

MEDIA ADVISORY

UNESCO TRAINS LIBYAN POLICE, CUSTOMS AND ANTIQUITY OFFICERS IN FIGHT AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

**Training session on the prevention and fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property in Libya (Tripolitania and Fezzan regions)
Sabratha World Heritage Site, 15-26 September 2013.**

SABRATHA, 25 September 2013 – As part of a broader capacity building programme funded by the Government of Italy, with the support of the Local Council of Sabratha, UNESCO and the Department of Antiquities of Libya co-organized from 15 to 26 September 2013 at the World Heritage Site of Sabratha a training session on the prevention and fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property in Libya. The training was aimed at 42 selected staff from different bodies of various public institutions (such as customs, police departments and public prosecutors) from the Tripolitania and Fezzan regions, with a view to enforcing an efficient protection system for cultural heritage and building-up a Libyan heritage police. The World Customs Organization, INTERPOL and ICOM also participated in this training, together with a number of international and Libyan archaeologists and academics.

This training session built on the recommendations adopted during the first introductory workshop on the prevention and fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property which took place at the Libya Museum in Tripoli on 27-30 April 2013.

A second training session aimed at selected staff from the Cyrenaica and Fezzan regions will take place at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Cyrene (Shahat) in November 2013.

The training session was opened on 15 September by the Vice Minister of Culture, Dr Mousa Harim, the acting Chairperson of the Department of Antiquities, Dr Abdelrahman Yakhlef, the Director of the Italian Institute of Culture representing the Italian Embassy in Libya, Mr Rubens Piovano, the UNESCO Representative in Libya, Dr Lodovico Folin Calabi, and a representative of the Local Council of Sabratha.

Overview of the training

Dr. Khaled El Haddar, Professor of Classic and Islamic Archaeology at the Benghazi University, and Dr Saad Buhagar, Professor of Proto-history at the University of Benghazi, discussed the state of stolen cultural property in the country. Professor Mabrouk Zanati, from the Zawya University, and Mr Ramadan Mohammed Shebani, from the Department of Antiquities of Libya, presented the main challenges for Libyan cultural heritage today. The course then focused on inventories and documentation of cultural heritage, offering an overview of those cultural properties of Libya which are more likely to be affected by illicit excavation and illicit trafficking, with the view to facilitating its identification by the customs and police officers. Lectures by Professor Luisa Musso, Director of the archaeological mission to Leptis Magna (RomaTre University, Roma) and by Dr.

Paul Bennett, Head of the Mission of Society for Libyan Studies, highlighted the main features of cultural artefacts, respectively from the Tripolitania and the Cyrenaica and Fezzan regions.

In addition to class lectures, the training included site visits to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sabratha; the customs department the Tunisian-Libyan border in Ras Ejder; the National Museum in Tripoli; the Department of Antiquities' Archives Unit, and the National Office of INTERPOL. These visits also contributed to explore improved security measures at the World Heritage Site of Sabratha and in its two museums.

Main outcomes of the training

- It explored ways to enforce a **specialized unit** in the country with the mandate to investigate and monitor illicit trade of cultural properties in Libya, paving the way to the draft terms of reference for such unit. For this purpose, the role of a **stolen object database** was underlined as one of the main urgent actions to be launched in the short term.
- It offered the opportunity for establishing a dialogue platform with public prosecutors and magistrates. Crucial issues to facilitate the **judicial procedures** were also discussed. The weakness of the current cultural heritage law, in particular the lack of specific provisions regulating the theft and return of stolen properties, was considered one of the main issues to be addressed. The establishment of a **working group** with judicial authorities, justice officials and law experts, has also been recommended. In addition, the Local Council of Sabratha proposed the establishment of a committee comprising various public and private stakeholders, to deal with illegal constructions around or in the vicinity of heritage sites through an integrated approach and proper urban planning.
- It sketched an **awareness raising campaign strategy** for the greater involvement of the civil society, in particular youth and children, in the protection of cultural heritage and in the prevention and fight against illicit trafficking. Three main intertwined issues have been selected as pilot campaigns in selected schools: **illicit traffic, illicit excavations and encroachment**. The last issue becoming progressively impelling, with the parallel uncontrolled and/or unplanned urban growth and the unclear definition of boundaries and plans for protected areas and future archaeological areas.

Closing session

On **26 September 2013**, the closing session of the training will be introduced by the Vice-Minister of Culture of Libya, Mousa Harim, by a representative of the Embassy of Italy in Libya, by the acting Chairperson of the Department of Antiquities of Libya, Abdelrahman Yakhlef, and by the Representative of UNESCO in Libya, Lodovico Folin Calabi. The coordinator of the UNESCO's culture programme in Libya, Dr Chiara Dezzi Bardeschi, will provide an overview of the outcomes of the training, highlighting the way forward and the future steps to improve the protection of cultural property in Libya.

VENUE: World Heritage Site of Sabratha

PROGRAMME

Time: 10:30-11:00

Description: *Opening remarks*

Speakers: H.E. Mousa Harim, Vice-Minister of Culture of Libya
Representative of the Embassy of Italy to Libya
Dr Lodovico Folin Calabi, UNESCO Representative in Libya
Dr Abdelrahman Yakhlef, Chairman of the Department of Antiquities
Mr Dya M. Algrbly, Chairperson of the Local Council of Sabratha

Time: 11.00-11:15

Description: *Outcomes of the technical workshop*

Speakers: Dr Chiara Dezzi Bardeschi (UNESCO)

Time: 11:15-11:30

Description: *Awarding of certificates*

Time: 11:30-12:30

Visit of the World Heritage Site of Sabratha

For more information, please contact:

UNESCO Project office in Libya

Chiara Dezzi Bardeschi,
Coordinator of the programme
+218 (0)916 791 871
c.dezzi-bardeschi@unesco.org

UNESCO Headquarters

Alberto Deregibus
Expert, Cultural Heritage Protection Treaties Section
+33 (0)1 4568 4499
a.deregibus@unesco.org

Department of Antiquities of Libya

Mr Taufik Nael
Manager for communication and international
cooperation
+218 (0)914 410 1554

UNESCO Regional Office in Cairo

Tamar Teneishvili
programme specialist for Culture
+ 212 (02) 279 430 36 - 279 417 56
t.teneishvili@unesco.org