



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION (WCO)⁽¹⁾

and

THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,

SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

on

COMBATting ILLICIT TRAFFIC IN CULTURAL PROPERTY

⁽¹⁾ Also referred to in official texts as the Customs Co-operation Council.

Acting within the framework of the Agreement signed in 1973 by the Director-General of UNESCO and the Secretary-General of the Customs Co-operation Council, and in particular pursuant to Article VI-2 of that Agreement

and

Being convinced that damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world;

Recognizing that the issue of the cultural heritage transcends frontiers;

Realizing that the plundering of cultural property is a world-wide phenomenon;

Believing that illicit traffic in cultural property constitutes a crime against the heritage of humanity;

Recognizing that international illicit traffic in cultural property is one of the oldest forms of organized cross-border crime;

Being aware that Customs, within the competence of their national administrations, have an important contribution to make in the fight against illicit traffic in cultural property;

Being aware that UNESCO has an essential role to play in protecting the heritage;

Noting that the increase in illicit traffic in cultural property, the volume of which has become alarming, makes it necessary for customs authorities, to the extent that national legislation provides them with such responsibility, to reinforce their surveillance and control wherever resources allow;

Being of the view that closer co-operation at the international, regional and national levels between the authorities responsible for protecting the cultural heritage and customs authorities will enhance the effectiveness of customs controls;

Being of the view that such co-operation will be advantageous to all parties involved in combatting illicit traffic in cultural property;

**The World Customs Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization**

have agreed as follows:

1. In order to strengthen co-operation between the two organizations with respect to combatting illicit traffic in cultural property, the WCO Secretariat and the UNESCO Secretariat shall communicate to each other all general information which may be of common interest;
2. The two Secretariats shall invite each other as observers to all meetings that they hold and that may be of common interest with respect to combatting illicit traffic in cultural property;
3. With a view to combatting illicit traffic in cultural property, the two Secretariats shall jointly determine and implement, each within its own field of competence, ways and means of enhancing co-operation and exchange of information between customs authorities and the competent authorities recognized by UNESCO for the protection of cultural heritage, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of fraud investigations and fraud profiles drawn up by the inspection services;
4. The UNESCO Secretariat shall provide the WCO Secretariat with any information that may be useful in impressing on the customs services the importance of problems relating to trade in cultural property and the procedures applying to such trade;

5. The WCO Secretariat shall provide the UNESCO Secretariat with information designed to enable services responsible for protection of the heritage to gain a better understanding of the tasks of the customs authorities and the problems that those authorities encounter;

6. The two Secretariats shall work together to produce publications aimed at awareness-raising and informing the various services responsible for combatting illicit traffic in cultural property;

7. The two Secretariats shall work together to design training materials in the field of combatting illicit traffic in cultural property;

8. The two Secretariats shall, within the limits of the means available to them, organize joint training activities for customs officers and other enforcement officers;

9. Either Secretariat shall communicate to the other its programme of activities relating to training on illicit traffic in cultural property and, according to the level of interest expressed, do everything possible to ensure that customs problems are dealt within UNESCO training courses, and that the problems encountered by UNESCO are dealt with in training courses for customs officers. Within the limits of available resources, the two Secretariats shall do their utmost to enable training officers from either secretariat to participate in the training activities of the other.

Done in two original copies, in English and in French, both texts being equally authentic.

Director-General of UNESCO



Secretary-General of WCO

