that cultural property to mark it by using the Distinctive Emblem for cultural property under enhanced protection. When the Committee is requested to grant enhanced protection under the emergency procedure, it requests the Party that has jurisdiction or control over the cultural property to mark the property.

#### **Modalities for using the Distinctive Emblem**

##### Use *ratione materiae*

103. The Distinctive Emblem should be used only to mark cultural property under enhanced protection. It may not be used for purposes – e.g. commercial, non-commercial – other than those specified in these Guidelines.

104. The use of the Distinctive Emblem for cultural property under enhanced protection is without prejudice to the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention and the Regulation for its execution with regard to the application of the “transport under special protection”.

##### Use *ratione temporis*

105. In peacetime, Parties that have jurisdiction or control over cultural property under enhanced protection may make preparations to mark such property by using the Distinctive Emblem.

106. In times of armed conflict – i.e. from the outbreak of hostilities leading to the advent of the armed conflict until the end of the armed conflict, including occupation – the Parties to the conflict are encouraged to mark cultural property under enhanced protection by using the Distinctive Emblem.

107. Without prejudice to Article 17 paragraph (2) of the 1954 Hague Convention, in the event of suspension or cancellation of enhanced protection by the Committee, Parties that have jurisdiction or control over the cultural property concerned by said suspension or cancellation should remove the Distinctive Emblem that had been used to mark the property.

#### **Modalities for placing the Distinctive Emblem**

108. The Distinctive Emblem should be placed and the extent of its visibility determined at the discretion of the Parties’ competent authorities.

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*109. As cultural property under enhanced protection is primarily part and parcel of heritage that is of the greatest importance to humanity, the Distinctive Emblem should be placed on the cultural property in a manner benefitting the property.*

*110. The Parties' resources permitting, technological developments will determine the means used – in times of peace and in times of armed conflict – to place the Distinctive Emblem on cultural property, including movable property, under enhanced protection.*

**Protection of the Distinctive Emblem from misuse**

*111. Use of the Distinctive Emblem that does not comply with principles set out in these Guidelines should be avoided.*

*112. The Parties are encouraged to disseminate the information concerning the Distinctive Emblem and the modalities for its use both within their civilian population and among military personnel.*

*113. The Parties are encouraged to enact legislation on the protection of the Distinctive Emblem and the modalities for its use and/or take other measures, as appropriate, on the protection of the Distinctive Emblem and the modalities for its use.*