

II.(iv) SPECIFIC COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

Afghanistan

29. Following the pillage of cultural heritage objects in Afghanistan resulting from the conflict, notably the losses suffered by the National Museum in Kabul, the Secretariat assisted dealers, museum curators, police forces and potential purchasers regarding the provenance of certain cultural objects for sale that might have originated in that country. The objects stolen from the Kabul Museum were entered in Interpol's internet database in 2004, and are hence accessible to all police forces.

30. UNESCO has contracts with the following organizations with the aim of safeguarding Afghan cultural heritage: the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH), the Cultural Heritage Foundation (presided by Professor Hirayama) in Japan, the Archaeological Museum in Lattes (France) and the Swiss Afghanistan Museum in Bubendorf (Switzerland). One of the main aspects of UNESCO's efforts is to provide protective custody for Afghan cultural objects found on the international market and, in particular, objects stolen from museums or found during recent illicit excavations. Such objects will be returned to Afghanistan as soon as the situation permits. The objects held in Switzerland were returned in 2007.

31. Following the request of the Afghan authorities for UNESCO to play a coordinating role in all international activities aimed at the safeguarding of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, UNESCO established in 2002 an International Coordination Committee, composed of Afghan and leading international experts from the most important donor countries and organizations providing funds or scientific assistance to the safeguarding of

Afghanistan's cultural heritage. This Committee identified the prevention of illicit excavations and the fight against illicit traffic of cultural property as two of its priorities.

UNESCO supports the efforts of the Afghan Government in this field.