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National meetings on the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, Honduras and Dominican Republic

September 2016

Preparative meetings on the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panamá, Honduras and Dominican Republic, organized by UNESCO Office in San Jose, with support from Centros Culturales de España and in collaboration with the UNESCO Office of La Habana, have taken place from September 5th through the 23rd of 2016.

These events were part of the “Strengthening national capacities on the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property and the promotion of its restitution in Central America” funded by Cooperación Española, and in preparation for the regional meeting that will take place in Antigua, Guatemala, at the end of November of this year.

The fight against illicit trafficking represents a joint effort not only among the Central American and Caribbean countries, but also among the government institutions of each country. This is why we invited customs agents, police officers, INTERPOL agents, prosecutors, museum workers, representatives of the Ministries of Culture, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Tourism, National Archives, etc. More than 120 participants from the six countries, representing 60 institutions, benefited from these workshop. They exchanged their opinions and experiences from which it was possible to make a diagnosis of the overall situation.

The purpose of these meetings was to achieve a common perspective of the existing resources and provide the participants with the theoretical tools, knowledge and skills to implement actions to combat and prevent trafficking of cultural goods within the national and international legal framework, and adhered to conventions and international agreements.

The training was provided by the expert Gustavo Alberto Ramírez with the participation of Mrs. Montserrat Martell, specialist in Culture from the UNESCO Office in San José, and Ms. Cristina Bosch, UNESCO consultant. We also had presentations in charge of some participants: Ms. Lady Bonilla from Museo Nacional de Costa Rica, Ms. Laurant Bonilla from ICOM Costa Rica, Mr. Ismael Alfaro and Ms. M^a Luisa Ramírez from Servicio Nacional de Aduanas in Costa Rica, Mr. Luis Diego Mora from INTERPOL Costa Rica, Mr. Bosco Moroney, from the Office of crime against patrimony from the Instituto Nicaragüense de Cultura, Mr.

Hugo Christian Vargas from Dirección General de Aduanas in Nicaragua, Mr. Jordy López from National Police in Nicaragua, Mr. Marlon Escamilla, National Director of Patrimonio Cultural y Natural in El Salvador, Ms. Katti Osorio from Instituto Nacional de Cultura from Panamá, Ms. Jany del Cid from Fiscalía de Etnias y Patrimonio in Honduras and president of the National Commission for the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods, Ms. Doris Dalila from Dirección de Aduanas in Honduras, Mr. Antonio Aquiles from Dirección General de Aduanas in Dominican Republic, Ms. Danisa Cruz from Fiscalía de Derechos Humanos in Dominican Republic and Ms. Yessica Romero from INTERPOL.

The participants pondered about several issues among which it is important to highlight the necessary updating of the laws that protect the cultural heritage in each country, the creation of awareness strategies among the youth and general public, the creation of capacities for customs agents and police forces or the establishment of protocols for the repatriation of goods.

The meetings proved to be a success to strengthen and create new alliances at the national level and unify efforts for the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods. The results achieved in these meetings will be transferred to the Regional Meeting in Antigua Guatemala, where the representatives of each country will exchange good practices.