



May 7, 2016

Dear Members of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee,

I write on behalf of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) to express my organization's strong support for extending the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Hellenic Republic Concerning the Imposition of Import Restrictions on Categories of Archaeological and Byzantine Ecclesiastical Ethnological Material through the 15th Century A.D. of the Hellenic Republic. ASOR, founded in 1900 and currently located at Boston University, is an international organization of archaeologists and historians whose mission is to initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the history and cultures of the Near East and wider Mediterranean. Our membership of 1700 professional members and another 12,000 "Friends of ASOR" has a strong interest in the long-term preservation, presentation, and safeguarding of the heritage of Greece.

Modern-day Greece is host to some of the oldest and most significant archaeological remains in the world. Most famous, perhaps, are the fabled monuments from the classical period, but equally remarkable are materials from the Minoan, Mycenaean, Archaic, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine eras. Greece is also home to important prehistoric archaeological materials, dating back to the Upper Paleolithic period (c. 20,000 BCE).

But for Greece, to be home to such a remarkable cultural patrimony comes with a cost, which is the threats this patrimony faces at the hands of unscrupulous individuals who, through the looting of archaeological sites and through other acts of theft (illegally taking materials held in storage facilities, for example), steal Greece's cultural heritage and sell it for profit, often by illegally exporting that material from its Greek home. Because, moreover, of the significant role of Greece in American self-understanding (our understanding of our democracy as having its roots in classical Athens, for example), the United States is a—if not *the*—prime market for these illegally exported materials.

Extending the Greece MOU is an important means by which the United States can act to quell the activities that contribute to the illicit trafficking of Greek cultural heritage. The MOU also offers opportunities to expand cultural relationships between the United States and Greece—as especially can be seen in the MOU's stipulations that encourage enhanced interchange of archaeological materials between Greece and the United States.

In short, the MOU enables and encourages the preservation of archaeological and historical sites in Greece, as well as supporting archaeological and historical research and education in both Greece and the US. For these reasons, ASOR strongly supports extending its provisions.

Sincerely yours,

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