

Position Paper**Committee: ECOSOC****Delegate: Patrick Wu Daiqi****Country: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland****School: No.2 High School of Eastern China Normal University****Topic: The Protection and Return of Cultural Artefacts to their Countries of Origin****October 4, 2015**

The Protection and Restitution of Cultural Artefacts to its Original Countries has long been a hot spot issue in various committee conferences of United Nations. Thereby, subsidiary bodies, organisations and committees have been established by the General Assembly in corporation with the ECOSOC to further supervise and formulate regulations. In accordance with the latest up-to-date documents submitted on the 19th session of the ICPRCP Committee[1], contributions on all fields of this issue including the promotion of bilateral negotiations, preparation of documents and resources, establishment of UNESCO Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws as well as subsidiary actions of capacity building and awareness raising.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (abbr. U.K.), as an active member state of ECOSOC and UNESCO, has been paying increasing attention on the issue of restitution and protection of cultural artefacts. Since United Kingdom has been playing an active role in the development of the World Heritage Fund subsidiary to the UNESCO[2], the U.K. calls upon all countries to act under the guidance of ICPRCP and UNIDROIT resolutions especially the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970[3] to further establish an all-round protection regulations and system to further ensure the long-term perseverance of cultural antiquities under the direct supervision of UNESCO.

The United Kingdom recognises the importance of cultural objects and its deep links with the national identity. However, without further notice the committee and the member states should realise that any cultural objects share the common characteristics of universal human property. Therefore the U.K. committed itself to the promotion of restitution and protection of cultural artefacts of all member states. As a developed country, the United Kingdom boasts the resources of adequate funds and advanced technology to provide professional perseverance service of heritages and cultural properties. Thus, various cases of well-preserved and exhibited cultural objects can be found throughout the U.K. , especially well-done cases include the British Museum. With in close corporation with the government of the United Kingdom[4] and other member states loaning their

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cultural property in exhibition, the British Museum boasts the capability of performing top-level archaeological researches collaborating with countries over the world.

With the thorough evaluation of the current situation, the United Kingdom strongly recommends the Committee to formulate an over-all evaluation system on the purpose of understanding the function and importance of a cultural property while acknowledging the capability of the originated-country, as the factors of which include social stability, economic and technological level as well as the completion of the cultural property supervising system. Based on an comprehensive research and study can we eventually formulate a formula that is justified to reveal the true value of a cultural object.

Addition to the evaluation system, United Kingdom is working closely with requesting countries to host exhibiting activities. The United Kingdom, representing several national museums, aims to share its collections of over eight million objects from across the globe with worldwide audiences. The International Touring Exhibition Programme[5] allows this rich and diverse collection and museum expertise to be brought to museums and galleries around the world. Thereby offering people living all over the world an opportunity of viewing and learning about the rare and precious cultural artefacts.

In accordance with the current system, United Kingdom has been receiving numerous informal requests of restitution culture properties without clear understandings and acknowledgement of the factors listed above. Therefore, U.K. urges all countries especially member states to follow the current regulations of ICPRCP to formally request a restitution of its cultural property with a submitted Standard Form concerning Requests for Return or Restitution[6], meanwhile requesting countries should take full responsibility in providing clear evidence to indicate the property rights declaration of certain cultural antiquities, and the restitution of which is of great significant impact to its country in all aspects.

Taking a brief look back on past solutions, Non-retrospective Operation Principle, as one of the most fundamental law, is necessary to be deeply implemented, as some countries are blindly condemning United Kingdom for no evidence and appropriate reasons, U.K. has no reason to react and respond to the restitution requests of cultural properties due to the complexity of historic transfer of cultural properties ownership. Cases exist as the Elgin Marbles issue[7] of debating over Greece, it is Greece to break the agreed regulations to re-discuss about the right ownership of which, for it is ago reached agreement on the topic of sharing the common wealth of human history. Despite that, United Kingdom is aware of the negative actions that parts of the returned artefacts are used for reselling instead of exhibition and education purposes, which is a defined as illegal and against humanitarianism.

Together with all member states, United Kingdom will be in close corporation with intergovernmental committee including ECOSOC & UNESCO as well as making further actions to implement the agreed regulations and resolutions including not only the signed agreements of restitution but also continuously to keep cultural properties under high-level of professional perseverance and protection. Meanwhile, U.K. as a leading and active member in the states, holds the responsibility to supervise and check up on the implementation of policies and regulations, thereby further ensuring the common human cultural property not damaged or lost.

United Kingdom believes that the holy duty of protecting and restitution the cultural artefacts needs the corporation of all member states. No matter the obstacles ahead, United Kingdom will consistently and generously help all states to realise the dream of sharing the fascinating common human wealth. United Kingdom hopes all countries can join together hand in hand to solve the difficulties lying ahead on our way of human beings.

Reference

- [1] Intergovernmental Committee For Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation (19th Session UNESCO Headquarters, 1-2 October 2014)
- [2] The World Heritage Fund Statement of Compulsory Contributions (31 May 2015).
- [3] Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property – 1970 (PHEIC) (2005 Second Edition)
- [4] Guidance Protecting cultural Objects on Loan (United Kingdom Government Department for Culture, Media & Sport) (6 August 2014)
- [5] International touring exhibitions A museum of the world for the world (British Museum)
- [6] Standard Form Concerning Requests for Return or Restitution (ICPRCP) (January 1986)
- [7] UNESCO Letter to British Government for the return of Parthenon's Marbles (UNESCO) (Oct 2014)

Related Links

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/world-heritage-fund/>

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/restitution-of-cultural-property/>

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/>

<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/>