Egypt Organizes an International Conference to Combat the Looting of Culture Heritage in the Arab World

(English Translation)

CAIRO (Reuters) – Egypt intends to organize an international conference addressing the looting of culture and heritage of the Arab world in May, titled “Cultural Heritage under Threat” in Cairo. Several international organizations are participating, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). On Thursday, the Minister of Antiquities Mahmoud El-Damaty released a statement that the conference, held in cooperation between the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Antiquities, and with the participation of UNESCO, will invite several Arab countries, including Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon.

The Minister added that this well-timed conference is organized specifically to highlight the significant amount of destruction on irreplaceable identities and heritage of these countries. He said that the conference would discuss cooperative policies in various areas of archaeological work, particularly facing the looting and smuggling of antiquities.

He added that the conference seeks to come up with effective solutions that should be announced on the international level. The conference will also highlight the frameworks dealing with the cultural property markets- both licit and illicit.

Earlier on Thursday, El-Damaty met with Deborah Lehr, chair of the Antiquities Coalition, and Kate Seeley, vice president of the Middle East Institute, both in Washington DC.
Much of the cultural heritage, which includes ancient antiquities and monuments, have been subjected to looting, destruction, and theft during the past few years because of the lack of security and stability in several countries in the Arab region.

*The Antiquities Coalition and the Middle East Institute are also co-sponsors of the “Cultural Heritage under Threat” conference, as both organizations focus on the preservation of cultural heritage in the Arab world.