

Regional training on Syrian cultural heritage: addressing the issue of illicit trafficking



Final report and Recommendations

*With the
Contribution of*

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Introduction

Syria holds an exceptional cultural heritage, testimony to some of the world's most ancient civilizations, carried by historic cities, archaeological sites and museum collections. The current situation of the cultural heritage in the country raises serious concerns: many historical and archaeological sites, among which World Heritage sites and sites on the World Heritage Tentative List, have or are being affected by violent fights or occupation by armed forces, and vandalism and looting of several archaeological sites and museums have been reported.

Since the beginning of the armed conflict in Syria, UNESCO has called for the safeguarding of the country's cultural heritage and alerted the international community regarding the risk of illicit export of cultural objects. This issue was also highlighted at the UN Security Council by the joint UN-Arab League Special Envoy for Syria - Lakhdar Brahimi, on his first briefing to the Council on 24 September 2012.

As part of UNESCO's action in response to the current Syrian crisis, UNESCO Amman Office and the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Protection Treaties Section organized a four-day regional training in Amman on 10-13 February 2013, with the support of the Swiss Federal Office for Culture and the UNESCO Offices in Iraq, Beirut and Venice. Held under the patronage of HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, the training aimed to assess the situation of the cultural heritage, its illicit trafficking and the risk of looting of Syrian cultural objects, and promote cooperation in priority in the region, as well as in the rest of the world. The initiative brought representatives of the police, customs and heritage departments from Syria and neighboring countries together with international organizations involved in cultural heritage management and protection, as well as international experts in Syrian archaeology and law enforcement agencies from countries such as Switzerland, Italy, France, Germany, United Kingdom and the United States.

The objective of the training was to contribute to the safeguarding of Syrian cultural heritage, providing a venue to discuss the current situation and develop an **Action Plan** to address the issue of illicit trafficking, in coordination with all relevant stakeholders and making use of the experience gained by UNESCO in other conflict and post-conflict situations.

The poster features logos at the top for the Amman Office of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The main title in Arabic is 'التدريب الإقليمي على التراث الثقافي السوري: معالجة مسألة الإتجار غير المشروع' (Regional training on Syrian cultural heritage: addressing the issue of illicit trafficking). Below the title is a collage of images showing various cultural artifacts like coins, scrolls, and a statue. The date 'عمان، ١٠-١٣ شباط ٢٠١٣' (Amman, 10-13 February 2013) is written below the collage. The English title 'Regional training on Syrian cultural heritage: addressing the issue of illicit trafficking' is at the bottom. Logos for the Swiss Confederation and the Swiss Federal Office for Culture are also present, along with the Arabic text 'بدعم من' (with the support of).

In order to reach this objective, the training workshop was structured in three main sessions (the Agenda of the meeting is enclosed to this document; see Annex II). These sessions aimed at:

1. Presenting the legal framework and current situation in Syria and the neighbouring countries (**Setting the context**);
2. Giving an overview of previous experiences, good practices and operational tools (**Illicit Trafficking - previous experiences, good practices and operational tools**);
3. Developing an Action Plan to protect museums and archaeological sites from looting, prevent illicit trafficking, improve restitutions to Syria and ensuring follow up activities (**Working groups: risk preparedness at museums and archaeological sites, the way forward**).



Ms. Anna Paolini, Head of UNESCO Amman Office, HRH Princess Sumaya bint EL Hassan, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Jordan Museum, HE Mr Michael Winzap, Ambassador of Switzerland to Jordan at the opening of the event.

Opening

The regional Training on Syrian Cultural heritage was opened by a welcome speech of UNESCO Representative in Jordan, followed by the official remarks of the Ambassador of Switzerland to Jordan, and HRH Princess Sumaya, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Jordan Museum, who patronized the event.

The opening ceremony was also attended by the Ambassador of the European Union to Jordan, the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Jordan, the Acting Director General of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, the Secretary General of the Jordan National Commission to UNESCO, and, among others, representatives from the Syrian, French and Italian Embassies to Jordan. University professors, scholars, and national and international NGOs dealing with cultural heritage from Jordan were also present at the opening.

Ms Anna Paolini, Head of UNESCO Amman Office, welcomed everyone to the meeting in her capacity as Acting Interim UN Resident Coordinator and UNESCO Representative in Jordan, and provided an outline of the United Nations Regional Response inside and outside Syria, including the role of UNESCO in the fields of education, refugees, culture, access to water etc.; she also gave an overview of the meeting objectives and expected results.

The Swiss Ambassador to Jordan, HE Mr Michael Winzap, focused on the Swiss support in the context of the Syrian crisis, involving the assistance to UNESCO in protecting the Syrian cultural heritage and ensuring the implementation of the 1954 and 1970 Conventions.

Finally, HRH Princess Sumaya addressed the audience with a keynote speech on the importance of preserving and protecting the world's heritage "in the firing line"; she stressed the importance of protecting the cultural heritage in times of crisis, since the cultural heritage is an "invaluable resource to rebuild communities and to restore links when conflict ends", it is something that belongs to the mankind and that cannot be replaced once it is lost. Protecting museums and archives is of utmost importance - she said, since those are "repositories of shared knowledge for a nation" (see speech in Annex IV).

Session I. Setting the context

1. Normative framework to fight against illicit trafficking: 1954, 1970, 1995 conventions

This part of the session established the legal background for the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage. UNESCO and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) presented the key international conventions for the protection of heritage against damage and illicit trading and a comparison of the legal protection of cultural heritage in the region.

The **1954 Hague Convention** for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflicts with its two additional protocols provides a framework for the protection of heritage during armed conflicts. Syria ratified the 1954 Convention and its First Protocol in 1958, but did not ratify the Second Additional one adopted in 1999 and which contains a number of amendments that improve significantly the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts; therefore UNESCO highly encourages its ratification.

The **1970 Convention** on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property is a key instrument in that domain, which played a major role in changing the attitudes of governments and setting legal and ethical standards. However, efforts at the national level are required in order to implement the Convention and benefit fully from its protection. UNESCO offers assistance in the implementation of the treaty and encourages the use of tools such as the Database of National Laws on Cultural Heritage, model provisions for legislation defining the ownership of the State on its heritage or examples of bilateral agreements regulating the movement of cultural objects. Fight against trafficking on internet, alternative means to dispute resolution on cultural property (mediation and conciliation, intergovernmental committees) and awareness-raising actions are also among the priorities of the Secretariat.

The **1995 UNIDROIT Convention** on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects strengthens the provisions of the 1970 Convention and complements them with minimal rules on restitution and return which aim at harmonising the various existing legislations. The UNIDROIT Convention provides direct tools to claim recovery of stolen property and illegally exported cultural objects, and is independent from national implementation measures (the Convention is self-executing into the national order). Therefore, this treaty offers important benefits for the countries rich in heritage such as Syria, Jordan, Turkey or Lebanon. None of these countries has ratified this treaty so far.

2. Cultural Heritage protection and regional cooperation: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan

During this part of the session, the representatives of the Departments of Antiquities from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan presented the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural objects as seen by the practitioners from the region. They also shared some good practices developed to prevent the illicit trading in cultural objects in their countries.

The **Director General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria** (thereafter DGAM) provided a key contribution, conveying information on damages to Syrian cultural heritage. He presented the report on the current status of Syrian antiquities, based on the information collected on the ground by employees of the DGAM (the report by the DGAM is available online, at the following links:

English: <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=309&id=717>;

Arabic: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=715>).

According to the DGAM Director, the overall situation of Syrian cultural heritage at the time of the meeting was less severe than reported by the media, at least for the museums and cultural institutions: the DGAM is continuing its efforts to protect the movable and immovable heritage by keeping its offices operational throughout the country despite the difficulties; the awareness raising activities carried out by the DGAM with the local communities since the beginning of the conflict, allowed limiting the impact of the situation on the cultural heritage; measures were taken to protect the movable heritage, and most of the archaeological remains stored in museums were inventoried and moved to safe storages; the reported number of stolen objects is so far limited (e.g. a bronze statue from the museum of Hama).

The most problematic task for the DGAM is to ensure the protection of the immovable heritage in the country, especially for those archaeological and world heritage sites that are located in conflict areas and cannot be accessed (and assessed) by the staff of the DGAM. Serious damages were reported in Aleppo, Bosra, Daraa, the Citadel of Raqqa, Mari, Doura Europos, Deir ez-Zor, Ebla and Homs. A key contribution to ensure the protection of those sites could come by the local communities, and to this end, a continued cooperation between the DGAM and the international archaeological missions is of utmost importance. To this regard, the unresolved issue of outstanding payments for site guards working with archaeological missions was mentioned: these missions are unable to transfer funds to Syria due to the situation in the country, despite having them allocated for this purpose; the help of UNESCO to facilitate this process was therefore requested.

Finally, in order to prevent a repetition of scenarios such as those that occurred in Iraq or Afghanistan, the DGAM Director called for a **neutral action for the sake of culture, and requested politically neutral support**. The DGAM is committed to cooperate with UNESCO and other international organizations, as well as with Syria neighbouring countries to safeguard the heritage of Syria.

The **Head of Legal Affairs at the DGAM** further emphasized the commitment of Syrian authorities to implement the cultural heritage protection treaties and recognized the need for ratifying the 2nd Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention as well as the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention. He also presented a DGAM project aimed at improvements in this field and changing attitudes of heritage managers and local communities, as well as highlighted the importance of regional cooperation.

The representative of the **Directorate General of Antiquities of the Ministry of Culture of Lebanon** outlined the measures to fight illicit trafficking under the Lebanese law. After delineating the procedures taken in case of seizure of illegally imported objects at the border, he gave examples of successful returns of seized objects to their countries of origin; this process is

undertaken in cooperation with the concerned countries. For instance, stolen objects from the Baghdad Museum were successfully returned to Iraq, and now some mosaics and manuscripts from Syria are undergoing the procedure to be returned. He also provided positive information concerning the ratification by Lebanon of the 1999 Second Protocol and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention.

The representative of the **Department of Antiquities of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan** expressed the need to effectively implement the UNESCO Conventions, and the will to collaborate at a regional and international level in order to enhance the protection of Syrian heritage. Jordan has laws and regulations addressing the issue of cultural heritage ownership and specific procedures for objects seized by police and customs (special storages; inventorying; examination); there are also procedures existing in case of armed conflict (Jordan is the only country of the region party to the 1999 2nd Protocol). Regarding the cooperation in the region, Jordan is controlling its borders and, in the past, pieces were returned to Iraq, Egypt and Yemen. However, he stressed the need of enhanced cooperation among international organizations, strengthened border controls, creation of databases of stolen objects, raise the awareness-among the population, and train the national institutions.

Following the presentations of Syria and its bordering countries, the discussion focused on regional and international cooperation. In several interventions, representatives from Syria and neighbouring countries recognized the need for coordinated action to protect Syrian and regional cultural heritage. Improving communication among the countries in the region was indicated as a major need to be urgently addressed. Also, the need to improve the skills of public officers working in the field of cultural heritage protection was emphasized, in order to ensure the application of international Conventions.

3. Threats to Syrian cultural heritage - the issue of illicit trafficking: archaeology experts

Representatives of international archaeological missions in Syria conveyed information on the state of archaeological sites, collected by the British, French, Italian, German and American missions. Their presentations drew the attention of the participants to the sites and artefacts at risk of looting and although not covering all the areas of the country, confirmed the reports provided by the DGAM. The representatives of the archaeological missions also confirmed that the issue of paying site guards is a serious problem.

The **representative of the French missions** (Institut Français du Proche-Orient, IFPO) provided an overview of the French archaeological projects in Syria and reported damages. The reported damages can be summarized as follows:

- Euphrates Valley: dig houses looted at Mari, Doura Europos and Zenobia; further damages, looting and vandalism at the site of Mari; vandalism at the museum and squatting at Doura Europos.
- Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (World Heritage sites): storage vandalized at Qala'at Semaan (St. Simeon); collapse of a large piece of limestone from a pyramidal tomb at El Bara; squatting by villagers in Sergilla.
- Other sites in the north: looting at Dja'de (Neolithic site) and Umm el Tlel (Paleolithic site).
- South: dig house destroyed at Bosra (located between the Citadel and the thermal baths); Tell el-Far, Tell Taouil, and Tell el-Kharaze are in a very exposed location but the situation is unknown (the materials are stored at a farmer's house).

The **representative from the UK archaeological mission** (Durham University) gave an overview of the different types of sites in Syria and their attractiveness to looters. From this perspective, tells and stone-built sites are less at risk, because excavating them requires substantial effort for the looters with relatively little reward in terms of artefacts. Arid zone sites are more at risk, because they are visible from the surface and contain shallow deposits, and are thus easier to excavate; however they are often located in remote locations, which could represent a protection factor. The most attractive and thus endangered sites are tombs, which are the easiest to loot and excavate and contain many small portable objects, which are often complete (unlikely materials from settlements); moreover, tombs are numerous and geographically widespread.

Regarding the projects with UK partners that were on-going before the conflict (Tell Brak, North East Syria; Land of Carchemish, Euphrates Valley; Andarin, Hama; Homs Survey), looting was not reported; however, the risk of destruction by landowners and farmers free from control of DGAM in the region of Homs was underlined.

The **representative of the Italian archaeological mission** from the University of Rome "La Sapienza" outlined the situation at the site of Ebla, where the Italian mission is working since the 60's. She confirmed that looting was reported at the site, as stated by the DGAM. However, the risk of further looting at the site is not high, since a lot of work at the site was carried out, and the excavations reached the bedrock level; also, finds of "attractive" items, such as figurines and seals are rare at the site. Besides, she raised concern about reported damages to two Islamic monuments, which were very important for the local community (this kind of heritage is often forgotten in the context).

She reported that the Italian government is keen to provide support for museums in Syria: today, archaeological missions do not focus only on archaeology, but also on conservation, communication, and community development. Also, training for young Syrian scholars in PhD programmes in Italy and abroad was suggested as a way to support post-conflict reconstruction in the country.

The **representative of the USA archaeological missions** (the Director of the Mission at Tell Mozan-Urkesh, UCLA) emphasized the importance of involving the local community in heritage protection, in order to ensure sustainability. In this sense, the case of Tell Mozan is exemplar: in the years before the crisis, Tell Mozan mission focused on the local community, creating a team of four local assistants and two local guards, and generally raising awareness among the local community through panels in Arabic and English, weekly lectures, and formal presentations at the end of the working seasons. Now that the international mission cannot enter Syria, the protection of the site is being ensured by the local team, which undertakes monthly visits to the site and reports back to the archaeological mission by internet, informing about any problem. This proved to be a very good example of distance monitoring, and an effective way to protect the site in the present conditions. Moreover, the mission had started working to create an eco-archaeological park in the area, to benefit both the site and the local community; to this end, a special unit within the DGAM had been created before the crisis, and this unit is still working on the project despite the situation.

The **representative from the German archaeological missions** (Director of the German Archaeological Institute in Damascus) gave an overview of the archaeological projects run by the German Archaeological Institute in Syria, mostly in the region of Hama (Shir, Neolithic settlement; Raphanaeae, Roman Legionary Fortress; Qasr al'Azam at Hama, Ottoman Governor's palace; Shayzar/Larissa, settlement of the Hellenistic to Medieval period). According to the collected

information (although scattered, coming from reliable sources), only at the site of Larissa was affected by damage, due to shelling.

Also, she drew the attention to categories of objects at risk of looting, such as Roman oil lamps, spindle whorls, coins, Bronze Age and prehistoric pottery. Targeting the most famous items in museum collections seems unlikely for the time being, however, this risk should be taken into account.

Finally, the **expert from the University of Bern** presented on the issue of illicit trafficking of cultural property through the diplomatic pouch: according to his presentation, it is common that some diplomats collect cultural objects from their country of assignment; this leads to the creation of large collections of antiquities, which do not always undergo through control by the customs. These collections can later be introduced lawfully into the art market, if sold, or could become part of museum collections, if donated. Therefore, in order to reduce the problem, civil servants working abroad should be asked export certificates in order to send out cultural objects; also, artefacts without searched provenance should not be accepted by sellers and museums. It featured later in the discussion that the illegal export of cultural property does not only concern diplomats, and that there is a general lack of awareness among international visitors to the countries rich in heritage. Later during the workshop the Swiss expert also presented on a project in Gaza, a case of archaeological work under the circumstances of a conflict. Activities there included not only research, but also awareness and capacity building, aimed also at solving issues with artefacts without certified origin.



Examples of artefacts included in the presentations of the representatives from the foreign archaeological missions.

Session II. Illicit Trafficking - previous experiences, good practices and operational tools

1. International Organizations

The session concentrated on the tools against the illicit trafficking of cultural objects provided by international organizations. First, support available for police and custom officers on the part of INTERPOL and World Customs Organization was presented.

The **INTERPOL** facilitates information exchange and police cooperation, both regionally and internationally. The specialized Works of Art Unit addresses the issue, and tools are available to assist countries in the fight against illicit traffic, including the Stolen Works of Art online database called "I-24/7".

The **World Customs Organization (WCO)** highlighted that the work of customs should be a top priority in countries rich in heritage as customs are at the front line in the fight against the illicit movement of cultural objects. International and regional cooperation is vital in this respect, e.g. via Regional Intelligence Liaison Office of WCO. The ARCHEO Programme was then presented, which constitutes an online communication tool used by customs in cases involving cultural objects; this tool facilitates quick online consultations on cultural objects with other customs officers and external experts, and is available also in Arabic.

Afterwards, international organizations focused on heritage protection.

ICOM presented its activities in fighting against the illicit trafficking of cultural objects. Since 2004 ICOM established a “Disaster Relief Task Force”, to monitor the situation in case of emergency, such as political conflict or disaster. Also, since 2000, ICOM instituted the Emergency Red Lists of artefacts in danger, which provide, for a given country, categories of objects exposed to illicit trafficking. An Emergency Red List on Syrian cultural objects is currently being developed with the financial support of the USA. ICOM is also planning to use satellite imagery to monitor the situation on the ground, in cooperation with UNITAR.

ICOMOS employs its experts, in particular the Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness, for documenting cultural heritage and fighting against illicit trafficking through civil society and local experts. It organized an e-learning course for Syrian heritage professionals in January 2013. The course contained, among others, information on disaster risk management, first aid to cultural collections, documentation techniques. ICOMOS stressed the importance of neutrality and steady relations between actors involved in the emergency response.

ICCROM emphasized that the response to the crisis should not wait until the conflict is resolved. It could be organized between the military, humanitarian aid and development agencies, and should focus on enhancing international and regional cooperation against illicit trafficking. Involving local communities seems crucial as well. A course on cultural heritage in times of crisis developed by ICCROM was mentioned as an example of possible action. The Director of ICCROM called on the academic institutions to highlight Syrian heritage abroad, and suggested preparation of a photo inventory of Syrian cultural objects and inventories of excavations and catalogues.

The **Blue Shield** network focused on the need of coordination between stakeholders and experts. Results of experts’ meeting should be disseminated, in order to avoid duplication and coordinate the international efforts. Establishing Blue Shield committees was encouraged in the region, as the Blue Shield network facilitates exchanging information, pre-conflict implementation of the 1954 and 1970 conventions, as well as assists post-conflict fact finding missions.

ICA stressed that preservation of archives in conflict allows reconstructing collections in case of loss, and to this end, it is vital to assess the risk. ICA has a regional section for the Arab region called ArbICA, which can facilitate activities in regard to archives preservation in Syria and communication with international experts.

2. Experiences in Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Libya

The experience of the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural objects from **Iraq** was discussed in length. The pillage of the National Museum in Baghdad hit the news headlines, but large scale looting during and after that conflict severely affected archaeological sites and museums throughout the country. The **UNESCO** Office for Iraq presented on the situation since 2003. The initial response comprised of expert meetings and on the ground assessment. Later interventions,

in cooperation with other actors included: border patrolling; training in site monitoring and object identification; database inventories; legal training. UNESCO continues to assist in the rehabilitation of cultural and heritage institutions, modernization of museum practices and management. Challenges remain related to the ratification of the UNIDROIT convention, enforcement of heritage law and increasing public awareness.

Specialized police units from Italy and France were engaged in the protection of heritage in Iraq, which exemplifies the advantages in establishing such units.

The **Italian Carabinieri Department for the protection of cultural heritage** presented some of their activities in Iraq aimed at restricting commercialization of looted objects, recording lost pieces (number and typology of the objects) and recovering them. They trained the local staff on monitoring archaeological areas, safety measures, methods of object identification, description and transportation of archaeological findings. Besides, they undertook two missions in Iraq, working on the inventory of the National Museum of Iraq and providing training for archaeological site keepers.

The **French Office for the Fight against Trafficking of Cultural Objects (OCBC)** also investigated against illicit trafficking in Iraq: in particular the specialized police unit recovered some Iraqi objects from internet illegal market (for more details about the presentation given by the French Police, see Part 3 of this Session).

Other experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations were presented by UNESCO and the Swiss Federal Office for Culture.

UNESCO presented the recent experiences in fighting against illicit trafficking in **Afghanistan, Egypt and Libya**:

- The actions in Afghanistan ranged from extensive operations to restore the museum infrastructures after war damages, to the reestablishment of inventories, staff training, capacity building, and awareness-raising. The security situation and lack of border control makes the control of the traffic in cultural objects difficult. However, the efforts of the organization and some “market countries” allowed for restitution of a large number of illegally exported artefacts.
- In Egypt, the local population played a vital role in safeguarding sites and museums, including the Cairo Museum. Despite this, some sites were affected by illicit excavations. UNESCO organized emergency actions to assess the situation at museums and sites and is currently developing projects on capacity building among the local population and disaster risk reduction.
- During the Libya crisis, UNESCO held emergency expert meetings and the Director-General was actively engaged in advocacy for enhancing protection of Libyan cultural property. A Project Office was recently established in Tripoli, with the aim of implementing technical assistance projects in the country across UNESCO’s fields of competence.

INTERPOL’s General Secretariat participated directly in some activities carried out at international level during crisis period. In particular, regarding Iraq and Egypt:

- Following the conflict in Iraq and the massive looting of the Iraq Museum in April 2003, the General Secretariat created a specific INTERPOL Tracking Task Force on stolen Iraqi antiquities (ITTF) which was maintained until 2010. This was a preferential platform with an operational focus including specialized units of member countries particularly active in tracing Iraqi cultural property and combating its illicit trafficking;
- a member of WOA Unit participated in a security mission, for an emergency action for museums and archaeological sites in Egypt, organized by UNESCO in May 2011.

The **Swiss Federal Office of Culture** presented the experience of the “Afghanistan Museum in Exile”, organized in Switzerland, that proved to be an effective way to safeguard the movable cultural property in time of conflict. The “Afghanistan Museum in Exile” opened in 2001 and constituted a depository for the protection of Afghan cultural artefacts during the conflict. The museum received more than 1,400 Afghan cultural objects from private donors and established a complete inventory by dedicated volunteer specialists. The success of this operation was proved by the successful restitution of the 1,400 objects to the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul in 2006, under the umbrella of UNESCO. Following this example, the principles that should govern such “safe havens” for cultural property can be outlined: “safe havens” are responsible for safekeeping and preserving the cultural heritage that they are entrusted, for its inventorying, and for returning it to its owner or established source when requested.

3. Investigation and restitution – operational tools

The session focused on investigation of crimes related to cultural heritage and modalities for restitution of illegally exported cultural objects.

UNESCO presented some operational tools and methods in fighting the illicit traffic of cultural objects. The creation of national police databases of stolen works of art is of major importance, since databases facilitate the task of the police to monitor, identify and recover stolen works of art, and can provide material to start investigations. A police database should be simple, and contain only relevant information to identify objects (object ID). It is advisable to create such a database for Syria now, in order to prevent illicit trafficking before it develops. Another useful tool is the UNESCO Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws, which provides free, easy and quick access to the cultural heritage laws currently in force in 180 countries.

Next, the key modalities for investigating illicit trafficking and returning stolen cultural property were presented. International police cooperation and judicial cooperation are vital to prosecute offences and return recovered objects to the country of origin. To this regard, it has to be noted that, in order to obtain legal assistance from another country and facilitate the restitution process, the establishment of bilateral agreements between countries is needed. The creation of specialized police units and the development of a comprehensive approach to restitution claims are also highly recommended. Finally, identifying market countries and establishing bilateral cooperation with them may be the key to successful operations.

In the discussion, the Head of Legal Affairs at DGAM raised the problem of commitment to the application of bilateral agreements on cultural property that creates problems for Syria and other countries rich in heritage.

ICOM presented the approach of museums to restitution claims and the ethical questions arising. Principles such as nationality, legality, morality or universality often oppose and create conflicts, while sustaining the dialogue should have priority. According to ICOM, complicated cases often require openness to dialogue and negotiations rather than judicial procedures. To this end, ICOM and the World Intellectual Property Organization Arbitration and Mediation Center (WIPO Center) established the “Art and Cultural Heritage Mediation Service”, which is a not-for-profit mediation service designed for art and cultural heritage disputes.

The national police units specialized in the protection of cultural property from France and Italy briefed on preventive and operational tools used in their practice.

The **French Central Office for the Fight against Trafficking of Cultural Objects (OCBC)** highlighted the need to establish a cooperation strategy among national, international and private institutions. Also, it is important to establish a legal framework adapted to national reality, a police register and databases providing object description and photographic information. The officer advised adaptation to the principles of the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention and application of preventive measures against destruction, theft and illicit transportation in the case of Syria.

The **Italian Carabinieri** presented the practical aspects of the Carabinieri cultural unit work and tools used in safeguarding cultural heritage - risk assessment, educational activities and police investigations: Carabinieri use of and help preparing inventories; actively protect the land and underwater cultural heritage through patrols; collaborate with researchers and heritage authorities. Risk maps, including aerial photos are also useful to survey threats, including clandestine excavations.

4. Art market

Christie's Auction House presented the perspective of the art market. The representative from Christie's stressed that his company condemns illicit trafficking of art and actively discourages it, e.g. by insisting on providing recent history of objects to eliminate looted artefacts. The need for cooperation and information exchange was emphasized. From this perspective, Christie's deplored the relatively little engagement with the art market on the part of stakeholders, as auction houses should not be seen as enemies, but partners in regard to the illicit trafficking of art.

This presentation triggered a vivid discussion on the art market's role and the need for checking the provenance of cultural artefacts and collections, the need of cooperation with police forces, as well as the need of abiding to the international conventions.

The issue of the art market and market countries was also the topic of the presentation by the **representative of the US Embassy to Jordan** that focused specifically on the sale of Iraqi antiquities and on the assistance available in the United States in cases involving Iraqi antiquities. The United States is a major market country of stolen cultural property, which is available on the black market, as well as on internet public auctions sites. The United States does not have a general patrimony law, but can assist in returning stolen cultural property to the country of origin, according to the National Stolen Property Act.



Session III. Working groups: risk preparedness at museums and archaeological sites, the way forward

Two parallel working groups were formed and both asked to discuss the two following scenarios, and provide recommendations:

1. The current scenario in Syria:

- a. How regional cooperation among customs, police, INTERPOL and the departments of Antiquities in Syria and neighbouring countries could be enhanced?
- b. In light of the presentations on the situation in Syria, which are the immediate threats to Cultural Heritage?
 - which heritage is more at risk?
 - what could be the immediate response of the international community in support to the DGAM? How could they be operationalized?
- c. Who could be responsible for the actions identified?

2. Recovery scenario: when situation will allow access

- a. Which are the activities to be carried out?
- b. Who could be responsible for the actions identified?
- c. How international cooperation mechanism could be established?



Following the two working sessions, the recommendations of the working groups were consolidated in one document by UNESCO. The results were then presented in a plenary meeting, discussed and endorsed by the participants. As a result, a Plan of Action to safeguard the heritage of Syria and fight against the illicit trafficking of Syrian cultural objects was outlined.

The Action Plan is attached to this document (Annex I).

Annex I: Plan of Action

UNESCO Regional Training on Syrian Cultural Heritage: addressing the issue of illicit trafficking

Amman 10-13 February 2013

PLAN OF ACTION

Cultural heritage represents a source of identity and fulfilment for its people: attacks on cultural heritage are not only attacks on the legacy of humanity, they are attacks on people's souls and identity, which can dramatically affect reconstruction and return to normalcy after conflicts. The protection of cultural heritage in case of conflict must be ensured by the international community, in order to pave the way towards recovery.

The present Plan of Action was prepared during the *Regional training on Syrian cultural heritage: addressing the issue of illicit trafficking*, organized by UNESCO Amman Office and the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Protection Treaties Section on 10-13 February 2013 in Amman. The meeting gathered representatives of the antiquities departments, police and customs from Syria and its neighbouring countries (Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey – Iraq was also invited but could not participate), together with international organizations involved in cultural heritage management and protection (ICCROM, INTERPOL, UNIDROIT, World Customs Organization, ICOMOS, ICOM, ICA, Blue Shield network.), law enforcement experts from specialized international police units (France, Italy and Switzerland), and archaeologists representing the main international archaeological missions working in Syria.

The development of this Action Plan was undertaken during the course of two working sessions, aimed at discussing possible actions to address the present scenario in Syria and to pave the way forward for a recovery scenario, by improving the regional and international cooperation.

Below are the actions recommended as a result of the discussions held during the training workshop; these actions are meant to safeguard the unique heritage of Syria, and fight against the illicit trafficking of its cultural objects by involving and coordinating the efforts of all major stakeholders.

The recommendations have been divided in two parts, to respond to the present situation and to forecast possible actions in the early recovery phase. The proposed actions focus on advocacy, standard setting, capacity building and awareness-raising, and involve all major stakeholders, including the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (hereinafter DGAM) and Syria's neighbouring countries.

Response in the current scenario

1. ADVOCACY: actions meant to advocate for the protection of Syrian cultural heritage at national and international level

Syrian DGAM:

- advocate in Syria for keeping cultural heritage among the priorities requiring attention during the crisis;
- advocate in Syria for continuing and enhancing the support to the work of the DGAM;

- advocate with the military, in line with the 1954 Hague Convention, to avoid using major heritage sites for military purposes, based on the information collected on the ground on those sites;
- report to the next UNESCO World Heritage Committee on the state of conservation of the World Heritage sites in Syria.

UNESCO:

- further advocate with the UN Security Council and UNESCO Member States on the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage in Syria as a priority. To this end, UNESCO should continue providing detailed and updated information to the United Nations Office of the Joint Special Representative for Syria and recommend to its Member States to exclude from sanctions the actions aimed at safeguarding cultural heritage in Syria;
- advocate with the international archaeological missions in Syria to ensure that they continue to operate for the safeguarding of Syrian cultural heritage. Their collaboration with local communities and use of long distance technologies should be seen as an effective way of protecting sites;
- advocate with major museums, archives and libraries hosting Syrian artefacts to highlight the value of those collections and develop special public messages, in order to communicate risks for the cultural heritage of Syria and raise public awareness on the current needs. Those messages should be devised in cooperation with UNESCO and DGAM;
- link UNESCO activities to the overall UN plan for Syria (SHARP).

Archaeological missions:

- share with other missions good practices that allow for the protection of sites from the distance, so to promote those practices wherever possible. UNESCO and DGAM can facilitate disseminating this information;
- promptly communicate to other missions, DGAM, INTERPOL and UNESCO any reports on damage to cultural heritage or looting on the sites of their research.

2. STANDARD SETTING: actions meant to establish a series of standard measures to prevent the risk of illicit trafficking and ensure the safeguard of Syrian cultural heritage

Syrian DGAM:

- encourage ratification of the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention, as well as the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects by Syria (and other bordering countries);
- cooperate with Departments of Antiquities in neighbouring countries to devise bilateral agreements for the restitution of cultural property. Law enforcement and military shall be included in the development of these agreements, and UNESCO could serve as a mediator in the process;
- provide INTERPOL with information on missing objects, in order to include them in the Stolen Works of Art Database. In such cases, INTERPOL in Syria should also immediately alert the INTERPOL's National Central Bureau outside Syria.

UNESCO and other international organizations:

- foster cooperation with countries where the market for illegal works of art is more active, and launch preventive actions in collaboration with their authorities;
- promote cooperation at the regional level, and among other actions, by providing models and assistance for the conclusion of bilateral agreements;
- disseminate to all parties related to the conflict in Syria, information about the penal consequences of intentional destruction of cultural property.

3. AWARENESS RAISING: actions meant to raise awareness on the importance of Syrian cultural heritage and the risks affecting its preservation

UNESCO and other international organizations:

- UNESCO shall introduce specific tools on cultural heritage among its informal education activities carried out in favour of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. It should also make those tools available to the Syrian Ministry of Education and Syrian NGOs and CBOs;
- International Council of Museums (ICOM) is called to complete and circulate the Emergency Red List of Syrian objects at risk by spring 2013.

UNESCO, other international organizations, DGAM and archaeological community:

A worldwide awareness raising campaign on Syrian cultural heritage and specific artefacts should be established under the UNESCO auspices, possibly including:

- an awareness raising travelling exhibition in Syria's neighbouring countries and abroad;
- a video documentary to raise awareness on the cultural heritage of Syria;
- an awareness raising brochure to be distributed among border police and customs inside Syrian and in Syria's neighbouring countries;
- press releases and slogans to be circulated in order to spread information and discourage purchases of Syrian cultural artefacts;
- campaigning through already existing regional programs;
- a virtual museum to promote the universal value of the Syrian heritage;
- an awareness raising conference on the Syrian cultural heritage.

DGAM and archaeological missions in Syria:

- organize lecturing on Syrian heritage and share information about such events to be advertised via the UNESCO web site;
- share with UNESCO and INTERPOL any information on the trafficking of Syrian cultural objects available to them;
- prepare an open letter in support of the efforts of the DGAM to be signed by the archaeological community;
- DGAM should develop a media strategy, including social media, to share and encourage sharing information about the Syrian cultural heritage inside Syria.

Archaeological institutes in Syria's neighbouring countries:

- encourage and invite lecturing on Syrian cultural heritage and share information about such events to be advertised via the UNESCO web site;
- share with UNESCO and INTERPOL any information on the trafficking of Syrian cultural objects available to them.

4. CAPACITY BUILDING: actions meant to build the capacities of safeguarding Syrian cultural heritage among Syrian authorities and Syrian neighbouring countries

UNESCO and INTERPOL/WCO:

- prepare and implement trainings for border and customs personnel in Syria and its neighbouring countries as a matter of urgency;
- facilitate systematic information exchange among Syria, Syria's neighbouring countries and the International Organizations, also at a long distance, in order to sustainably combat the illicit trading of cultural objects;
- INTERPOL is called to organize, in cooperation with the World Customs Organisation - Regional Intelligence Liaison Office, specialized meetings involving police and customs officers of Syria and neighbouring countries.

International organizations:

- the International Council of Museums (ICOM) is called to provide trainings on the *Object ID*;
- The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), in cooperation with ICOM Disaster Relief Task Force, ICA and the Blue Shield, should develop and implement e-courses, covering all issues related to risk management, including also the illicit trade in cultural objects and law enforcement. UNESCO coordination is sought to this end;
- ICOM and ICOMOS should adapt to the Syrian context existing guidelines for the protection of museums, cultural institutions and sites, and disseminate them via DGAM, NGOs and CBOs.

UNESCO and other international organizations:

- train the Red Cross and Red Crescent staff in Syria, as well as the UN personnel in Syria to use the site and monument evaluation forms, so that they could report on the condition of cultural heritage to DGAM and UNESCO when possible (see section 5. Preventive actions and tools below).

5. PREVENTIVE ACTIONS and TOOLS: actions meant to take preventive measures to safeguard Syrian cultural heritage at risk

DGAM:

- establish repositories of data outside Syria, via double server, to enhance the protection of the information on the state of heritage collected to date;
- initiate the assessment of storages and prepare a database of cultural objects including photographic data;
- consider movement of selected masterpieces to “safe havens” outside Syria, in case the situation worsens, or to organize a travelling exhibition for them as a protective action.

UNESCO and other international organizations:

- develop guidelines on “safe havens” for collections and protective measures for sites;
- adapt to the Syrian context existing evaluation forms to assess the state of conservation of sites and monuments;
- UNESCO, as a trustworthy information clearing house, in partnership with DGAM, is called to assess the feasibility of the remote satellite surveillance of archaeological sites and cultural landscapes at risk. To this end, DGAM shall provide locations of most sensitive areas; UNESCO shall try to obtain access to satellite information;
- Archaeological missions working in Syria should continue monitoring the sites, basing on the historic data they possess, and alert the DGAM if a direct action is needed;
- Archaeological missions are asked to share existing databases with the DGAM and UNESCO, in view of creating a unique database of sites in Syria;
- For the monitoring of urban sites, the World Heritage Information Network and ICOMOS shall provide their expertise.

6. NETWORKING: actions meant to improve contacts among stakeholders in the region and internationally, to foster cooperation in safeguarding Syrian cultural heritage

UNESCO:

- create a database of experts on Syrian cultural heritage and facilitate networking between them;
- open a repository of information on Syrian heritage, linked to the UNESCO web site, as well as create a network of external on-line repositories.

Response in the early recovery phase

1. ASSESSMENT

UNESCO is called to prepare for the in-country assessment phase from now, in order to assess and quantify the damages to the cultural heritage. The assessment will be carried out once the security situation allows; site monitoring could start whenever feasible.

In the meantime, it is important to train the DGAM staff in rapid assessment of site/monuments/collections using *ad hoc* assessment forms. To this end, a network of DGAM staff shall be identified in different provinces. Together with local staff of archaeological missions and students in archaeology and heritage, where possible, these shall be trained on line by ICCROM/ICOMOS/ICOM/UNESCO. Training of trainers and simulations could also take place either in Lebanon or Jordan. Identified staff shall also be attributed sites, and teams' size shall vary according to site/collection/monument.

Once situation allows, these teams shall be paired with International archaeological missions' staff and eventually with UNESCO experts/staff, to compile a thorough assessment of the country. This extensive assessment plan shall be in place prior to the possibility to enter into the country. Therefore planning shall initiate from present. The plan shall include identification of National teams, assignment of sites, training on line on condition assessment, Training of Trainers, collection of existing documentation (plans, maps, drawings, pictures, videos) on the sites/collections/monuments prior to the armed conflict for comparison. To this end a proposal could be formulated and budgeted. UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS/ICOM are asked to work together to devise this plan in cooperation with DGAM and archaeological missions. UNESCO is called to seek funds to this end. UNESCO is also called to link this plan with the overall International recovery plan for Syria.

2. Awareness raising on damages and urgent needs

The efforts to raise awareness on Syrian heritage and the means of protection should continue and be enhanced after the crisis ends. UNESCO should make sure that the informal education toolkit previously developed is delivered to the Syrian schools through the Ministry of Education.

At the international level, a conference focused on Syrian archaeology and heritage should be organized, possibly within the framework of the International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE) network or the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) meetings.

3. CAPACITY BUILDING

The capacity of the DGAM to assess and quantify the damages to the cultural heritage should be further developed through capacity building and training activities organized by UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS (see section 1. Assessment).

The network of municipal museums in Syria needs to be promptly assessed in order to be reorganized and reopened. To this end, at the same time of the assessment, training in conservation and data base preparation shall be given. It would also be important to identify Syrian students in archaeology/conservation, including the ones who studied abroad, to be part of the early recovery phase.

Training for site guards should be undertaken by UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS, in collaboration with International police forces, in order to improve on the ground protection and engage local communities in the process.

Training on reporting damages to cultural heritage for Syrian journalists should also be organized by UNESCO

4. STANDARD SETTING

Syria should be encouraged to ratify the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

5. NETWORKING

A police unit specialized in cultural heritage should be established in Syria, with the assistance of UNESCO and support from experienced units of this kind in other countries (e.g. France, Italy, Switzerland). The supporting police forces should also prepare reference materials and train the Syrian police officers in culture specific activities.

OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

- Creation of an *ad hoc* UNESCO fund for the salvage of the Syrian cultural heritage is sought, in order to enable implementation of the activities defined in the action plan, in the short term scenario.
- Creation a **Syrian Heritage Coordination Group** under the auspices of UNESCO, comprised of representatives of international organizations, NGOs (with limited participation and flexible ToR) and a representatives of the international archaeological mission working in Syria, to overlook the implementation of the Plan of Action. The Coordination Group should convene a 2-day meeting to assess the implementation of the plan after 6 months.
- A programmatic focal point in charge of the cultural response for Syria cultural heritage should be designated to managing the Coordination Group.

Annex II: Agenda of the workshop

Under the patronage of HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan

Regional training on Syrian cultural heritage: addressing the issue of illicit trafficking

Amman, Marriott Hotel, 10-13 February 2013

Day 1

- 9.00-09.45 Official remarks:
- Ms Anna Paolini, Head of UNESCO Office in Amman and UNESCO Representative in Jordan
 - HEMr Michael Winzap, Ambassador of Switzerland to Jordan
 - Keynote Address: HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Jordan Museum

09.45-10.30 Coffee break

10.30-10.45 Presentation of the workshop objectives and expected outputs; presentation of UNESCO activities since the beginning of the conflict (Ms Anna Paolini, UNESCO)

I. Setting the context

Moderator: Ms Anna Paolini, Head of UNESCO Office in Amman and UNESCO Representative in Jordan

1. The normative framework to fight against illicit trafficking

11.00-11.30 The 1954 UNESCO Convention and its two Protocols (Mr Edouard Planche, UNESCO)

11.30-12.15 The 1970 UNESCO Convention and the national legislations for the protection of cultural heritage (Mr Edouard Planche, UNESCO)

12.15-13.00 The 1995 UNIDROIT Convention (Ms Marina Schneider, Senior Officer, UNIDROIT)

13.00-14.00 Lunch

2. Cultural Heritage protection and regional cooperation

Moderator: Dr Samir Abdulac, UNESCO Expert

14.00-14.45 Syrian cultural heritage: the current situation (Dr Maamoun Abdulkarim, Director, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria)

14.45-15.15 Cultural Heritage protection and regional cooperation in Lebanon (Mr. Assaad Seif, Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture, Lebanon)

- 15.15-15.45 Cultural Heritage protection and regional cooperation in Jordan(Mr Adnan Rafaiaa, Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan)
- 15.45-16.00 Coffee break
- 16.00-16.30 Laws for the protection, management and promotion of Syrian cultural heritage (Mr. Ayman Suleiman, Head of Legal Affairs, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria)
- 16.30-17.30 Discussion

Evening

- 19.00-20.30 Reception

Day 2

Moderator: Dr Samir Abdulac and Ms Anna Paolini, UNESCO

3. Threats to Syrian cultural heritage: the issue of illicit trafficking

- 09.00-09.45 Remarks by Dr Maamoun Abdulkarim, Director, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria
- 09.45-10.45 Representatives of foreign archaeological missions:
- 09.45-10.05 Marc Griesheimer, IFPO
 - 10.05-10.25 Graham Philip, Durham University
 - 10.25-10.45 Frances Pinnock, University of Rome La Sapienza
- 10.45-11.00 Coffee break
- 11.00-11.40 Representatives of foreign archaeological missions:
- 11.00-11.20 Giorgio Buccellati, UCLA
 - 11.20-11.40 Karin Bartl, DAI
- 11.40-12.00 The diplomatic pouch issue(Dr Marc-André Haldimann, Archaeologist, Former Chief Curator, Berne University)

II. Illicit trafficking: previous experiences, good practices and operational tools

- Moderator: Mr Friedrich Schipper, Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield
- 12.00-12.30 The role of INTERPOL in the protection of cultural heritage in times of crisis (Mr Fabrizio Panone, Criminal Intelligence Officer, INTERPOL)
- 12.30-13.00 WCO/ RILO (Mr Laurent Pinot, RILO Western Europe)
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00-14.30 The role of a NGO - International Council of Museums (Ms France Desmarais, ICOM)

- 14.30-15.00 International Council of Monuments and Sites (Ms Cristina Menegazzi and Dr Samir Abdulac)
- 15.00-15.30 Building capacity for safeguarding heritage & promoting peace in times of conflict (Dr Stefano De Caro, Director-General, ICCROM)
- 15.30-15.45 Coffee break
- 15.45-16.15 Blue Shield Statement (Mr Friedrich Schipper, Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield)
- 16.15-16.45 International Council of Archives (Ms Cristina Menegazzi, ICA)
- 16.45-17.30 Discussion

Day 3

Moderator: Mr Benno Widmer, Federal Office of Culture, Switzerland

III. Continuation of “Illicit trafficking: previous experiences and good practices”

- 09.00-09.30 Carabinieri T.P.C. in Iraq (Capt. Giuseppe Marseglia, Carabinieri, Italy)
- 09.30-10.00 The example of the Afghanistan Museum in exile, Bubendorf (Switzerland) (Mr Benno Widmer, Federal Office of Culture, Switzerland)
- 10.00-10.30 UNESCO experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations, The case of Iraq (Ms Geraldine Chatelard, UNESCO)
- 10.30-10.45 Coffee break
- 11.00-11.45 UNESCO experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations (Mr Edouard Planche, UNESCO)
- 11.45-12.15 The national databases of stolen works of art (Mr Alberto Deregibus, UNESCO)
- 12.15-13.00 Modalities for return and restitution (Mr Alberto Deregibus, UNESCO)
- 13.00-13.15 Role of museums in returns and restitutions (Ms. France Desmarais, ICOM)
- 13.15-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00-14.30 Investigation techniques (Mr Stéphane Gauffeny, Colonel de Gendarmerie, Office Central de lutte contre le trafic des Biens Culturel, France)
- 14.30-15.00 The preventive activities and the protection of archaeological sites (Capt. Giuseppe Marseglia, Carabinieri, Italy)
- 15.00-15.15 Archaeology in times of conflict – the case of Gaza (Marc-André Haldimann, Archaeologist, Former Chief Curator, Berne University)
- 15.15-15.30 Coffee break

15.30-16.00 Preventing the illicit trade in cultural property: the role of Christie's auction house (Mr Martin Wilson, Christie's)

IV. Risk preparedness at museums and archaeological sites: the way forward

16.00-17:30 Working sessions:

Moderators: Mr Joseph Kreidi and Mr Edouard Planche, UNESCO
Dr Samir Abdulac and Ms Anna Paolini, UNESCO

The present scenario: possible actions to fight illicit trafficking

- Which are the present needs and threats?
- Which could be the role of the international community?
- Which could be the role of police and customs?
- How can regional cooperation be improved?
- What response actions can be taken now to mitigate the issue of illicit trafficking?
- Who does what?

Day 4

09.00-10.30 Continuation of working sessions

The recovery scenario:

- How a damage assessment could be carried out? By whom?
- Which actions could be carried out?
- How restitution will be carried out?
- How will the countries in the region cooperate?
- Which will be the role of the international community?
- Who does what?

10.30-11.00 Coffee break

11.00-11.15 Repatriation of cultural property: the US experience (Kimberley K McCarty, Legal Attache, U.S. Embassy Amman)

11.15-11.45 Brief reporting of the working sessions to the plenary and discussion

11.45-13.15 Plenary working session: Finalization of a "roadmap" to address Syrian cultural heritage

13.15-15.00 Lunch

15.00-16.00 Closing session: final presentation of the results and final discussion

Annex III: list of participating institutions

Archaeological missions in Syria

Durham University
German Archaeological Institute (DAI)
Institut français du Proche-Orient (IFPO)
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
Univeristy of Rome La Sapienza

Art dealers

Christie's

International organizations and institutions

Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield (ANCBS)
Federal Office for Culture, Switzerland
ICA
ICCROM
ICOM
ICOMOS
INTERPOL
UNIDROIT
University of Bern
WCO-RILO

International police

Carabinieri, Italy
Federal Police, Switzerland
Office central de lutte contre le trafic des biens culturels (OCBC), France

Jordanian authorities

Customs Department
Department of Antiquities
INTERPOL

Lebanese authorities

Customs Department

Directorate General of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture

INTERPOL

Police Department

Syrian authorities

Customs Department

Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM)

Police Department

Turkish authorities

Customs Department

INTERPOL

Institutions in Jordan

American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR)

American Embassy in Amman

Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL)

French Embassy in Amman

Hashemite University

Institut français du Proche-Orient (IFPO), Amman

Petra National Trust

World Monuments Fund

UNESCO

Office for Iraq

Office in Amman

Office in Beirut

Cultural Heritage Protection Treaties Section

Annex IV: Keynote Speech by HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan

© HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan

Y.E. Dr. Anna Paolini, Head of UNESCO Office in Amman and UNESCO Representative in Jordan,

Y.E. Mr. Michael Winzap, Ambassador of Switzerland to Jordan and Iraq,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I commend you all for your dedication to preserving and securing our world's heritage under fire, particularly in this latest challenge to a vital part of our regional patrimony. This workshop on Regional Training on Syrian Cultural Heritage: Addressing the issue of illicit trafficking, is unfortunately very necessary as the strife in Syria continues. As our neighbours to the north suffer ongoing misery and threats to life and limb, we are mindful that their cultural heritage is also in the firing line.

We are all united in our conviction that cultural heritage must not become a casualty of war or be used as a weapon to undermine the identity of communities under attack. As conflict rolls on unchecked, we must determine that the protection of culture is a vital part of protecting people in crisis. For safeguarding a nation's cultural heritage provides them with invaluable resources to rebuild communities, to re-establish unbroken cultural roots, and to restore links when conflict ends. War is brutally life-threatening, and callously destructive to many of the most vulnerable people. We must not let war deprive current and future generations of their timelessly layered identity.

Setting a global context for challenges faced by cultural heritage in times of conflict is essential to ensuring that the heritage of afflicted communities is safeguarded for future generations. For let us be clear that culture is not just at risk of collateral damage in conflict. It is very often the target of aggression and manipulation by those with a violent political agenda. The implement of international law is crucial in this respect and so we must do everything we can to strengthen the capacities of states to do so.

The various international Conventions to which governments have committed themselves, must be championed and enforced as permanent and unavoidable governmental obligations for the protection of cultural heritage. These include the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Properties in the Event of Armed Conflict - 1954, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property - 1970, and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. No matter how desperate a struggle seems to either side in conflict, we must never desist from crying out that states and others have an obligation to protect their heritage. How short a journey we have traveled as human beings when we continue to see this creation of human misery and this contempt for one's history – one's story. Is it really necessary to state yet again that not everything is allowed in war? Regrettably, it seems so.

Ladies and Gentlemen: War is not a part of any nation's identity. It is alien to civilization and it is foreign to the purity of the human soul. War is common but it is not normal, it is destructive but it is transitory. It may affect a nation's ability to thrive and to grow but it is not to be permitted to determine an artificial and dark identity. National and community identity is fostered by the

creativity of human civilization and is renewed through the preservation of cultural traditions and artifacts.

As Irina Bokova, Secretary General of UNESCO, wrote recently in the New York Times: “Culture has universal meaning. When cultural heritage is attacked anywhere in the world, like the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo and World Heritage sites damaged by severe bombing in Syria, each of us is shocked; this is a loss to all humanity.”

There is no doubt that Syria occupies territory that has been home to some of our world’s most impressive ancient civilisations. This heritage belongs not only to the Syrian people but also to their global family of mankind. Damascus and Aleppo are among the world's oldest inhabited cities and Syria is the birthplace of agrarian society.

Today, as the conflict rages on around them, brave and dedicated Syrian archaeologists are cataloguing at great personal risk the destruction of historical sites and doing much to save what they can. Reports from these committed individuals and from foreign specialists indicate that much damage has already been wrought in the country. We hear that an Assyrian temple has been destroyed at Tell Sheikh Hamad, and that terrible damage has been done to the wall and towers of the citadel of al-Madiq castle. Also, at the world-famous castle of Krak des Chevaliers, shelling has severely damaging the Crusader chapel, while looting of the magnificent Roman mosaics of Apamea, has destroyed a glorious and inspirational site. Shockingly, in the latter case, thieves – not armed combatants – have reportedly used bulldozers to lift up Roman floors and transport them for sale. Elsewhere, troops have occupied the Castle of Ibn Maan above the Roman city of Palmyra and have parked tanks and armoured vehicles in the Valley of the Tombs to the west of the old city.

These reports are graphically shocking and deeply upsetting. Perhaps what is most threatened in Syria, as is so often the case, is that junction between tangible and intangible heritage, where artifacts in situ give so much richness to local, national and regional heritage. They tell part of our universal, human story. But we must focus on the importance of museums and archives as repositories of shared knowledge for a nation. These should be protected by populations and combatants as sanctuaries and shared spaces and must be elevated above politics and conflict.

Ladies and Gentlemen: The reports we hear conjure up images of cultural Armageddon and a soulless disregard for soulful human creativity. Attacks against cultural heritage threaten the loss or disaggregation of cultural practices with consequences for the identity of a country and its people. I dearly hope that people caught up in this conflict will endure and at some time soon, one prays that the current conflict will be but a memory. Indeed, history teaches us that this too shall pass. But let us do all we can to ensure that when this agony is gone, our Syrian friends and the entire world, will not have lost a heritage that can never be replaced.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Amman Office of UNESCO for organizing this sad but essential meeting, with the support of UNESCO Cultural Heritage Protection Treaties Section and UNESCO offices in Beirut, Venice and Iraq. I would also like to thank the national, regional and international organizations involved in heritage protection, including International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Council on Archives (ICA), International Council of Museums (ICOM), International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), INTERPOL and Blue Shield.