

The Cairo Declaration

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Recognizing the continuing threat to our economic, cultural well-being and national security as a result of antiquities looting, trafficking and destruction by criminal networks and extremist groups, the Governments of Egypt, Libya, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Oman agreed at a Ministerial Conference held in Cairo on the 13th and 14th of May 2015, to launch immediate joint efforts to stand against the abovementioned threats.

The Middle East and Northern African region is home to the beginnings of human civilization. It has a long and rich history. Criminal networks and terrorists groups. have systematically looted historic sites and profited from the sales of these antiquities in international black markets. In addition, as a means to intimidate local populations, these looters have intentionally destroyed historical relics. We deplore their actions, and view this as a crime against human civilization.

In light of the above, the participating governments attending this conference have agreed on the necessity of the following actions:

- Launch a Cultural Racketeering Task Force consisting of a senior representative from each country to coordinate efforts.
- Establish an International Advisory Committee, which will advise the task force on ways to fight cultural racketeering.
- Initiate an awareness campaign in demand countries to discourage purchases of looted antiquities.
- Consider the possibilities to start negotiations with international partners as the United States and The European Union on a “Regional Cultural Memorandum of Understanding” which would lead to the ban of dealing in looted antiquities.
- Raise awareness campaigns aiming to protect cultural property against illegal digging and excavations, while implementing harsher sanctions on those who attempt illegal excavations.

- Study the possibilities of establishing an independent regional Anti- laundering Agency that will cooperate with the competent international agencies to help monitor and halt the trade of antiquities.

The Director General of UNESCO, Ms. Irina Bokova, has agreed to host a conference with the concerned Middle East and Northern African region countries and other governments interested in joining this Initiative against antiquities looting during the United Nations General Assembly meeting in September 2015.