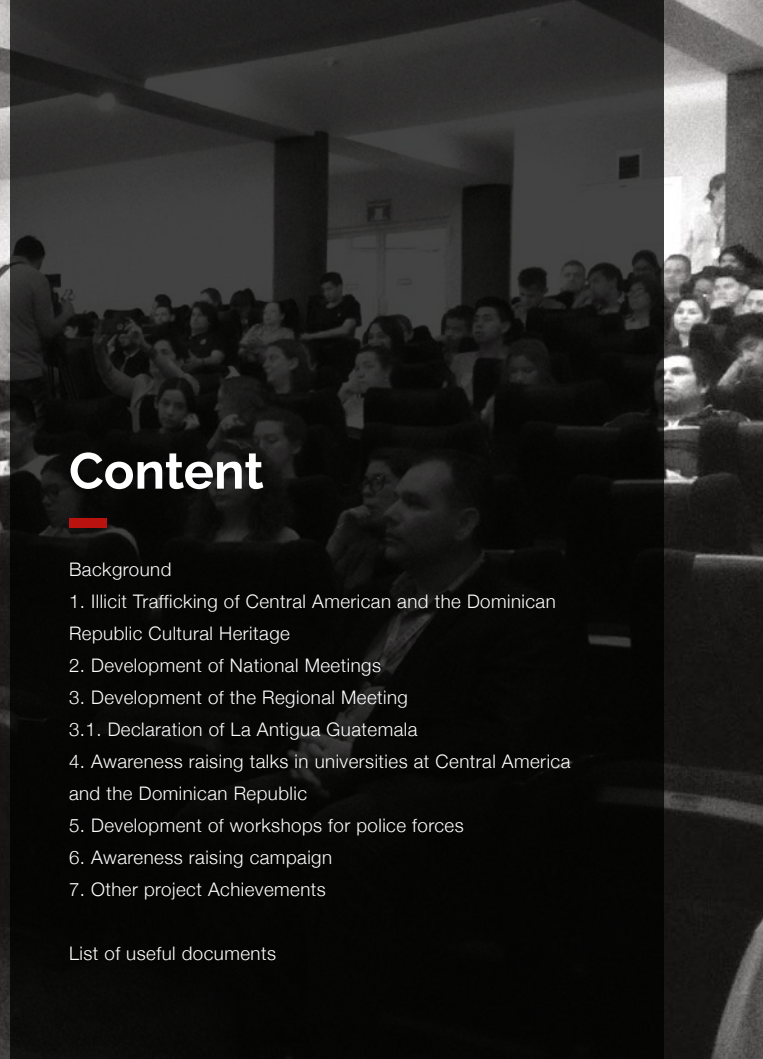




**Development of Regional Capacity Building Project
to Combat Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Property
and its Restitution in Central America
and Dominican Republic**

(2016-2017).





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Background

The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (herein 1970 Convention) was adopted by the UNESCO General Assembly in 1970 and has been ratified in all Spanish speaking Central American countries and Dominican Republic (Costa Rica in 1996, El Salvador in 1978, Guatemala in 1985, Honduras in 1979, Nicaragua in 1977, Panama in 1973 and Dominican Republic in 1973). However, in the Declaration of the Third Meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which took place in La Habana on 18th and 19th of September 2015, the need of adopting a regional position to fight illicit trafficking was identified.

As an answer, the Secretariat of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, together with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (hereinafter AECID), formulated the project entitled "Capacity-building for combating illicit trafficking in cultural property and the promotion of its restitution in Central America and the Dominican Republic." The regional project aims to better implement the 1970 Convention through the development of human and institutional prevention capacities at the national level (with a particular emphasis on updating inventories, training for police and customs officers, and the creation of specialized interdisciplinary units to protect cultural heritage), strengthening national and subregional cooperation, and raising awareness among the general public.

In addition, the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage has a positive impact on the economic development of the region - as well as the cohesion of societies - on the medium term, through a more developed sustainable tourism and other means, such as the improvement of local craft industries.

With the approval and financial support of AECID, the project started to be implemented in May 2016. In the framework of International Museum Day, an official presentation of the project was made in San José, Costa Rica, on May 18. The regional objectives and activities of the project were presented. The event was accompanied by a lecture given by Dr. Luz Endere, an international specialist in the subject of illicit trafficking in cultural property.

1. Illicit Trafficking of Central American and Dominican Republic Cultural Heritage

Central America is a region of great richness of tangible cultural heritage, both pre-Hispanic and colonial, as it is demonstrated by the great number of archaeological and historical sites, some of which have been declared World Heritage Sites. However, the distribution of the sites makes difficult its safeguard, and for that reason, the looter often arrives before the archaeologist. For example: El Salvador has 20,000 km², with 1000 identified archaeological sites, of which only 10 are owned by the State and only 5 are authorized as archaeological parks. The same is true for churches where the theft, trafficking and illicit commercialization of religious art have increased over the last 15 years. Even in museums, the lack of resources makes it difficult to implement sufficient measures for the protection of cultural property. Underwater cultural heritage must also be taken into account, especially since many countries in this region still do not recognize it under their cultural heritage protection laws and are highly exposed to professional looters.

Illicit trafficking in cultural property is a scourge that has hit the Central American region heavily. The theft, looting and illegal sale of cultural property is a crime that attacks science, historical memory and cultural roots of nations. Its combat requires specialized knowledge and strategies designed according to the historical characteristics and legal framework of each country.

According to data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (hereinafter UNODC), it is estimated that illicit trafficking in cultural property moves between 3.4 and 6.3 million dollars worldwide each year. Likewise, the International Council of Museums (hereinafter ICOM) has reported that illicit exports of cultural property that have been intercepted in the last 20 years indicate an increase on the interest of objects coming from Central America.

In particular, the most urgent needs to be addressed in the region are the following:

- To create a rapidly operational networks of experts sharing knowledge and practical tools at the national and sub-regional level with the aim to reduce illicit trafficking in cultural property and facilitate its restitution;
- To develop preventive measures for safeguarding movable cultural heritage, with a special focus on the drafting of effective legislation, the update and modernization of inventories and the creation of specialized police agents, customs units and prosecutors;
- To improve awareness on the consequences of illicit trafficking, in order to involve the public - especially youth - as well as tourists, media and the art market all over the world.

2. Development of National Meetings:

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. ([See video](#))

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 customs agents, police officers, INTERPOL agents, prosecutors, museum workers, representatives of the Ministries of Culture, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Tourism, and National Archives, were invited. More than 120 participants from the six countries, representing 60 institutions, benefited from these workshops. They exchanged their opinions and experiences from which it was possible to diagnose the overall situation, taking into consideration the strengths and needs of each country.

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 property within the national legal framework, and adhered to conventions and international agreements.

The two days training, in charge of Mr. Gustavo Alberto Ramírez, an archaeologist and expert on the subject, served as a preparation prior to the regional meeting that took place in Antigua Guatemala, at the end of November of the same year.

The meetings proved to be a success to strengthen and create new alliances at the national level, unify efforts for the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property, and promote the creation of national inter-institutional units on this subject. The results achieved in these meetings were transferred to the regional meeting.

3. Development of the Regional Meeting to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property in Central America and Dominican Republic:

From November 28th to December 2nd 2016, the Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española in La Antigua, Guatemala, hosted the meeting of representatives of the seven beneficiary countries of the project (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Dominican Republic). It included the representation of the different national bodies involved in the fight against illicit trafficking and the safeguarding of cultural heritage, such as customs agents, officials from the Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, prosecutors, police officers and Interpol agents.

Eduard Planche and Arturo Da Silva from UNESCO, Maria Schneider from International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), Michelle Medina of World Customs Organization (WCO), Marcelo El Haibe of International Criminal Police Organization (OIPC INTERPOL), lieutenant Aguilar Navarro of the Spanish Civil Guard, Carlos González-Barandiarán of the Ministry of Education in Spain, and Samuel Fernando Franco Arce, president of ICOM-LAC, were the experts who provided specialized training to the participants.

The intervention of such experts and the participation of regional entities served to propose the creation, development, and application of legal tools and practices in combating illicit trafficking of cultural property at the regional level. This framework also promoted the creation of mechanisms to properly implement the 1970 UNESCO Convention, the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention and other international instruments.

The event was the product of valuable cooperation between the UNESCO Cluster Office for Central America with representation in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, the Regional Office of Culture for Latin America and the Caribbean with representation in Aruba, Cuba and Dominican Republic, the UNESCO Representative Office in Guatemala, the Secretariats of the 1970 Convention on the measures to be taken to prohibit and prevent the importation, exportation and transfer of ownership of cultural property and the Convention on the protection of underwater cultural heritage of 2001, as well as UNIDROIT.

The meeting concluded with the commitment of the 34 participants to take concrete actions to improve their capacity to fight the illicit traffic of cultural goods and to strengthen international cooperation, as reflected in the document "Declaration of La Antigua Guatemala for the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property in Central America and Dominican Republic".



Regional Meeting to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property held in La Antigua Guatemala.

3.1. Declaration of La Antigua Guatemala:

The Declaration proposes to unite efforts and work in an inter-institutional, national, subregional and international level, cooperating with the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic to stop the illicit trafficking of cultural goods in all its forms, including the Internet. ([See document](#))

It contains 17 points that define the route for the good implementation of the 1970 Convention, based on six axes:

- Data systematization.
- Updating and homogenization of existing legislation.
- Training.
- Local and international cooperation systems.
- Ratification and implementation of existing conventions.
- Awareness raising and education.

The Declaration further recommends the use of certain specialized tools. Some of them are practical tools and ethical instruments that UNESCO and other collaborating institutions have developed to contribute to the fight against illicit trafficking:

- UNESCO database on national cultural heritage laws, an international resource to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property.
- Arthemis, a database developed by the University of Geneva with restitution cases.
- International Standard Object ID, a model form for the registration of cultural property.
- UNESCO-AMA export certificate, designed to adapt to the nature and specific needs of cultural property, in relation to its protection when transported from one country to another.
- ARCHEO Platform, developed by the World Customs Organization, to facilitate the identification of suspicious cultural property.
- Interpol stolen works database.

On February 28th, 2017, the Declaration was presented to the 37th Regular Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education and Culture of the CECC/SICA, which through resolution N°8 decided to “Support the compliance of the agreements of the Declaration of Antigua Guatemala to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property in Central America and the Dominican Republic, to strengthen institutional capacities and promote Central American regional cooperation. It also supports the initiative to elevate this Declaration to the Summit of Presidents of SICA, as it is an issue that requires the joint work of several State institutions.”



4. Awareness raising campaign:

During the development of the project, a parallel raise awareness campaign was produced. The campaign was framed within the axis of action to raise awareness relative the protection of cultural heritage and the fight against illicit traffic in cultural property among the public. To this end, the Salvadoran company Kino Glaz was hired for the production of communication materials. These were:

- An audiovisual clip that was broadcast with emphasis through the internet ([See clip](#))
- A radio campaign
- A thematic web www.elpatrimonioesdetodos.com
- A Facebook page

Under the motto "Let's not allow robbery. Say no to illicit traffic of cultural property!" the campaign was launched through different media during a whole month and it was well received by the public. The main target was the young population of the region and therefore it was decided utilize social networks.



EL TRÁFICO ILÍCITO DE BIENES CULTURALES EN CENTROAMÉRICA

FECHAS
 13 DE FEBRERO, UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PANAMÁ
 14 DE FEBRERO, UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE NICARAGUA
 15 DE FEBRERO, UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE EL SALVADOR
 16 DE FEBRERO, UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE HONDURAS
 28 DE FEBRERO, UNIVERSIDAD DE COSTA RICA
 03 DE MARZO, UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE SANTO DOMINGO, REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA



Oficina de San José
 Representación para
 Costa Rica, El Salvador,
 Honduras, Nicaragua
 y Panamá

CON LA FINANCIACIÓN DE:



5. Awareness raising talks in Central American Universities:

The awareness-raising activities include talks in the universities of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic, held in February 2017. The talks were developed in order to raise awareness among young people about the problem of illicit trafficking cultural property in Central America and Dominican Republic.

- **Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá**, in coordination with Dr. Alexis Mojica, of the Laboratory of Research in Engineering and Applied Sciences of the Experimental Center of Engineering of the UTP.
- **Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua**, in coordination with Mrs. Sagrario Balladares, Coordinator of the Archaeological Center for Documentation and Research. CADI-UNAN-MANAGUA.
- **Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador**, in coordination with Mr. Julio Cesar Martínez, Director of the UTEC School of Anthropology.
- **Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras**, in coordination with Mr. Mario Mejía, Director of Culture of UNAH.
- **Universidad de Costa Rica**, in the framework of the Meeting of the Central American Anthropology Network and in collaboration with Mrs. Giselle Chang.
- **Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Santo Domingo**, in coordination with UNESCO Office in La Habana.

The academic institutions were in charge of summoning the students of different university careers and welcomed the event with great enthusiasm. In addition to the intervention of Mrs. Montserrat Martell, Culture Programme Specialist of UNESCO San José, entitled "The illicit trafficking of cultural property in Central America", local agents involved in heritage protection participated with a presentation of this problem at the national level. [Video of the talk](#)

The UNESCO Office in Guatemala also organized in March 2017 a seminar for university students entitled "Seminar to raise awareness and defense of Guatemalan cultural heritage and fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property".



6. Development of workshops for police forces:

The initiative emerges as a response to the needs identified during the Regional Meeting and included in the "Declaration of La Antigua Guatemala for the fight against illicit traffic in cultural property in Central America and the Dominican Republic", which identifies as one of the priorities the creation, identification and training of specialized national teams of customs, police, prosecutors and all State security agencies in charge of the prevention of illicit traffic in cultural property and the fight against this scourge. It also aims to develop coordination between these services and the relevant municipal, national, regional and international institutions (point 3).

The two-day workshops were held on March 13 and 14, 2017 in Costa Rica, and on March 16 and 17 in El Salvador by Mr. Marcelo El Haibe, Interpol Argentina Commissioner, with extensive experience in recovery of cultural assets and leading courses for police officers throughout Latin America.

Directed to the officials of the different police forces such as the National Guard, the Treasury Police, the National Police and the Customs Agents, the objective of this activity was to strengthen the operational capacities in the prevention and fight against the illicit traffic of goods and promote the creation of specialized units.



Workshop for El Salvador's police forces in the auditorium of Museo Nacional de Antropología Dr. David J. Guzmán



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Cooperación Española

Oficina UNIDOX San José, Representación para el Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua y Panamá. <http://www.unidox.org/honduras/cr>

7. Other Project Achievements:

Creation and strengthening of alliances

The meetings and training in the countries of the region were organized successfully with the collaboration and cooperation with facilities, technical resources and logistical support provided by the Centros de Cooperación Española. The celebration of these trainings and the regional meeting at the CCE, besides of reducing the project costs, gave greater visibility to the donor. Likewise, the activities in the different universities of Central America were well received and new and valuable alliances were created in diverse centers to work together on issues of heritage protection.

Gender perspective

From UNESCO we incorporate the gender perspective transversally in all the projects that were developed, with the objective of achieving gender equality. In this framework, meetings, workshops and awareness-raising activities were organized with a gender approach, ensuring that women participated as both trainers and beneficiaries. Of the 150 beneficiaries, 49% were women.

Diffusion and visibility

Throughout the year of implementation of the project, more than 100 publications have been identified on the activities that have been carried out, both in the press and in social networks.

- Audiovisual material such as interviews with experts from the regional meeting and university papers were recorded and posted on the internet for free distribution.
- Pre-and post-press releases have been published on the UNESCO San José website, on the official website of the 1970 Convention Secretariat and on the Latin American and Caribbean Portal on Culture.
- Articles have been published in the region's press (El Heraldó, Panamá 24h, El Universal, La Estrella de Panamá, La Antigua Guatemala, etc.)
- Follow-up publications have been made on Facebook and Twitter.

List of useful documents

1. [Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property-1970](#)
2. [UNIDROIT Convention on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects 1995](#)
3. [Convention on the protection of the underwater cultural heritage 2001](#)
4. [List of object verification - Object ID](#)
5. [ICOM code of ethics for museums](#)
6. [International code of ethics for dealers in cultural property 1999](#)
7. [Pontifical letter on the necessity and urgency of inventory and cataloguing of the cultural heritage of the church \(1999\)](#)
8. [Curricular letter about the pastoral function of ecclesiastical museums 2001](#)
9. [UNESCO data base of national cultural heritage laws](#)
10. [Arthemis. Data base of cases of restitution of cultural property.](#)
11. [Red List of endangered cultural objects of Central America and Mexico](#)
12. [Culture and Development Journal n10. Stop the illicit traffic of cultural property](#)



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la Ciencia y la Cultura



Convención
para la lucha contra
el tráfico ilícito
de bienes culturales



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