

DOMBAUMEISTER E.V.



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PRESS RELEASE

This year's conference of the Association of European Cathedral Master Builders, Minster Master Builders and Master Craftsmen took place in Greifswald and Stralsund from 20 to 24 September 2022 at the invitation of the Church administration (Landeskirchenamt) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany. The main theme of the conference was "Large Cathedrals – Small Parishes".

Among the topics discussed were the challenges of restoring the great brick Gothic churches in Greifswald and Stralsund under the changed conditions of smaller parishes, in order to carry their magnificent architectural heritage into the next generations.

The approximately 150 members of the association are architects, master builders, restorers and builders from seventeen European countries, who meet to exchange their expertise within the framework of the Cathedral Master Builders' Conference, which usually takes place each year. The task of the Association is the preservation and maintenance of the great churches and cathedrals, as well as the preservation and continuation of the intangible cultural heritage, the traditions and the contemporary craft techniques, without which the great task could hardly be accomplished. However, it is also the Association's task to promote understanding of Europe's common cultural heritage among the general public and political decision-makers in order to permanently protect, maintain and preserve it for future

generations. The Association also maintains contacts with the associations of architects and master builders in France, Great Britain and Italy.

At the elections for the new board, which take place every three years, architect Annette Loeffel, Bern (master builder (minster architect at the Bern Minster / Switzerland) was elected as the new chairperson of the association. Gerd Meyerhoff, Greifswald (building official with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany) was elected vice-chairperson.

A member of the association from St. Sophia's Cathedral in Kyiv / Ukraine gave an impressive account of the terrible destruction in many cities and communities caused by Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine, which also irreparably destroyed or severely damaged countless cultural monuments.

Wars not only cause terrible suffering among the population, but also destroy the cultural heritage of generations – cultural heritage that is of great importance to all mankind.

At this year's meeting, the Cathedral Master Builders' Association therefore drew up an appeal with the Greifswald Declaration of 23.09.2022, which is addressed to governmental and non-governmental organisations all over the world:

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Greifswald, 23-09-2022

Greifswald Declaration

The European Association of Cathedral Master Builders, Minster Master Builders and Master Craftsmen e.V. is committed to the preservation of the European cultural heritage and to the understanding and exchange of cultural workers across all national borders.

The terrible and destructive events of wars continue to have an effect for generations. Even more than 75 years after the end of the Second World War, work is still underway in many European cities to repair the damage. This makes us aware of the lasting destructive power of wars, which we want to counter with reconstruction and international understanding.

Since February 24, 2022, another war has shaken European soil due to Russia's attack on Ukraine, a war that was already started in 2014 with the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. We condemn this brutal and unjustifiable war of aggression by Russia which is contrary to international law. This war is directed against the people of Ukraine and the cultural testimonies of generations.

This war does not only cause great suffering among the Ukrainian people, it also puts in danger the cultural heritage of mankind, be it churches, cultural and worship sites, museums, archives, libraries, monuments and works of art, which are formative for Ukrainian culture and have great significance for people of all nations. Hundreds of buildings and cultural institutions have already been destroyed or severely damaged by the war.

We declare our solidarity with all people in Ukraine who suffer from the war, who have to fear for their lives and with all those who work for the protection of cultural assets in Ukraine, sometimes at the risk of their lives.

We call on Russia to stop its belligerent and destructive actions and return to the peaceful coexistence of peoples. Likewise, we call on all parties to respect the Hague Convention.

According to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, Article 4, all Contracting Parties have undertaken "to respect cultural property located on their own territory or on the territory of other High Contracting Parties by refraining from using such property, the facilities intended for its protection and the immediate surroundings for purposes which might subject it to destruction or damage in the event of armed conflict, and by refraining from all acts of hostility against such property", which could expose it to destruction or damage in the event of armed conflict, and refraining from all acts of hostility against it", and "to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, suppress any theft, looting or other unlawful seizure of cultural property, as well as any senseless destruction of such property."

We call on the relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations, the United Nations, UNESCO, ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) and ICOM (International Council of Museums) to use their respective influence to stop the murder of thousands of innocent people and the destruction of cultural properties.

All the members of the association stand with the people in Ukraine. Furthermore, we encourage the people in all countries of Europe and the whole world to actively work for the peaceful coexistence of nations.

Drawn up by the board of the association