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**Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage
14-15 May 2012
Koh Kong Resort Hotel
Koh Kong, Cambodia**

UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of Cambodia will jointly organize the Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage from 14 to 15 May 2012 in Koh Kong, Cambodia.

Underwater Cultural Heritage encompasses all traces of human existence that lie under water for at least one hundred years and have cultural or historical values. In the Asia-Pacific region, this includes significant ancient shipwrecks of the maritime Silk Road, sunken ruins and cities as well as submerged caves. This heritage represents an invaluable source of information on ancient civilizations and historic seafaring, as well as unique diving and tourism and development opportunities.

The *UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage* is the leading legal instrument guiding underwater archaeology worldwide. It is designed to strengthen legal protection, research, cooperation, awareness-raising and capacity-building. Especially the Convention's clear prohibition of the commercial exploitation of sites as well as its guidance on the development of underwater archaeology is important for the Asia-Pacific region.

The objectives of this regional meeting are manifold. Most importantly, the meeting will discuss the advantages of ratifying the 2001 Convention for the Asian states, and contribute to raising awareness against issues surrounding commercial exploitation and treasure-hunt of underwater cultural heritage. In addition to addressing policy issues, new projects may be initiated to progress underwater archaeology in Cambodia and the Asia-Pacific region.

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