

Ancient Olympia Recommendation

The participants in the 3rd International Conference on the Return of Cultural Property, held in Athens and Ancient Olympia, Greece from 23 to 26 October 2013

Expressing their appreciation to the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports for organizing and hosting this event, which will hopefully become a new international forum convened on a regular basis, giving a valuable opportunity to experts to share experiences, knowledge and ideas on the return and restitution as well as the combat against illicit trafficking of cultural property,

Recalling the relevant international and regional legal instruments as well as national legislations on the matter,

Recognizing that the prevention of illicit traffic of cultural property and the fight against it requires cooperation on an international level,

Welcoming the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES /67/L.34 on the Return and Restitution of cultural property adopted on 5 December 2012,

Taking note of the UNESCO Rules of Procedure on Mediation and Conciliation adopted by the ICPRCP,

Recalling the UNESCO's and ICOM'S Codes of Ethics,

Deeply concerned about the recent wanton destruction and pillaging of cultural objects in Syria,

Taking into account that the progressive development of technologies making underwater antiquities accessible for commercial exploitation constitutes a significant danger for their integrity,

Recognizing with satisfaction that the common initiative taken by Greece and Korea in organizing international conferences on the return of cultural property has gained wider support,

RECOMMEND THAT:

1. States become parties to the relevant international instruments, in particular the 1970 UNESCO Convention and 1995 UNIDROIT Convention, if they have not already done so.
2. States discuss cases relating to return of cultural objects not governed by international legal instruments, seeking equitable solutions taking into account all the relevant and specific circumstances, such as the integrity of the cultural context, significance of the object for the States concerned, ethical propriety of its removal, treatment of the object by the present possessors, and the State of origin's commitment to security and care of objects;
3. States and other concerned entities draft and adopt, on the basis of in-depth research, Statements of Principles on the return of cultural objects to their countries of origin for cases where international legal instruments do not apply;
4. States, in attempting to reach equitable solutions, consider means of cooperation with other States, entities and individuals through cultural policy in general, including loans, temporary exhibitions, joint excavations activities, research, and restoration;
5. States use the existing alternative means of dispute resolution available;
6. States actively support UNESCO's role of coordination for the fighting against illicit trafficking and, to this end, provide for appropriate resources;
7. States seeking the return of cultural objects institute programs of raising awareness of the harmful effects of their removal, develop appropriate inventories of archaeological sites, monuments and cultural objects both in their territories and elsewhere, set priorities among the objects being sought, seek technical assistance where local resources are inadequate, and look for resources to assist with the cost of return;
8. States, museums and other concerned entities take an active role in assisting the return of displaced cultural objects including professional, financial, technical and other support;

9. States develop their own national databases and participate into INTERPOL's data base, according to their needs, with a basic aim to secure and safeguard their national cultural treasures and monuments;
10. States, private entities and individuals make their best efforts to minimize the harmful effects to cultural heritage during armed conflicts and to assist the affected States in the return and restitution of their respective cultural property;
11. Museums, dealers and all other relevant parties should be diligent to ensure that their policies and practices of acquisition should not be such as to encourage the destruction and looting of the cultural heritage of nations facing crisis or any kind of armed conflicts;
12. States, museums and individuals should act in good faith and initiate dialogues for the return of cultural objects to the original contexts in which they were created. In this respect, the participants in this Conference welcome the process of mediation launched for the first time by UNESCO aiming at solving the longstanding issue of the repatriation of the Parthenon marbles and urge the countries concerned to take any necessary step in good faith in order to achieve a positive outcome.