



# SAIMUN 2022

## Resolution #180

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POWERED BY MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE MANAGER

**Committee:** SPECPOL

**Topic:** the question of returning Artefacts to their original countries

**Main Submitter:** United Kingdom

**Co-Submitters:** Saudi Arabia, Poland, Chile, Spain, Pakistan, Japan, Iran, Bahrain

THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLINIZATION COMMITTEE,

*Defines* artefacts as an object made by a human being, typically one of cultural or historical interest, showing human workmanship or modification as distinguished from a natural object; such as the Rosetta Stone, Chinese Qin Sword, and the Droga Stones,

*Declaring* that artefacts were taken from countries at a time when they were colonies of foreign powers. Since the era of colonialism has been over for many years, countries can feel as though it is unfair that their former colonisers still own their property and refuse to give it back,

*Aware of* the vital work being carried out on the protection of artefacts by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs),

*Fully aware* that it is morally correct, and reflects basic property laws, that stolen or looted property should be returned to its rightful owner,

*Acknowledges* that 90% of Africa's material cultural heritage is now located in the West in major museum collections,

*Highlighting* that the provenance and ownership of artefacts remains a contentious issue, and not one that is likely to go away anytime soon. The choice not to repatriate items cannot be seen as insensitive, but has to be viewed in the light of what those items mean to the institution and its funding, which is a precarious balancing act,

*Recalling* the United Nations Resolution No.11806 'Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property', adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) at its sixteenth session, Paris, 14 November 1970,

*Takes note* of the declarations and recommendations of the international forums on the return of artefacts and cultural property, held in Seoul in July 2011 and October 2012, in Olympia, Greece in October 2013, in Dunhuang, China, in September 2014 and in Nevsehir, Turkey in October 2015,

*Expressing*

deep concern about the continuing illicit traffic in both historical and cultural artefacts and its damage to the cultural heritage of nations,

*Conscious* that these artefacts are frequently stolen or obtained under 'dubious circumstances' from their rightful owners,

*Emphasising* the point that historical items may only be fully appreciated when placed in its historical context; when dissociated from their home country, these fragments lose their geographical and historical context,

1. **Suggests**

the establishment of a biannual conference, named the 'United Nations discussion of the return of artefacts' (UN

2. **Urges**

the creation of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Return of Cultural Property (ICRCP) which will communicate with governments and set up a protection, preservation, identification, and display programme for the purpose of ensuring the safe return of cultural property to its country of origin and to its people;

The sub-body will ensure the artefact's protection by:

- a. Storing the artefacts in the same conditions as they were found or conditions to be decided by experts on a situational basis,
- b. Creating a strict integrated management plan to minimise the danger,
- c. Ensuring that artefacts are always handled with clean cotton gloves

3. **Encourages**

member states to return the artefact that have been illegally taken away from their original country artefacts which will from a particular member state to the originating member state if and only if the following conditions are satisfied:

- a. the receiving state is able to receive the piece by:
  - i. has a suitable site to house the piece which showcases it to the public
  - ii. Is not in a state of war or civil unrest
- b) the receiving state has a deep cultural, historical or religious connection to the artefact,

4. **Endorses**

the creation of a Co-ordinating Committee for the Return of Cultural Property (CCRCP) which will coordinate and promote the work of the sub-bodies and will provide online resources with the aims such as but not limited to:

- a. Showcasing artefacts and the culture and history behind them,
- b. Teaching people how to visit sites without damaging them or the artefacts they contain;

5. **Asks**

that the World Bank provides funds, to be overseen by UNESCO, to countries that cannot afford actions such

- a. countries with a greater number of valuable artefacts receiving more funding from the United Nations in order to:
  - i enable conservation works to be carried out on both artefacts and sites which are in need,
  - ii showcase artefacts along with their history and culture;

## 6. Calls

for each individual member state to work cooperatively to ensure the preservation and protection of artefacts and

- a. communicating methods of artefact conservation, restoration and transport along with showcasing and
- b. providing funds to improve the presentation and safety along with the condition of artefacts by supplying these funds and
- c. cooperating fully with the UNSCIAA and attending the UNDRA conference;

7.

## Calls

for member nations to acknowledge, recognize and pay tribute to the origins of the artefacts and recognize and pay

8.

## Calls

## upon

all relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and other relevant intergovernmental

- a. making information on colonial collections in museums widely available, such as but not limited to:
  - i. details relating to the origins of artefacts in these collections
  - ii. details relating to the acquisition of such artefacts, i.e. methods used to acquire them and the date
- b. investigating the provenance of cultural artefacts upon request, provided they meet criteria such as but not limited to:
  - I. available evidence suggesting serious concerns over whether the acquisition of such artefacts was
- c. providing publicly available updates on the restitution process and status of colonial collections in museums across the world:
  - (i) publishing detailed bi-annual reports

## 9. Calls for

any member of a nation that can't permanently give back the artefacts due to the laws of that member nation, should change or alter their laws to allow them to return illegally obtained artefacts to the rightful country of origin;

## 10. Requests

that in the case that an artefact is unable to be properly located (find its original area), the artefact should be given to a member state

## 11. Further suggests

that the UNSCIAA deal with matters relating to fossils and co-ordinate international dialogue surrounding discussion on