

RESOLUTION OF THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL
ON THE ROLE OF CUSTOMS IN PREVENTING ILLICIT TRAFFICKING
OF CULTURAL OBJECTS

(Brussels, July 2016)

THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL* :

NOTING :

the alarming reports of looting and destruction of cultural heritage sites in conflict zones and the increasing illicit trafficking of cultural objects;

the linkages between illicit trafficking in cultural objects, money laundering, other criminal activities and possibly terrorism;

the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property, which is the first international legal framework for combating illicit trafficking of cultural property;

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2199 adopted on 12 February 2015, wherein the Council condemns the destruction of the cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria and calls on Member States to take steps to prevent trade in cultural objects illegally removed from either country during the conflict there;

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2253 adopted on 17 December 2015, which specifically addresses trade in cultural property as one of the possible routes of terrorist financing and reminds that all Member States shall take appropriate steps to prevent the trade in Iraqi and Syrian cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific, and religious importance;

the leading role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in fostering intergovernmental cooperation in this field;

RECOGNIZING that :

trafficking of cultural objects diminishes national patrimony and progressively deprives humanity of its heritage;

if the looting and destruction of cultural objects continue at the current pace, this may irreversibly compromise the world's cultural heritage;

illicit trafficking of cultural objects has to be addressed in a holistic manner by targeting source, transit and market countries, thus covering the entire supply chain;

international borders still offer the best opportunity to intercept stolen cultural artefacts and, to that end, Customs authorities can play an instrumental role in preventing illicit trafficking of cultural objects around the world;

* Customs Co-operation Council is the official name of the World Customs Organization (WCO).

Customs authorities may not have the necessary expertise to identify cultural objects, including their provenance, authenticity and legal status related to their movement across borders;

the exchange of information, expertise and intelligence as well as close cooperation between Customs authorities, other law enforcement agencies, the private sector and non-governmental organizations are critical in achieving success in this mission;

RESOLVES that the WCO :

Advocates the need to elevate illicit trafficking in cultural objects as an issue of a global concern and to conduct analysis to identify and close gaps in the current legislation and techniques to address this scourge;

Encourages Customs and other competent authorities to introduce new Export Certificates, or revise existing Certificates, in line with the UNESCO-WCO Model Export Certificate;

Underlines the importance of the WCO Compliance and Enforcement Package (CEP) including the Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) and its seizure database, and urges Customs authorities to provide seizure information to enable the production of regional and global intelligence products to tackle illicit trafficking of cultural objects;

Requests Customs authorities and their national counterparts to enhance their participation in ARCHEO, a CENcomm-based platform that serves as a communication tool for the exchange of information, to assist in the identification and verification of cultural objects;

Endorses close cooperation at national, regional and international level among and between Customs and other regulatory and enforcement authorities, academia, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in relation to information exchange, with a view to preventing illicit trafficking in cultural objects and contributing to investigative efforts aimed at disrupting and dismantling criminal networks and activities;

Supports regional cooperation efforts through the WCO's Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs);

Commits to support its Members in enhancing their enforcement capabilities through the development of necessary tools and specific training in cooperation with partner organizations;

Calls on Customs authorities to enhance efforts and continue to raise awareness, through special events and public campaigns, of the problem of illicit trafficking of cultural objects and its impact on the common heritage of humanity.
