



CONCLUSIONS

13th Meeting of the INTERPOL Expert Group (IEG) on Stolen Cultural Property Lyon, France, 8-9 March 2016

The participants at the 13th Meeting of the INTERPOL Expert Group (IEG) on Stolen Cultural Property, held in Lyon, France, on 8-9 March 2016:

ACKNOWLEDGING the full relevance of the recommendations of the 12th meeting of the INTERPOL Expert Group held in Lyon on 18-19 June 2015;

AWARE of the long-term severe threat to cultural heritage, due to natural disaster, civil unrest or armed conflict, and of the increasing cases of thefts and illicit trafficking in cultural property in many regions of the world, especially in the MENA region;

TAKING into consideration recent UN resolutions, in particular UN Security Council Resolutions 2253 and 2199 (2015) on the threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, as well as UN General Assembly Resolution 69/281 (2015) on saving the cultural heritage of Iraq and UN General Assembly Resolution 69/196 (2014) on international guidelines for crime prevention and criminal justice responses with respect to trafficking in cultural property and other related offences;

ALSO TAKING into consideration the European Parliament Resolution of 30 April 2015 on the destruction of cultural sites perpetrated by ISIS/Da'esh (2015/2649(RSP));

RECOGNIZING the need for strong national legislation for the protection of cultural heritage, and for harmonization of laws across jurisdictions, and the benefits of efficient implementation of international legal instruments in this area;

RECOGNIZING the benefits and importance of UNESCO 1970 and UNIDROIT 1995 Conventions as a legal basis in the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property, and also of United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, as well as exchanges of best practices and of increased operational cooperation to fight the illicit traffic in cultural property, in particular between law enforcement agencies and UNESCO, UNIDROIT, UNODC, the WCO, ICOM and INTERPOL;

ENCOURAGE INTERPOL's member countries to:

CONTINUE their efforts to implement the requirements of the UN Security Council Resolution 2199 (2015) concerning cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific, and religious importance illegally removed from Iraq since 6 August 1990 and from Syria since 15 March 2011;

COMPILE AND SHARE data on thefts and seizures of cultural items with relevant organizations, and conduct research into actors and operational modes of illicit trafficking in cultural items, when appropriate;

USE INTERPOL's capabilities (INTERPOL Stolen Works of Art Database, Poster of the Most Wanted Works of Art, Notices, etc.) for improving police cooperation in countering illicit traffic in cultural goods and related offences worldwide, particularly if linked to organized crime and terrorism, as well as all other practical tools available to the law enforcement agencies, such as ICOM Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk, etc.;

GIVE special priority to checks of objects at borders and in their respective national art market, as well as to seizures of doubtful items, especially coming from Iraq and Syria; for this purpose (and considering § 17 of UNSC Resolution 2199 mentioning that INTERPOL and UNESCO are in charge of the future safe return of the objects looted and stolen in Syria and Iraq), INTERPOL's member countries are kindly requested, without compromising possible ongoing investigations, to transmit systematically information about seized cultural artefacts to IPSP.

RECOMMEND that INTERPOL and its partner Organizations:

PROVIDE, within their respective mandates, special support to countries during crisis and post-crisis periods, according to their specific requirements;

PROVIDE ALSO, in line with their respective roles, technical assistance to raise awareness and build capacity for appropriate officials, including customs, police, prosecution and judicial services, and include a component on the possible links between trafficking in cultural property and terrorism financing, particularly in relation to Iraq and Syria, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2199 /2015, but also to Libya and Yemen;

INCREASE their efforts in searching for a coordinated approach in order to obtain more complete, consistent and reliable statistical data on crimes against cultural property;

ENCOURAGE their respective member countries to ratify the relevant international conventions relating to the protection of cultural heritage, if they are not yet States Parties, and implement their provisions;

CONSIDER the use of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to promote the international cooperation in investigation, prosecution and adjudication of trafficking in cultural property and other related offences, as well as in search, seizure, confiscation and recovery of cultural property;

RAISE AWARENESS within the private sector, including auction houses, internet companies and providers, etc., of the consequences of the illicit trade in cultural objects, in particular the risk of terrorism financing, and encourage them to systematically use INTERPOL's Stolen Works of Art database for checking cultural objects seized or offered for sale;

ENCOURAGE the creation, where it does not exist, of a specialised police unit with a national database interconnected with INTERPOL database, as well as the maintenance or reinforcement of existing specialised units.

RECOMMEND that INTERPOL General Secretariat:

SEEK increased operational cooperation with NCBs and specialized law enforcement agencies in particular cases, which may lead to the creation of a regular Task Force;

EXPLORE the possibility to develop innovative technologies (mobile application, etc.) to support the daily job of the law enforcement agencies and the other international stakeholders in identifying the provenance of cultural artefacts (stolen or not).

FACILITATE the searches of cultural objects stolen from crisis areas, in dedicating on INTERPOL's public website a special paragraph to items stolen in Libya and featured in INTERPOL's database of stolen art, as already made for objects stolen from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

STRENGTHEN cooperation with the World Customs Organization in order to intercept illegally imported/exported cultural goods at borders, in particular through ARCHEO network.