

International Archaeological Community

E-Mail: presidents@flinders.edu.au

February 4th, 2011

The International Archaeological Community is following with great concern the events unfolding in Egypt.

In these past few days, the world has seen the desires of Egyptians to exercise their basic civil rights and has received news of the destruction and looting of a significant part of Egypt's invaluable and irreplaceable archaeological history. Any damage to museum collections is an irreversible loss to Egypt's history, which has long engaged the world, as well as its own citizens, with key sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. Archaeological sites and artifacts, historic monuments and documents, and artistic expressions, are just a few examples of Egypt's cultural heritage. The richness of this heritage is integral to the country's economic well-being, particularly in terms of heritage tourism. In addition, the Egyptian people have distinguished themselves for deeply caring about their heritage and the engagement of Egyptian scholars to study their rich past and make their knowledge available to their own people is well recognized in our profession. We urge you, in full awareness of the existence of other priorities in this political situation, to state that the history of Egypt is a priority area and that Egypt's cultural heritage must be protected.

Based on experience with other zones of conflict, we are deeply concerned about the potential looting and subsequent illegal trade of Egypt's antiquities, and the dispersal and destruction of its tangible and intangible heritage. We urge you to consider, among your concerns in this conflict, strategies to secure this threatened heritage from potential looters and illegal export, and to assist professionals and scholars to carry out their stewardship duties. We call on international law enforcement agencies to adopt immediate plans to be vigilant against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods under existing legislations and to follow the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), the Cultural Property Implementation Act, and the UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen

or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995). We encourage international agencies to be alert over the next several months for the possible appearance of looted Egyptian antiquities at their borders and to assist in the recovery of this cultural heritage.

Egypt will require funding for the reconstruction of its heritage and to strengthen its institutional and professional capacity to ensure effective heritage management. To the extent that you are able, we hope you will assist in the reconstruction of Egypt's invaluable history and assure that the appropriate committees work closely with Egyptian scholars and authorities. Finally, we offer the expertise of our organizations in assisting you in anyway possible to safeguard the richness of Egypt's history.

President Dr. Ben A. Nelson
Archaeology Division-American Anthropological
Association
www.aaanet.org/sections/ad/index.html

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Willem J.H. Willems
International Committee on Archaeological
Heritage Management-ICAHM

President Dr. Elizabeth Bartman
Archaeological Institute of America-AIA
www.archaeological.org

Secretary-General Dr. Luiz Oosterbeek
International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric
Sciences- UISPP
www.uispp.pt.vu/

President Dr. Lucy Wayne
American Cultural Resources Association
www.acra-crm.org

Secretary General Dr. Ian Lilley
Pan African Archaeological Association for
Prehistory and Related Studies
www.panafprehistory.org

President Dr. Eldon Yellowhorn
Canadian Archaeological Association
www.canadianarchaeology.com

President Prof.Dr.Dr.h.c.mult. Hermann Parzinger
Präsidium der Deutschen Verbände für
Altertumsforschung
parzinger@hv.spk-berlin.de

President Dr. Friedrich Lüth
European Association of Archaeologists-EAA
www.e-a-a.org/

President Dr. Margaret W. Conkey
Society for American Archaeology-SAA
www.saa.org

President Prof. Dr. Sandra L. López Varela
Society for Archaeological Sciences-SAS
www.socarchsci.org

President Dr. William B. Lees
Society for Historical Archaeology-SHA
www.sha.org

President Dr. Chapurukha Kusimba
Society of Africanist Archaeologists (SAfA)
www.safa.rice.edu

President Dr. Leslie C. Aiello
Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological
Research
www.wennergren.org

President Dr. Claire Smith
World Archaeological Congress-WAC
www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org