



Addressing Illicit Trafficking and Protection of Cultural Property



Country: The Arab Republic of Egypt

Role: The Delegate of Egypt

Committee: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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1) Summarization of the Context and Regarding History of Egypt

Illicit trafficking has been a major issue in human history, affecting many countries, dating back thousands of years, and causing noticeable harm to many cultures around the world. Egypt, despite being a country with considerable ancient heritage including property such as artifacts, objects and collections, is one of the countries that has been under the effect of such activity, holding genuine grievances with this matter due to the historical looting which took place during the colonial era (19th-20th centuries.) Egypt, ever since the looting and grievances, has been actively invested into the issue, pursuing their cultural properties in order to regain the ownership of them back.

Furthermore, the grievances have only gotten more serious throughout periods of political instability and weak border maintenance, causing illegal excavations and cross-border smuggling. The loss of such property not only undermines Egypt's identity but also harms a significant portion of academic research, culture, tourism, and the economy. Due to the reasons mentioned, Egypt has persisted with regaining lost properties and increasing maintenance to prevent further damage.

2) Current Policies and Approach of Egypt

The Government of Egypt is not passive with the ongoing illegal trafficking issues but instead has laws, agreements, and ratifications in regard. The Egyptian Antiquities Protection Law is a major example of the enforced laws about this situation, as it declares all antiquities as state property, criminalizes illegal excavation, possession of undocumented artifacts, and export without permission, imposes heavy prison sentences and fines, and regulates museums and private collections. In addition, the State of Egypt has ratified the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (aka Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property,) ensuring Egypt can legally request the return of stolen artifacts, and other ratifiers are expected to cooperate with the State. Egypt has also entered into bilateral agreements with other states in order to further support the prevention of illicit artifact trafficking and repatriation of already stolen property.

3) Issues and Possible Resolutions

As of now, the State of Egypt still holds weaknesses in the protection of cultural property, such as weak enforcement in transit, online black-market sales, lack of artifact documentation, insufficient funding for site protection, and a high demand from foreign collectors. In order to patch such weaknesses, Egypt emphasizes the importance of the

existence of stronger international databases for better documentation, better border training to prevent cross-border smuggling, tech-based cultural property tracking to gather real-time data regarding properties and store the data in the international databases, public awareness campaigns to gather additional help and support from the residents, faster repatriation mechanisms in order to achieve quicker return of cultural property, and shared responsibility of market countries in order to halt illicit trafficking on demand with the help of import laws, refusal of undocumented artifacts, and the prosecution of buyers. In regard to such matters, the State of Egypt requests international cooperation for the achievement of such protection of cultural property and to prevent illicit trafficking as much as possible.

Bibliography

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