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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR PROMOTING THE
RETURN OF CULTURAL PROPERTY TO ITS COUNTRIES OF
ORIGIN OR ITS RESTITUTION IN CASE OF ILLICIT
APPROPRIATION**

**Nineteenth Session
UNESCO Headquarters, Room XI
1 – 2 October 2014**

Provisional agenda item 7: Report of the Secretariat

The Secretariat reports to the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation (hereafter “the Committee”) at its nineteenth session on activities carried out since its eighteenth session, held on 22 June 2012 and, in particular, on the follow-up to the recommendations adopted by the Committee.

Decision required: paragraph 45

INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat reports to the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation (hereafter “the Committee”) at its nineteenth session on activities carried out since its eighteenth session, held on 22 June 2012 and, in particular, on the follow-up to the recommendations adopted by the Committee.

I. PROMOTION OF BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS

2. In accordance with the Article 4.2 of the Statutes of the Committee providing that the Committee shall be responsible for ‘promoting multilateral and bilateral cooperation with a view to the restitution and return of cultural property to its countries of origin’, the Secretariat is pleased to inform the Committee of the following cases. In addition, with regard to the follow-up of the recommendations, the current report presents the actions undertaken by the Secretariat as requested.

The Parthenon Sculptures (Recommendation No. 5)

3. The Parthenon Sculptures have been the subject of a case pending before the Committee since 1984.

4. Pursuant to Recommendation No. 5 adopted at the eighteenth session of the Committee (Paris, 22 June 2012), the Director-General assisted in convening the necessary meetings between Greece and the United Kingdom with the aim of reaching a mutually acceptable solution to the issue of the Parthenon Sculptures. On 23 July 2013, the Director-General met H.E. Mr Panos Panagiotopoulos, Minister of Culture of the Hellenic Republic. During their discussion, Mr Panagiotopoulos expressed his hopes *‘that UNESCO could use its good offices with the authorities of the United Kingdom as a facilitator in the matter of the Parthenon sculptures. In that regard, he referred to the mediation and conciliation roles played in 2010 in the context of this Committee’*¹.

5. Following this meeting, the Assistant Director-General for Culture sent a letter to the United Kingdom authorities, informing them of the will of the Greek authorities to possibly resort to the mediation/conciliation procedure.

6. The Secretariat has been informed that the Greek proposal is under consideration by the British authorities.

The Khmer Statues

7. In 2013, Cambodia undertook efforts to obtain the return of five of the nine statues looted in Prasat Chen, Koh Ker and located abroad². Although these cases were not formally brought to the Committee, UNESCO acted as a facilitator in the discussions between the States concerned and various public and private stakeholders.

¹ http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/single-view/news/the_director_general_meets_he_mr_panos_panagiotopoulos_minister_of_culture_of_the_hellenic_republic/" \l ".VAbRnvl_v_0

² The five statues are:

- The Duryodhana (Sotheby’s, New York)
- The Bhima (Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California)
- The Pandava Brothers, Sahadeva & Nakula (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)
- The Balarama (Christie’s, New York)

8. In June 2013, the opening ceremony of the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee was marked by the return to Cambodia of two of these statues (known as the Pandava Brothers) by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The statues were handed over to H.E. Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen, who stressed the central role of heritage preservation in national reconstruction and economic development. The UNESCO Director-General, who also participated in the ceremony, underscored that *'this restitution is an expression of strong ethical and moral behaviour that provides an example of good practice to other museums and collectors (...) UNESCO is honoured to have contributed to this restitution, which is, I believe, a move towards greater respect and mutual understanding'*³.

9. The Secretariat of the 1970 Convention invited the Cambodian authorities to present this case during the second session of the Subsidiary Committee of the Meeting of State Parties to the 1970 Convention (30 June – 2 July 2014, UNESCO Headquarters). On this occasion, Members of the Subsidiary Committee as well as Observers took the opportunity to share good practices, along with this example which reflects the important efforts made at the national level by Cambodia to recover its looted cultural heritage.

Mediation and Conciliation procedures

10. Within the framework of the strategies designed and implemented to facilitate the work of the Committee and to enhance the process of return or restitution of cultural objects, UNESCO provides alternative means to resolve disputes linked to cultural property, in the framework of the Committee: the Mediation and Conciliation procedures. In this regard, a specific working document has been prepared by the Secretariat (see doc. ICPRCP/14/19.COM/6). This procedure has been requested in the case of the Parthenon Sculptures, as described in paragraphs 3-5 above.

II. PREPARATION OF DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES (Recommendations Nos. 8 and 9)

11. During the eighteenth session of the Committee in 2012, the Members of this Committee expressly requested the Secretariat to comply within the deadlines provided for Article 2.6 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure concerning the dispatch of the provisional agenda within statutory limits. Consequently, the Committee adopted Recommendation No. 8, which requests that the provisional agenda be sent at least sixty days before the Committee's session. Accordingly, and in agreement with Chair and Rapporteur of the Committee, the Secretariat sent the Provisional Agenda of the nineteenth session on 31 July 2014 to the Committee Members as well as to the UNESCO Member States that are not members of the Committee (observers).

12. Nevertheless, it has to be underlined that the Secretariat of the Committee is also the Secretariat of the 1970 Convention and is lacking human and financial resources (currently only one permanent P-3 paid from the Regular Budget of UNESCO, one Associate Expert, one temporary staff and one recently seconded expert, see paragraph 12 below.). Therefore, regarding recommendation No. 9 adopted by the Committee requesting adequate human and financial resources, little progress has been made so far. Nonetheless, in the frame of the recent redeployment exercise, 55 per cent of a P3 dedicated to museum issues as well

³ UNESCO Website:

http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/important_khmer_statues_returned_to_cambodia_during_opening_of_world_heritage_meeting_in_phnom_penh/

as a G4 administrative assistant have joined the team. Furthermore, a P-4 is currently being recruited to strengthen the Cultural Heritage Protection Treaties Section.

13. With reference to previous appeals on this matter⁴, States interested in the topics related to this Committee and the 1970 Convention could consider the possibility to reinforce the Secretariat with human and financial resources in order to facilitate the successful implementation of the tasks assigned. In this context, the Secretariat is pleased to inform the Committee Members as well as the States not members of the Committee (Observers) that Turkey agreed to second from July 2014 until July 2015, a Turkish expert to the Secretariat in charge of the Committee and the 1970 Convention.

III. UNESCO DATABASE OF NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE LAWS

14. The UNESCO Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws, launched in 2005, is continuously being updated and promoted by the Secretariat, in order to make this practical tool as widely known as possible. It is being presented at meetings, conferences, workshops on the protection of cultural heritage. The Database is a unique multilingual tool at international level, free of charge, which gives rapid access to national cultural legislation and certified information.

15. National legislation can be considered the first fundamental step in the process of the return and restitution of stolen or illicitly exported cultural objects. The accessibility of these legal texts increases the exchange of experience between the States and facilitates the strengthening of their national regulations in order to prevent illicit trafficking. It also facilitates the resolution of cases linked to return and restitution of cultural heritage.

16. All the States are strongly encouraged to submit their national cultural heritage legislations and all information related to the protection of their heritage to the UNESCO Secretariat for inclusion in the Database, which currently comprises 2,663 national cultural laws from 185 countries. The texts are available online at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws>.

17. The Secretariat continues to promote the Database at key events. For example, during the Meeting of the World Customs Organization in Malta in 2013 and the First and Second Sessions of Subsidiary Committee of the Meeting of State Parties to the 1970 Convention in July 2013 and June 2014, respectively.

IV. MODEL PROVISIONS DEFINING STATE OWNERSHIP OF UNDISCOVERED CULTURAL PROPERTY

18. Since the creation of Model Provisions defining State ownership of undiscovered cultural property in 2010, the UNIDROIT and UNESCO Secretariats promote regularly this legal tool during training workshops held worldwide and encourage national authorities to use it if their country has not yet clearly defined its ownership on undiscovered cultural property. The 'Model Provisions' and their explanatory guidelines are available to the relevant national bodies to help them establish and recognize State ownership of undiscovered cultural objects with a view, among others, to facilitating restitution in case of unlawful removal.

19. The aim of this tool is to ensure that all States are equipped with sufficiently clear legal principles to prove their ownership of cultural property, in particular before a court. States need a clear and comprehensive definition of State ownership on undiscovered cultural

⁴ Director-General's circular letter, dated 12 March 2014

objects, to justify their claims on return and restitution. 'The Model Provisions' have to be considered as a preventive mechanism for States, especially those with a rich archaeological heritage.

20. Nevertheless, it is necessary to implement 'The Model Provisions' at the national level within the framework of national legislation so that the ownership of undiscovered cultural property is clearly defined. They can either supplement or replace existing legal provisions to ensure the protection of such objects.

V. CAPACITY-BUILDING

21. In the framework of the fight against illicit traffic and the implementation of the 1970 Convention, from June 2012 to May 2014, 19 workshops in more than 70 countries involving 600 participants have been organized by UNESCO. Detailed information on the contents and places of these activities can be found in the Secretariat Report to the Second session of the Subsidiary Committee of the 1970 Convention, 30 June – 2 July 2014 (Document C70/14/2.SC/3).

VI. AWARENESS-RAISING

22. In accordance with the Article 4.4 of the Statutes, which provides that the Committee shall be responsible for 'fostering a public information campaign on the real nature, scale and scope of the problem of the restitution or return of cultural property to its countries of origin', the Secretariat informs the Committee about campaigns, publications and various media tools developed in the framework of this task.

Campaign (International level⁵)

23. In March 2014, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) joined forces to invite tourists to become responsible travelers and help fight trafficking. The campaign "Your actions count: Be a responsible traveler" aims to raise awareness among tourists around the world on ways to help fight trafficking by encouraging a better understanding of the major criminal implications hidden behind some decisions by tourists and travelers to buy protected cultural heritage pieces .

24. On 5 March 2014, UNESCO's Director-General participated in the launch of the campaign in Berlin. On that occasion she appealed to tourists buying cultural artefacts to routinely inquire about their origin in order to know for certain that they had not been stolen or trafficked. The Secretariat is seeking the support of the Members of the Committee and the observers to promote this campaign worldwide. Public and private partners such as hotels, airline companies and tour operators, are particularly welcome to join this initiative.

Campaign (South America)

25. In addition to training activities (2012 and 2013), drawing on funds provided by Spain (AECID), the UNESCO Offices in Lima (National Office for Peru) and Montevideo (Cluster Office for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) conducted a major media and awareness-raising campaign to combat trafficking in cultural property in Latin America.

⁵ <http://bearesponsibletraveller.org/>

26. In March 2014, the UNESCO Office in Montevideo and the Uruguayan National Commission for UNESCO launched a media campaign to raise public awareness on action undertaken to combat cultural-property trafficking in South America. It included a posters competition on the theme of cultural property trafficking prevention. A video clip was also produced to draw attention to the current smuggling of cultural property in the MERCOSUR countries, while highlighting the work accomplished by UNESCO and its partners to prevent trafficking in cultural property in the region.

27. The UNESCO Office in Lima and the Ministry of Culture of Peru also published “No robes el pasado” [“Don’t steal the past”], a magazine for children and young people, setting out in comic strips the inherent risks of cultural-property trafficking and the need to protect the national and regional heritage for the enjoyment of future generations. Posters depicting the magazine cover page were also distributed. See also: (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002269/226971s.pdf>)

Campaign (North Africa)

28. In addition to training activities (2013), a regional awareness-raising campaign was conducted in partnership with local authorities. Communication aids (posters and postcards) and a series of awareness-raising clips on combating trafficking in the North Africa region, concomitantly targeting local communities and tourists, are being produced. A children’s comic book on heritage protection will soon be published.

Video Clip: Iraq television spots and computer graphics film⁶

29. The UNESCO Office in Iraq produced three television spots in Arabic. They were broadcast in late 2012 on Iraqi television channels to alert the public and, in particular, local people to the inherent risk of trafficking in Iraqi cultural property.

30. Additionally, in 2013, the UNESCO Office in Iraq produced a computer graphics film in Arabic to raise awareness among young Iraqis of the importance of preserving their cultural heritage. The video was financed from an extrabudgetary contribution from the Federal Office of Culture (FOC) of Switzerland.

Video Clip: South-East Asia video clip “Heritage is identity, don’t steal it”⁷

31. This awareness-raising video is designed in particular to inform tourists who were likely to be offered cultural property of illicit origin when travelling. It was also designed to alert local communities to the loss of their heritage. The video will be distributed through UNESCO networks and under the campaign “Your Actions Count – Be a Responsible Traveller” (see paragraphs 21-22).

Video Clip: Syrian Arab Republic video clip “Help save the cultural heritage of Syria”⁸

32. In August 2013, the UNESCO Office in Amman produced a video clip to raise public awareness of the importance of Syria’s cultural heritage, drawing attention to the current situation and the need to preserve the heritage for future generations. The video is available in English with Arabic subtitles.

⁶ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/videos/>

⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁸ *Ibidem.*

Publications

33. The Secretariat contributed to the magazine published by the UNESCO Office in Havana (Regional Bureau for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean). The magazine, a medium for reflection, exchange and the sharing of ideas and experiential data on culture, portrays culture as a key factor of the region's economic and human development. It contains contributions by UNESCO, UNIDROIT, INTERPOL and ICOM experts and experiential accounts and mechanisms used to curb cultural-property trafficking in the region. It also contains the results of various workshops held in Asunción (Paraguay), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Lima (Peru) and Castries (Saint Lucia).

34. The Arabic version of *Witnesses to History: a compendium of documents and writings on the return of cultural objects* was published in April 2014, thanks to funds from Bahrain. The publication contains a review of historical, philosophical and ethical analyses of the problem of securing the return of cultural objects. It may be used as documentation for students and the general public and as a reference book for specialists, researchers and decision-makers. It is available in Arabic, Chinese, English and French. The Secretariat is pursuing its efforts to raise extrabudgetary funds in order to publish a Spanish version.

35. In April 2014, the Secretariat published a second edition of the French version of the "Commentary on the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property" by Professor P. J. O'Keefe (2007).

VII. PROGRAMMES RELATED TO THE CONSTITUTION OF COLLECTIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MUSEUMS

36. In the approved 37 C/5, programmes related to museums are integrated under the expected result related to the implementation of the 1970 Convention (Expected Result 2 "Policy dialogue promoted to combat illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property through enhanced, strengthened and more efficient international cooperation, including the implementation of the 1970 Convention and enhanced capacities of museums")⁹.

37. As Articles 4.3 and 4.6 of the Statutes of the Committee are related to actions concerning museums, the Secretariat informs the Committee of the current activities by the UNESCO museum experts in this area:

Centre for Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts of the Haram-al Sharif in Jerusalem (Funded by Norway)

38. The project, which was launched in 2012, constitutes Phase III of UNESCO's efforts to build the capacity of the Centre for Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts of the Haram-al Sharif in Jerusalem. The aim is to provide the local authorities with the capacity to preserve of some 3,000 ancient manuscripts. Five new staff members are being trained, with the existing staff, in conservation, restoration, documentation and inventorying. A total of nine training sessions have been held since September 2012. Study trips to comparable institutions in Paris and Florence were organized for the staff in December 2013 in order to enhance their skills and establish institutional links. These activities aim at ensuring the sustainable long-

⁹ Please also refer to doc. ICPRCP/14/19.COM/4 "Report on Evaluation by the Internal Oversight Service of UNESCO's standard-setting work of the Culture Sector (Part II), role of the Committee and proposed strategy"

term operations of the Centre as a reference point for manuscript restoration and training in the region after the completion of the project in 2015.

Islamic Museum of Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem (funded by Saudi Arabia)

39. Located in a city that is sacred to three world religions, the Islamic Museum houses one of the finest collections of Islamic heritage. It has been closed to the public since 1999 owing to concerns over security and the quality of interior spaces. The objective of the project, started in 2009, is to build the capacities of the staff, set-up an electronic inventory of the collections, and redesign the museological concept in view of its reopening to the public. Four Palestinian staff members have been appointed and trained in English, computer skills, conservation, restoration, photography of objects, inventory building, museum management and art history (a total of ten training courses have been conducted). Photographic and computer equipment for the inventory have been purchased and the electronic and photographic inventory will soon be completed.

Revitalization and Collection Care Programme for the Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life, Lviv (Ukraine): Phase I (Funded by Norway)

40. In 2012, the UNESCO project in the Ukrainian City of Lviv, centred on improving the museographical conditions of the Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life was launched. The first phase of this project aims to combat the deteriorating conditions of the Museum's architectural structures and the limited public awareness of the institution. The project resulted in emergency restoration of selected wooden architectural structures, collection management of movable objects, and capacity-building of museum professionals in management, restoration and documentation with seven workshops implemented to date.

The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) in Cairo (Voluntary Contribution – International Campaign) and general assistance in Egyptian museum sector

41. The country's first museum of civilization will showcase Egyptian civilization from prehistoric times to the present day by means of a multidisciplinary approach that highlights the country's tangible and intangible heritage. The project, launched in 2008, foresees the development of a training programme in museum studies for staff, assistance in capacity building, organizational development, documentation and collections management (notably to collect ethnographic objects and recording associated oral histories, skills and knowledge) as well as creating partnerships and promoting the museum worldwide. The first museology training course for Museum Studies was organized by French University in cooperation with the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP). The one-month course was organized for ten staff members of NMEC in April 2014. A total of 250 staff members from the museum are enrolled in a three-month basic museology training programme

Furthermore, UNESCO is assisting in the reconstruction and collection recovery of the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, heavily damaged in January 2014. The Organization is also providing technical assistance to the Mallawi museum, as well as a series of intensive training courses for museum risk and disaster preparedness, which started in December 2013 and continues during 2014. A joint UNESCO-ICCROM-ICOM-ARC-WHC¹⁰ mission to Cairo, Egypt in September 2014 provided further advice on future training and capacity building actions to be undertaken.

¹⁰ Arab Regional Center for World Heritage

Series of training materials and tools

42. UNESCO/ICOM Training package for museum, “Running a Museum”, was launched in 2007 and exists in more than six language versions, combining a theoretical manual, trainer’s manual and assessment tool for training needs in various fields of museum and collection management¹¹.

43. UNESCO Cultural Heritage Protection Handbook series, has published six titles dealing with practical aspects of work in museums, such as safety and security, documentation, handling of manuscripts, disaster preparedness, protection of heritage of religious interest. It exists in more than a dozen languages¹².

44. UNESCO also developed an on-line portal ‘RE-ORG’ in cooperation with ICCROM over a period of four years. The portal is intended to guide museum professionals in developed and developing countries alike, in their work of improving collection documentation and storage management¹³.

45. The Committee may wish to adopt the following recommendation:

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 19.COM 3

The Committee,

1. Having considered document ICPRCP/14/19.COM/3,
2. Takes note with appreciation of the report by the Secretariat on its activities since the last session in 2012;
3. Welcomes actions taken to enhance capacities and raise awareness of the fight against trafficking in cultural property and the role of museums;
4. Encourages States to conduct bilateral negotiations on the return and restitution of cultural property;
5. Also takes note of the increasing tasks assigned to the Secretariat and the need to strengthen it with human and financial resources;
6. Invites its Member States and Observers to provide human and financial resources to Secretariat to ensure the sustainability of the Committee;
7. Also invites Member States to submit to the Secretariat information on ongoing bilateral negotiations in respect of return and restitution of cultural property, as well as on the successful conclusion of such cases.

¹¹ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/unescoicom-museum-studies-training-package/>

¹² <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/movable-heritage-outreach-programme/>

¹³ <http://www.re-org.info/en>

ANNEX

The main role of the Committee is to seek ways and means of facilitating bilateral negotiations for the restitution or return of cultural property as mentioned in Article 4.1 in its Statutes. To assist the Committee in this task and in accordance with Recommendation No.3 adopted at its twelfth session, recent examples of items returned or restituted, as a result of legal proceedings, bilateral negotiations, voluntary acts by the possessor or other solutions (trade, loans and production of replicas), are listed below to guide the Committee.

This list is not exhaustive and the information related to these cases has been communicated directly to the Secretariat by the States concerned (and are consequently also available on UNESCO's website) or have been founded through public information. The Secretariat contacted all the Permanent Delegations of concerned States in order to confirm the information regarding the case(s) involving their country. The annex therefore contains only validated information.

August 2014: Funerary Stelas (United States - Turkey)

In 2006, experts from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism noted 16 Roman funerary stelas in the digital catalogue of a US-based gallery. Scientific research and an examination of criminal records related to the illicit excavations detected in the source area of the stelas indicated that the stelas were stolen from West Anatolia. Following the registration of these stelas in the INTERPOL Database as stolen, the FBI's New York Field Office and the Art Crime Unit opened an investigation and eventually facilitated the return of ten of the funerary stelas to Turkey.



© Ministry of Culture and Tourism,
Turkey

July 2014: eight Cultural Objects (United States - Nigeria)

In 2013, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts received 308 cultural objects from a private collection. Following this bequest, the Museum initiated research on the provenance of these works. The provenance research revealed that eight of these objects were taken out of Nigeria illicitly and sold on the market with fake provenance and export documents. The 'Red List of African Archaeological Objects' of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) facilitated the research. These eight artifacts include a brass altar figure thought to have been stolen from the Royal Palace in Benin City in 1970s, a 4-foot-tall wooden ancestral figure, which was in the Oron Museum (Calabar/Nigeria) at least until 1970, and a 2,000-year-old terracotta head. The museum contacted the Nigeria's National Commission of Museums and Monuments, which confirmed the findings and requested that the works be returned. In July 2014, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts returned the eight artifacts to Nigeria.

June 2014: 'Cycladic Pan' (Germany - Greece)

On 6 June, the state of Baden-Württemberg handed to Greek authorities over two objects from the Cycladic culture - a marble figurine dating from 2700-2300 BC and a pan dating from 2700-2400 BC. Both objects had been acquired by the Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe in the 1970s and were returned in the spirit of the 1970 UNESCO Convention.



© Badisches
Landesmuseum
Karlsruhe

June 2014: 'Paracas Textiles' (Sweden - Peru)

An exhibition in Gothenburg (Sweden), titled "A Stolen World: The Paracas Collection", highlighted the worldwide problem of illicit excavations, and prompted the Government of Peru to claim for the return of the Paracas Textiles in Gothenburg in December 2009¹⁴. The City of Gothenburg immediately responded positively to this request, and since then many efforts have been put into finding a solution as to how the extremely fragile collection could be returned. An important precedent was established last May 2014, when the representatives of the City of Gothenburg and of the Peruvian Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding affirming the agreement to the restitution of a collection of Paracas Textiles that were illicitly exported to Sweden between 1924 and 1955. This agreement was reached without any legal process. The collection will be conserved in Peru as the Gothenburg collection, and this agreement has prompted the development of scientific and museographic collaboration between Peru and Sweden. Conservators and curators from both Sweden and Peru are involved in the process, and the first four textiles were returned successfully on June 2014.



© Ministry of Culture
Peru

¹⁴ Donna Yates, 'Paracas Textiles', Trafficking Culture Project, University of Glasgow
<http://traffickingculture.org/encyclopedia/case-studies/paracas-textiles/>

June 2014: 'Benin Bronzes' (UK - Nigeria)

A retired British medical consultant decided to return to Nigeria two pieces of Benin Bronzes he inherited from his grandfather. After being informed about Nigeria's claims for the return of the Benin Bronzes looted from several collections, the British citizen decided to send voluntarily them to the place of origin where they belonged. The handover ceremony took place in Benin City in Nigeria on 21 June 2014.



© National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria

May 2014: Coins (Switzerland - Serbia)

In May 2014, Switzerland returned to Serbia a batch of some 150 ancient coins dating back to the Roman Empire. The majority of the coins are in bronze, and date from the fourth century, and some are Roman coins known as antoniniani from the third century, and the aces are from the second century. This restitution follows their illegal importation into Switzerland by a Serbian resident in 2011. The coins, illegally excavated and imported from Serbia, were intended for resale in Switzerland on a platform. This restitution, accompanied by the Specialized Body for the International Transfer of Cultural Property of the Federal Office of Culture (FOC), highlights the fruitful cooperation between Switzerland and Serbia, both signatories to the UNESCO Convention of 1970 regarding the transfer of cultural property and the fight against illicit trafficking. It embodies the shared commitment of the two countries to protect cultural heritage.



© FOC, Switzerland

May 2014: Egyptian Objects (Germany - Egypt)

On 30 April 2014, Germany returned three antique Egyptian objects – a stela, an obelisk and a shrine – to Egypt. Coming from Switzerland, the illegally exported objects had been confiscated by German custom investigators at the border checkpoint. A court in Freiburg decided their return to Egypt.



Ambassador of Egypt to Germany, Dr. Higazy, and the German Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, Prof. Dr. Böhmer, during the handover ceremony © photothek

April 2014: nine Royal Seals (United States- Republic of Korea)

Nine Royal Seals of the Korean Empire and Joseon Dynasty removed during the Korean War were returned to Republic of Korea (in April 2014 during U.S.-South Korea Summit). The return was an outcome of the U.S. - Korea joint investigation between the U.S. Homeland Security Investigations and the Korean Cultural Heritage Administration and Korean Supreme Prosecutors' Office. This was the second success in the return of the Korean cultural property following a rare Korea's modern currency plate seized and returned in September 2013. The nine seals include three national seals of the Korean Empire, one royal seal of the Korean Empire and five signets of the Joseon Royal Court. [NB: *The Korean Empire (1897-1910) succeeded the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910)*].



© Korean Cultural Heritage Administration, Republic of Korea

April 2014: 'Mask of Gorgon' (Tunisia – Algeria)

In April 2014, the Algerian and Tunisian authorities signed an agreement for the restitution of the Mask of Gorgon, a rare archaeological object made of 320 kilograms of marble that was stolen from the site of Hippo Regius, Annaba (in Algeria) in 1996 and recovered in Tunisia. During the restitution ceremony, the archaeological piece was exhibited at the Carthage National Museum. On 13 April 2014, the mask was returned to Algeria and is currently exhibited at the National Museum of Antiquities in Algiers.



© National Museum of Antiquities in Algiers

March 2014: 68 Artifacts (Switzerland - Italy)

In March 2014, the Swiss authorities returned a number of art works and archaeological goods to Italy. This restitution marks the end of a procedure for international judicial mutual assistance that lasted nearly thirteen years and resulted in the restitution of a total of 4,536 items to Italy, including a number of Etruscan and Roman antiquities that had been illegally excavated. The request for international judicial mutual assistance made by Italy to Switzerland in 2001 was as part of a criminal investigation against an antiquities dealer and others, on a wide range of charges: belonging to a criminal organization, illegal transfer of cultural goods, receiving stolen property, and absence of declaration of archaeological finds. Switzerland and Italy, both signatories to the UNESCO Convention of 1970 which relates to the transfer of cultural property and the fight against illicit trafficking, are bound by a bilateral agreement on the import and return of cultural property. This agreement, in effect since 27 April 2008, calls for these two countries to cooperate more closely with the aim of preserving their cultural heritage and to fight more effectively against illicit trafficking of cultural property.



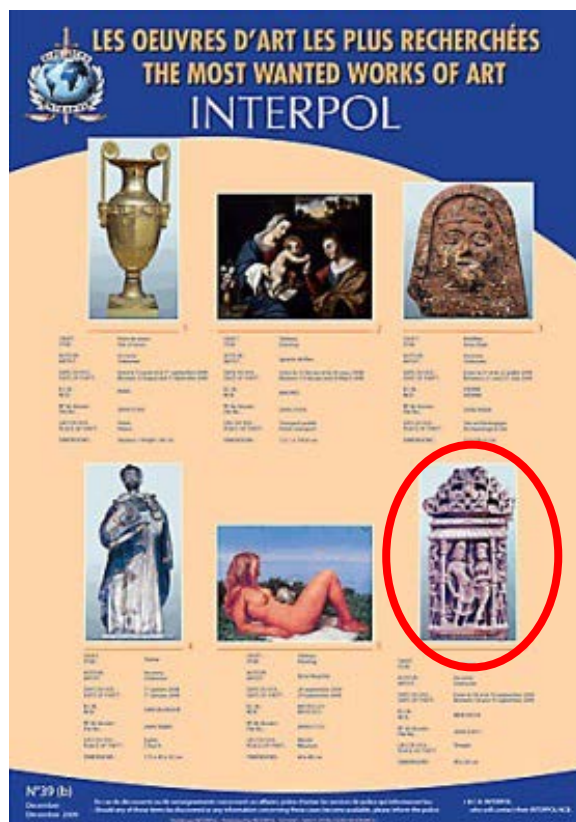
© Stawa Basel

February 2014: 30 'Vigango' (United States - Kenya)

In 1980s, sacred objects of the Mijikenda, called vigango, were stolen from Kenya to be sold to tourist shops and art dealers in foreign countries. After an announcement of the Kenyan Government regarding the illegality of the trade of vigango, this illicit activity decreased. Many were donated to museum by private collectors. In 2003, an article by US anthropologists drew the attention of the curator of Denver Museum of Nature and Science to the vigango in its collection. After provenance research undertaken by the museum, and a letter sent to the Kenyan Government expressing the museum's wish to return these vigango to Kenya, 30 pieces were delivered to Kenya in 19 February 2014¹⁵.

January 2014: three Sculptures (United States - India)

In 2009, India announced that two sandstone sculptures were stolen from the Gadgach Temple in Atrud, Rajasthan (India). One of them, 'Vishnu and Lakshmi,' was on the list of INTERPOL's top 10 most wanted works of art. The sculptures dated from the 11th and 12th centuries. In April 2010, Homeland Security Investigation Agents received information about recently looted Indian sandstone artifacts. It have been revealed that the "Vishnu and Lakshmi" sculpture was first transported to other countries and then sent to the United States for an exhibition in a private gallery. Agents recovered the piece in transit. The other stolen sculpture "Vishnu and Parvati" was seized by agents when it was being shipped to another country. A black stone Bodhisattva was discovered by customs and border protection officers in 2011 while being smuggled into Newark Airport. All three artefacts were returned to India by United States of America in January 2014.



© Interpol

¹⁵ Laetitia Nicolazzi, Alessandro Chechi, Marc-André Renold, « Affaire 30 Vigango – Denver Museum of Nature and Science et Kenya », Plateforme ArThemis (<http://unige.ch/art-adr>), Centre du droit de l'art, Université de Genève

December 2013: Khmer Statue (United States - Cambodia)

A Khmer statue was offered to sale in March 2011 by Sotheby's Auction House in New York. Following the attempt of National Commission of Cambodia for UNESCO, Sotheby's agreed to withdraw the sale of the statue. Cambodia claimed that the statue was illicitly removed from Koh Ker site in 1970s and requested its return. UNESCO assisted Cambodia in negotiations with a private collector who offered to buy the statue and to donate it to Cambodia. United States filed a forfeiture action in April 2012. As a result of ongoing negotiations among relevant parties, Sotheby's voluntarily returned the statue to Cambodia. This case is part of a serial return cases of Khmer Statues looted from Cambodia.



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September 2013: Cylinder Seals and a cuneiform tablet (Germany - Iraq)

Thirteen ancient artifacts have been returned to Iraq, among them at least one object stolen from the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad in 2003. Among the objects seized by German law enforcement authorities were eight cylinder seals of up to 5,000 years old as well as several sculptures. Respecting the instructions left in the will of a private individual, a group of heirs has conveyed a tablet of cuneiform script that presumably originated from the Nimrod palace, to the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq, in Berlin.



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July 2013: 170 Frescoes, Mosaics and Icons (Germany - Cyprus)

In July 2013, Germany returned some 170 frescoes, mosaics and icons to Cyprus. They had been stolen from churches in Cyprus and were seized by the German authorities in 1997. A Court in Munich had given the go-ahead for their return to Cyprus after it issued a final ruling on the question of ownership. The illustration below depicts a detail of a wall mosaic of the apse of the church of the Panagia Kanakaria in Lythrangomi, dating from the 6th century.



© van Hasz, Bavarian State Office of Criminal Investigation

May 2013: Silver Plaque (Germany - Bulgaria)

In May 2013, Germany returned a votive offering from the 2nd/3rd century BC in the form of a Danubian Horseman silver plaque to Bulgaria. The photo below depicts the Consul Ivan Ilianov Jordanov, from Bulgaria, and the German State Secretary, Ingmar Jung, during the handover ceremony.



© Hessen State Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts

December 2012: 'Orpheus Mosaic' (United States - Turkey)

In December 1999, an Orpheus Mosaic was offered for sale by Christie's Auction House in New York. Turkey asked that the artefact be pulled out of the sale, claiming that the inscriptions and style of the mosaic is characteristic of Şanlıurfa province, Eastern Turkey. Christie's did not accept withdrawing the sale of the mosaic and also refused to disclose the buyer's identity. The mosaic was bought by the Dallas Museum of Art in 1999, and in 2009 the Turkish Government learned of its whereabouts from an article published by a Turkish scholar. A criminal investigation started by the Şanlıurfa prosecutor in 2012. In the same year, the Director of the Dallas Museum of Art, initiated a research on the provenance of the artifacts in its collection. In December 2012, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Dallas Museum of Art signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the return of mosaic and strengthening collaboration in the area of culture and arts.



© Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Turkey

November 2012: 'Toi Moko' (Canada - New Zealand)

In 2003, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) was mandated by the New Zealand Government to seek the repatriation of Māori and Moriori ancestral remains housed in institutions around the world. In early 2012, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts contacted Te Papa to indicate their Board of Trustees had formally agreed to return a 'Toi Moko' (Māori mummified head) to its homeland, and in November of the same year, Te Papa uplifted the ancestor from Montreal. The 'Toi Moko' is now cared for in Te Papa's Wāhi Tapu (sacred repository) until further research reveals his specific tribal origin within New Zealand. This repatriation followed similar voluntary returns of Māori remains from three other Canadian museums (the Royal Ontario Museum, the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, and the Canadian Museum of Civilization) in June 2008.

July 2012: 843 Artifacts (United Kingdom - Afghanistan)

A group of 843 cultural objects stolen from National Museum of Kabul during the civil war in the 1990s were returned to Afghanistan in July 2012. The artefacts seized by custom officials and 'Art and Antiquities Unit' of the UK's Metropolitan Police. The artefacts were transferred to the British Museum for safe keeping before their return to Afghanistan. The group of the objects included the Begram Ivories and an important Buddha sculpture. Both of the parties mentioned that this restitution is a result of ongoing dialogue among the respective institutions and mutual support of the government authorities.