Fifth Session of the Subsidiary Committee of the Meeting of States Parties to the 1970 Convention 17-19 May 2017;

Summary of Doha Office Intervention:

The Current Situation and Actions Taken to Mitigate Illicit Traffic of Yemeni Cultural Property:

Recent conflicts in the region, in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and the rapid development and expansion of the art market in the region has created a high demand for cultural objects and increased the prevalence of illegal trafficking of cultural artifacts originating from countries that do not have the necessary measures in place. Easily accessible land routes to art-market states has exacerbated the situation for Yemen.

In light of these developments, UNESCO has intensified its capacity-building and support for Yemen and in the region. The Doha Office has conducted a range of activities to fight against illicit traffic of antiquities in the Persian Gulf countries and Yemen with a particular focus on heritage endangered by the ongoing conflicts. The activities undertaken have focused on 4 key areas:

Capacity-building training on the prevention of Illicit Traffic:

Yemeni staff from GOPHCY and SFD from various Governorates in Yemen were trained on the application of a mobile rapid assessment tool applicable to movable and immovable cultural heritage. The tool was applied to the Dhamar Museum for inventory of movable cultural objects and prevention of illicit traffic. UNESCO has also recently undertaken training initiatives in Oman and UAE to attempt to stem the trade through overland routes out of Yemen.

Awareness-Raising and Advocacy:

An international awareness-raising campaign, “Yemeni Heritage Week- Museums United for Yemen”, was organized from 24 to 30 April 2016 under the umbrella of UNESCO’s #Unite4Heritage. The objective of this campaign was to raise the awareness of the general public about the richness of cultural heritage in Yemen that is at risk due to the ongoing conflict. The campaign was organized in collaboration with 10 leading museums from around the world to highlight the issue.

Inventories of Museum Collections in Yemen:

The Doha Office has been supporting the Yemeni authorities in documenting artifacts and collections under potential threat from looting and destruction. Following the destruction of the Dhamar Museum, approximately 1000 objects have been inventoried from the ruins of the Museum using the training and application developed under the rapid assessment tool for both movable and immovable heritage under the UNESCO Doha Regular Programme. This activity and support for Yemeni authorities is ongoing.

Tracking of Stolen Artifacts:

The Doha Office has been working with Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) on tracking and tracing Yemeni artifacts through electronic media to monitor the situation.