

STATEMENT REGARDING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE UNITED STATES FROM UNESCO

October 16, 2017

The undersigned organizations wish to express their concerns about the decision by the current U.S. administration to withdraw the United States from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Founded in 1945, UNESCO promotes education, women's rights and many other goals around the world, including the protection of cultural heritage. The foremost UNESCO program in the preservation of cultural resources is the World Heritage List, which is made up of sites identified for their historical, natural, cultural, or scientific significance. They are protected under international treaties.

Questions involving history and culture have always been vulnerable to politicization. This is especially true in deeply divided and contested regions. While UNESCO is not perfect, either as a forum for discussing such matters, or in its cultural resources management policies, it remains the best environment and mechanism there is for transcending international boundaries in order to protect locations important to our shared history and common humanity. Engagement, not withdrawal, is likelier to bring about beneficial change.

We are disappointed with this decision, and hope that the U.S. will rejoin UNESCO as soon as possible. In the meantime, we support the work of UNESCO generally, and stand ready to work with it to improve the organization's ability to meet our common cultural heritage goals.

American Anthropological Association
American Cultural Resources Association
Society for American Archaeology
Society for Historical Archaeology