

Mrs Maggy NAGEL
Minister of Culture of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg,

M. Tibor NAVRACSICS
European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

M. Pierre MOSCOVICI
European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs

Dear Minister, Commissioners,

By their criminal acts in Iraq and Syria as by the deadly attacks they committed in Paris and Saint-Denis on November 13, the terrorists from Daech have targeted not only men and women wounded in their flesh but also values, a culture, a heritage that constitute the greatness of our humanity.

Savagely destroying Nimrud sites in Iraq, Palmyra in Syria, and many others sites in the Middle East, the terrorists are attacking the very soul of this region, cradle of our civilisation. This is our very conception of dialogue, diversity and coexistence of cultures which are at stake. By engaging in the direct or indirect traffic of cultural objects from archaeological sites, museums and libraries, they finance their abject crimes in the region as in Europe.

As highlighted by the debates during the Council of Culture Ministers of November 24, it is time for Europe, in the name of both its values and its security, to act more effectively against these attacks against heritage and this traffic of cultural goods.

To do so, it must create a legal framework perfectly adapted to the fight against illicit traffic of cultural goods, which will help drying up terrorist financing, as envisaged by the Commission in its European program security released on April 28 which mentioned "*further measures in the field of terrorist financing, in particular regarding the illicit trade of cultural goods.*"

While the European Union can lean on regulation n°116/2009 on the export of cultural goods to protect the cultural goods of the Member States, there is however no legal instrument designed to tackle illicit importation of cultural goods in the European Union in a comprehensive way. Although two instruments regarding Iraq and Syria were adopted respectively in 2003 (Council Regulation (EC) n° 1210/2003 of 7 July 2003) and 2013 (Council Regulation (EU) n° 1332/2013 of 13 December 2013), it is necessary to ensure their effective enforcement, and they should be strengthened by a broader scheme that the present context has made sorely needed.

This scheme could accompany the implementation, in the exporting countries, of policies that require export authorisation and a clear documentation on the origin of cultural goods. It may also support a strengthening of cooperation between the operational services of the Member States, in particular customs and police services competent in the fight against illicit traffic, in cooperation with the relevant international organisations (Interpol, World Customs Organisation, UNESCO, UNODC).

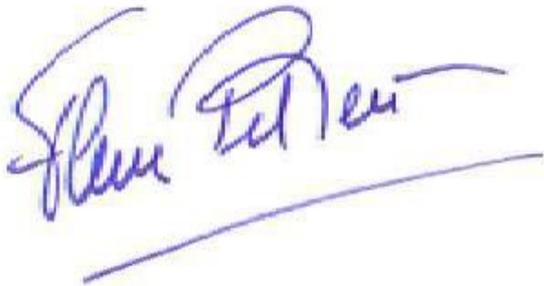
Hence, we, Ministers of Culture, wish to call on the European Commission to submit as soon as possible to the Council of the European Union and to the European Parliament a proposal for an EU regulation with a view to prohibiting, with all due efficiency, the importation of cultural goods exported illegally.

Counting on your mobilisation to address this critical issue immediately, please accept, Madam Minister, Commissioners, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Fleur PELLERIN

Minister for Culture and Communication

French Republic

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fleur Pellerin', with a horizontal line underneath.

Prof. Monika GRÜTTERS MdB

Federal Government Commissioner for Culture
and the Media

Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor

Federal Republic of Germany

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Monika Grütters'.

Dario FRANCESCHINI

Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities
and Tourism

Italian Republic

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dario Franceschini', with the name printed above it.