

Amman hosts conference to launch regional task force to combat cultural racketeering

Amman, Sept. 6 (Petra) -- Under the patronage of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Nasser Judeh, the second annual #CultureUnderThreat regional conference will be held in Amman on September 8, 2016 to advance cooperation between Arab countries in the fight against the illegal smuggling and sale of cultural artifacts from the region.

According to a statement released by the ministry, the opening and closing sessions of the conference are on the record and open to the media.

The statement said that for those wishing to attend the conference, they are asked to contact info.conf@fm.gov.jo to register to attend. More information about the conference is available online at theantiquitiescoalition.org/jordan2016.

The conference will be hosted by the Jordanian government, the Antiquities Coalition, and Middle East Institute (MEI), and will bring together ministers from 17 Arab League nations.

Lina Annab, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, will head the proceedings. These regional leaders will coordinate actions to address the threat to cultural heritage emanating from antiquities looting, trafficking, and destruction by looters, criminals, and terrorist groups.

In addition, the Task Force Against Cultural Racketeering, consisting of government representatives from each country, will hold its inaugural meeting to finalize an action plan for the upcoming year on specific actions to be taken in this joint effort.

This historic event builds upon the Cairo Declaration released in 2015, in which ministers from 10 key Arab countries agreed to take steps to combat cultural crimes, and a follow-up high level forum held in September during the 70th session of United Nations General Assembly.

Cultural racketeering has increasingly become a financing tool for criminal and terrorist groups. Archaeological, historic, and religious sites are still at risk from armed conflict, targeted destruction, and organized plunder.

Criminal and terrorist groups, such as Daesh, have earned several million dollars from cultural racketeering, which is being used to fund their operations. Arab countries agree on the need to cut off all sources of criminal and terrorist financing activities, including those originating from blood antiquities.