Oral Report on the Informal Working Group Meeting

Wednesday 17 May 2017, 10:50 – 11:00

Maria Andreadaki – Vlazaki
Secretary General
Brought together states representatives, experts and professionals in a less formal context, proper for dialogue and negotiations that promote trust and cultivate good faith. At this meeting, apart from the delegates from 15 of the 18 countries of the Subsidiary Committee, representatives of Christie's auction house, ebay and INTERPOL also participated.
The discussion mainly focused on:
• The digital documentation of movable and immovable cultural property, its specific problems and the options for transfer of knowledge of this good practice, as well as the need for establishing and maintaining updated inventories
• The threats faced by countries under armed conflict in safekeeping their cultural heritage from illegal trade
• The cooperation of countries with INTERPOL and national law enforcement authorities which have developed advanced techniques in confronting cultural crime
The discussion mainly focused on:

• The bilateral cooperation between countries for the exchange of information
• The efforts to strengthen legal trade of cultural goods and handle it as part of the solution through the due diligence of the buyer and the compliance of the seller to the relevant code of ethics of ICOM
• The legislation terms and conditions of e – traders
• The attempts for creating mobile phone applications for searching lost or stolen cultural goods in online relevant databases.
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The Secretariat of the UNESCO 1970 Convention:
• stressed the need for proper application of the Convention
• highlighted the creation and maintenance of updated inventories, according to Article 5 of the Convention
• focused on the importance of the ICOM code of ethics
• underlined the crucial function of the Interpol Database
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Mr. Sotirios Patronos, Archaeologist at the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports:
- presented the colossal ongoing effort of Greece to document and record the whole of the Greek movable as well as immovable cultural property, through the use of an elaborate and multifunctional platform, which is already partly available online
- His presentation triggered a long discussion on the various problems that Greece confronts at this indexing attempt and also on the possibility to transfer this good practice to other countries
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Major Gianpietro Romano, the representative of Italy and expert of the Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage
• presented the efforts of this special law enforcement unit on preventing and investigating thefts from collections
• focused on book and library related cases.
• briefly mentioned the Leonardo Database used by the Carabinieri
Mr. Hartley Waltman, senior counselor at Christie’s Auction House:
• declared the opposition of the auction house to the illegal trade of cultural goods
• described the methods used for the investigation of the provenance of the objects
• insisted on the need for broader and closer cooperation both with states as well as with the Police
• stated that legal and ethical trade of cultural goods is part of the solution rather than part of the problem
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Mr. Corrado Catesi, Coordinator of the Works of Art Unit at INTERPOL:
• gave particularly important information concerning the use of the INTERPOL Database of lost or stolen cultural goods and its innovative application for smartphones
• explained the problem with forgeries and brought as example similar workshops in operation, especially in the Middle East
Ms. Delphine Dauba – Pantanacce, Senior Legal Counsel at Ebay Europe:

• referred to the obligation of e–trade providers to conform to the legislation of each state
• declared that Ebay does not possess the items and has often withdrawn products from sellers not compliant to the Laws of certain states
Ms. Susana Franco, representing Mexico, had a brief intervention about the upcoming meeting in Mexico for the protection of Documentary Heritage.
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Mr. Nevil Antonio Montenegro, Rapporteur of the Committee presented the efforts of Ecuador for the protection of Cultural heritage and also the effective bilateral collaboration with Peru.
Mrs. Artemis Papathanasiou, Legal advisor at the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Chairperson to the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2nd Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, argued that illicit trafficking of cultural property is a necessary side effect of armed conflicts.
An initiative and action of Greece for the protection of our cultural property from illegal transport and damage especially in territories under armed conflict.

The establishment of a roster, at present counting almost 30 persons, which are ready to offer their services in countries under armed conflict situations, where cultural heritage is seriously under threat. Archaeologists, architects and civil engineers, conservators, lawyers and specialists in the restoration of monuments have replied positively to our call and now their contact details and CVs are available upon request to the UNESCO Secretariat or any other competent body for possible future cooperation.
Thank you for your attention!

Dr. Maria Andreadaki - Vlazaki
mvlazaki@culture.gr
Secretary General