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A Letter from the President

In January 2007, at the 107th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), the AIA, together with the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI) and the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, signed a Joint Statement of Principle on the Protection of Archaeological Sites, Monuments, and Museums. The statement, reproduced on the following page, came about through a series of meetings between officers of the AIA and the DAI over the past two years, which grew to include our colleagues from the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. We all agreed that it was necessary for archaeologists to speak out strongly against looting and other forms of destruction of the archaeological record across the globe. We felt that it would be much more effective if our organizations, representing a group of countries with wide geographic and chronological areas of interest, articulated our concerns collectively rather than individually. Representatives of all three organizations were involved in drafting the document, and representatives of all three were present at the signing ceremony.

The signing of this historic document inaugurates a new era of international cooperation among archaeologists who are actively working to preserve the world's archaeological resources. In a time of armed conflict, we need to promote the protection of cultural heritage more energetically than we have done thus far, becoming, in essence, a United Nations of archaeologists. Our numbers will grow as new collaborations are forged, and in time the archaeological institutes of the world will speak with one voice when cultural heritage is threatened.

Other organizations interested in lending their support to these principles are encouraged to sign on. Please contact me for more information.

C. BRIAN ROSE
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JOINT STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE ON THE PROTECTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES,
MONUMENTS, AND MUSEUMS

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, THE GERMAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE,
AND THE INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The world's monuments, archaeological sites, and museums are irreplaceable parts of the common heritage of humanity, yet in an ever increasing number of countries they continue to be at risk of pillaging, wartime damage, and even destruction. Their extraordinary value as records of humanity's past history imposes a moral obligation on governments and peoples to protect and conserve them. In the conviction that such records of human achievement should continue to speak to all the world's peoples, the Archaeological Institute of America, the German Archaeological Institute, and the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences together endorse the following statement of principle:

A. In order to act as responsible stewards of the material heritage of humanity, governments should provide effective and continuing protection for monuments, museums, and sites in their jurisdictions.

B. In order to discourage the destruction of archaeological sites, the world's museums and private collectors should adopt and rigorously observe the Code of Ethics of the International Council of Museums, not acquiring "objects where there is reasonable cause to believe their recovery involved the unauthorized, unscientific, or intentional destruction of monuments [and] archaeological sites."

C. In order to reunite pillaged works with the monuments, sites, or historical contexts from which they were illegally removed, and to serve as a disincentive to further pillage, such works should be restored whenever possible to the site or country of origin.

D. All nations should ratify and consistently respect the provisions embodied in the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its First and Second Protocols, regarding the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflict and military occupation.

Protection of sites, monuments, and museums requires the participation of the political, economic, and policing agencies of governments, as well as of non-governmental organizations, individuals, and the private sector. The German Archaeological Institute, the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Archaeological Institute of America urge governments and individuals to endorse these objectives and to work actively to realize them.

Signed: January 5, 2007

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