

37 **Message to the Senate Transmitting Convention on the
Illicit Movement of Cultural Property. February 2, 1972**

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to accession, I transmit herewith the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

The illicit movement of national art treasures has become a matter of serious concern in the world community. Many countries have lost important cultural property through illegal exportation. The theft of art objects from museums, churches and collections is increasing. Rising prices for antiquities stimulate looting of archaeological sites, causing the destruction of irreplaceable resources for scientific and cultural studies. In addition, the appearance in the United States of important art treasures of suspicious origin gives rise to problems in our relations with other countries.

The Convention, adopted on November 14, 1970, by a vote of 77 to 1 with 8 abstentions at the Sixteenth General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a significant effort at multilateral cooperation to help preserve the cultural resources of mankind. Under the Convention, each state undertakes to protect its own cultural heritage and agrees to cooperate in a number of important but limited respects to help protect the cultural heritage of other states. Perhaps the heart of the Convention from the standpoint of the United States is Article 9, which establishes an important new framework for international cooperation. Under this Article, the states parties undertake to participate in a concerted international effort to determine and to carry out the necessary corrective measures in cases in which a state's cultural

patrimony is in jeopardy from pillage of archaeological or ethnological materials.

The Convention also requires states parties to prohibit the import of cultural property stolen from museums, public monuments or similar institutions and to take appropriate steps, upon request, to recover and return such cultural property. In addition, they pledge to take what measures they can, consistent with existing national legislation, to prevent museums and similar institutions within their territory from acquiring cultural property originating in another state party which has been illegally exported after entry into force of the Convention.

I am enclosing the report of the Secretary of State, which more fully explains the Convention and the reservation and

understandings we recommend. Certain provisions of the Convention will require implementing legislation, which the Executive Branch will be prepared to discuss during the Senate's consideration of the Convention.

I believe international cooperation is required in order to preserve the priceless heritage of humanity, and I urge the Senate to give prompt advice and consent to United States accession to this Convention, subject to the reservation and understandings recommended in the report of the Secretary of State.

RICHARD NIXON

The White House,

February 2, 1972.

NOTE: The text of the convention and the report of the Secretary of State are printed in Senate Executive B (93d Cong., 2d sess.).