Statement by the UK on the Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum

- The UK Government notes the strong aspirations of the Greek Government to see all the surviving sculptures from the Parthenon reunified in the Acropolis Museum.

- The Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum were legally acquired under the laws pertaining at the time and are legally owned by the Trustees of the Museum, which is independent of Government.

- The Trustees of the British Museum believe that the Museum is the best place for the sculptures to be seen in the context of their rich contribution to the history of the whole of humanity. The British Museum is a world museum and millions of people from all over the world are able to visit the Museum free of charge.

- The current exhibition 'Rodin and the Art of Ancient Greece', which will run at the British Museum from 26th April to 29th July 2018, includes a number of the Parthenon sculptures. These are displayed alongside Rodin’s works, lent as part of a collaboration with the Musée Rodin in Paris. Although he never visited Greece, Rodin engaged deeply with the Parthenon sculptures during repeated visits to London. The profound effect of this experience on his own creativity is explored in this exhibition, which also allows the Parthenon sculptures themselves to be seen in a new way.

- The Trustees have never been asked for a loan of the Parthenon sculptures by the Greek Government, only for their permanent transfer to Athens. The Trustees will consider any request for any part of the collection to be borrowed and then returned, provided the borrowing institution acknowledges the British Museum’s ownership and that the normal loan conditions are satisfied.

- The British Museum publicly displays the entirety of its holdings of sculptures from the Parthenon, irrespective of size; views the status of all of them in the same light; and welcomes research on all of them equally, whether undertaken by UK, Greek or international scholars.

- The British Museum has a long history of friendly collaboration with colleagues in Athens. The Museum was pleased to host Professor Pandermalis and a team from the Acropolis Museum in August 2017, to continue the work of scanning the Parthenon sculptures in London. The Museum also welcomed a colleague from
the Acropolis Restoration Service, who pursued research on the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon and presented the results in a well-received public lecture at the British Museum.

- In late 2016, the British Museum presented a replica of a lion’s head waterspout from the Parthenon to colleagues in the Acropolis Restoration Service. The British Museum was also pleased to lend four significant objects to the Acropolis Museum for the very successful exhibition “A World of Emotion: Ancient Greece, 700 BC-200 AD” in summer 2017.

- The UK Government fully supports the position taken by the Trustees of the British Museum and is keen that museum professionals in Greece and the United Kingdom should continue to have a dialogue, to assist understanding on these issues.