

Head Chair: Matthew Cheng

Vice Chair: Elisa Costa

Hey Delegates!

I'm Matthew Cheng, I'm a senior, and I'll be your head chair. This is my fourth year in MUN and I love it - it has broadened my worldview and made me more confident in voicing my opinions. Outside of this club, I play classical and jazz piano and perform at local senior centers. In my free time, you can find me playing basketball, trying new foods, and traveling to exotic destinations. Feel free to message or email me with any questions!

- Matthew Cheng, Head Chair

Hi!

I'm Elisa Costa, a junior, and your vice chair. This is my third year in MUN. Throughout the past couple of years I've been able to grow as a leader and public speaker. Outside of MUN I spend lots of time reading or spending time with my friends at different restaurants. If I'm not doing either of those things, you'll probably find me watching The Office on Netflix. I look forward to seeing you all in committee!

- Elisa Costa, Vice Chair

Reminder: Position papers are due by October 7th at 11:59PM to zhen1hong2@gmail.com.

Feel free to email us if you have any questions!

Committee: UNESCO

Topic: Trafficking of Artifacts in Conflict Zones

Solutions should address the prevention of trafficking as well as identification and return of trafficked artifacts. Remember - we're looking for solutions that are creative and detailed.

Background:

Trafficking of artifacts has occurred for thousands of years and is currently a multibillion dollar trade. The earliest known case of illegal trade regarding artifacts took place in 1113 B.C. in Thebes. Typically, during raids in various countries, artifacts are plundered and then sold illegally, often to museums and private collections. In 1970, UNESCO adopted the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property in order to combat the illegal trade of cultural artifacts. In 1954, the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict became the first international treaty signed to focus only on the protection of cultural property in armed conflict.

There have also been many UNESCO World Heritage sites that have been seized. For example, the Syrian city of Palmyra has been under the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria twice. Earlier in 2018, over 4100 artifacts were recovered by a global law enforcement operation, led by INTERPOL and Europol. This resulted in over 53 people being arrested for having a connection to the robberies.

These government organizations have stated that the internet has become increasingly difficult to use for monitoring the illicit trafficking of goods. The internet has made it easier for thieves to contact sellers without the trouble of customs and international policies. The

trafficking of artifacts has also been difficult to monitor because when they are stolen, the artifacts are replaced with almost identical replicas. Unlike the trafficking of drugs or firearms, trafficking artifacts becomes complicated because it is nearly impossible to tell the difference between the true and falsified artifact, even to the buyer.

Possible Solutions:

One possible solution that can be taken is stricter screening of artifacts in museums and other institutions, which could be done directly through UNESCO or other organizations. By identifying the background of each item, such as its origin, any artifacts that have been trafficked would be more easily identified. Perhaps measures can also be taken to make adjustments to the existing UNESCO Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws, which would help improve tracking of museum artifacts.

Other solutions could help to stop antique trafficking at its source. One possible way would be to improve surveillance at significant cultural sites, which could be done through security guards or live surveillance systems. Surveillance in areas of intense conflict can be difficult, however, as it may be dangerous to intervene, and further measures may need to be taken in these circumstances. However, this would at the very least allow UNESCO to recognize when artifacts are seized and would also prevent replacement with fake replicas. ‘

Questions to Consider:

1. How can black market trade of illegally seized artifacts be monitored better?
2. What aspect of this issue should UNESCO prioritize moving forward?

3. How strictly should those involved in antique trafficking be punished?
4. To what extent should UNESCO be involved? Should it give countries general guidelines or should it be directly involved?
5. How might different countries require different approaches to solutions?

Works Cited:

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4. <https://www.decodedscience.org/portable-antiquities-from-conflict-zones-identifying-and-safeguarding-cultural-heritage/22999>
5. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/over-41-000-artefacts-seized-in-global-operation-targeting-illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-goods>
6. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2016/06/looting-ancient-blood-antiquities/>