

**Speech by Francesco Bandarin, Assistant Director-General for Culture,  
on the occasion of the  
Extraordinary Meeting of States Parties to the 1970 Convention  
UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 1 July 2013**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters for the Extraordinary Meeting of States Parties to the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

Following the Second Meeting of States Parties held in June 2012, in accordance with the wishes of UNESCO's Member States, Director-General Bokova proposed to convene an Extraordinary Meeting of States Parties in 2013 – one year before the time frame specified in the newly adopted Rules of Procedure – in order to accelerate the creation of the monitoring organs and to elect the members of the Subsidiary Committee established in 2012.

The wide scale interest in this new Subsidiary Committee is also demonstrated by the numerous candidatures from representatives of States Parties from all six regional groups.

The next two days will be decisive for the 1970 Convention. Your debates will cover four decades of interpretation and concrete practice of this international treaty. For the first time in 43 years, States Parties will begin preparing draft the operational guidelines that will ultimately determine the Convention's practical implementation.

This meeting clearly reflects the political will of international community to create the new and improved tools needed to build a common front against illegal trade of archaeological and artistic objects, especially from areas affected by conflicts and crisis. In Mali despite numerous logistical challenges on the ground, UNESCO is

actively working with national authorities to train Malian police to protect their precious manuscripts, rebuild their earthen monuments and to create a regional network for the protection of cultural heritage.

As you are aware, the situation is far more difficult in Syria. In that country, destruction and looting of heritage continues with impunity, and our experts have been unable to intervene directly owing to the security situation. Nonetheless UNESCO has called upon the active cooperation and vigilance of the police and customs officials of bordering countries.

Allow me to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Switzerland for its continuous and generous financial support to the fight against illicit trafficking. I would also like to thank China and Turkey for contributing to the organization of this extraordinary meeting.

As I mentioned, the Subsidiary Committee's priority task will be agreeing on the Convention's operational guidelines. This will require a great commitment and hard work from all Delegations. Highly qualified specialists and, academic and legal experts have joined us to help States Parties in this task. In this regard, we are very fortunate to have among us today Professor Lyndel Prott, who is the "institutional memory" of the Convention. The draft operational guidelines proposed by the Secretariat are based on a preliminary study prepared by Professor Prott.

From our extensive experience with other culture conventions, we know that drafting operational guidelines is a long, complex and arduous task requiring a great deal of patience, dedication, compromise and consultation. This meeting is the first step in a collaborative process that no doubt will be continued over subsequent Committee sessions to ensure that the final draft as revised and fine-tuned effectively responds to the need to protect cultural heritage as understood by all States Parties.

UNESCO is eager to embark upon this exciting new chapter in the life of the 1970 Convention. However ensuring this instrument's widest possible implementation and

meeting the expectations of States Parties requires adequate human and financial resources. In this connection, I must acknowledge here the unfailing commitment and hard work of the small team that currently provides the Secretariat to the Convention within the Culture Sector. Moreover, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Belgium for financing a junior expert associate and Italy for seconding a specialist from the Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage. While we are making every effort to reinforce this four-person team so as to accord the 1970 Convention its due importance as recognized by Members States, it is very difficult to do so under the Organization's current financial situation. On behalf of the Director-General, I therefore appeal to all States Parties to provide the additional financial support and expertise without which the Secretariat cannot satisfactorily pursue its work to protect heritage from illicit trafficking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are all aware that the work you will carry out over the next few days will have long-term consequences. The Convention must be implemented more vigorously in order to combat a scourge that deprives every day millions worldwide of the enjoyment of our common cultural heritage.

I am confident that your expertise, wisdom and shared desire to safeguard cultural for future generations will ensure the success of your deliberations.

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