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FIRST SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
PROTECTION OF THE CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE
OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

First session

(Paris, 27 June - 1 July 1977)

Offer of collaboration from the International
Organization for the Protection of Works of Art

The Vice-President responsible for Administrative Matters of the International Organization for the Protection of Works of Art has sent the Director-General a letter, dated 27 January 1977, offering that Organization's collaboration "on a consultative basis in the work of the [World Heritage] Committee".

The Director-General is transmitting this offer to the World Heritage Committee for a decision.

To assist the World Heritage Committee in considering the offer, the Director-General wishes to bring the following information to the Committee's attention. The International Organization for the Protection of Works of Art is an international non-governmental organization admitted in April 1975 to what is known as "mutual information" relationship with Unesco. The purpose of this Organization is "to develop..... the preventive side of work to combat criminal practices in the field of art, by means of education and the spread of information and by making the public and owners of works of art aware of the possibility of deterrent action through the application of the recommendations of the experts who met in Brussels in November 1973 to study, under Unesco's auspices, the question of the risks incurred by works of art".

A translation of the above-mentioned letter is appended to this document.

(CC-77/CONF.001/COL.3)

20 JUN 1977

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE POUR
LA PROTECTION DES OEUVRES D'ART

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR
THE PROTECTION OF WORKS OF ART

27 January 1977

Dear Sir,

The Board of Directors of our Organization has asked me to tell you how very interested the OIPA is in the projects of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

We are interested because of the efforts we are making to bring about a general awareness of the problems involved in securing respect for the artistic and cultural heritage of nations, the deterioration or disappearance of which - whether as a result of destruction by natural causes or of wilful depredation - is seriously, and often irreversibly, detrimental to genuine understanding of civilizations and cultures.

If this effort to sensitize public opinion is to be truly significant, however, it is first necessary to have detailed knowledge of the representative works recognized as such by governmental authorities.

While such works do not represent the entire national heritage of any country, since the choice is necessarily limited, it is none the less true that they are the ones which have been most thoroughly studied, and the assurance provided by really scientific authentication may serve as an example and model for broader study of the artistic heritage of particular countries.

We believe that by contributing, within the limits of its competence, to the practical implementation of decisions made at the intergovernmental level, our Organization is in a position to play an effective part in the work undertaken by the World Heritage Committee.

For that reason, we should be highly honoured to collaborate on a consultative basis in the work of the Committee.

Having regard to the basic policies of our Organization, as regards both technical matters and the encouragement of respect for the cultural heritage, which necessarily entails countering criminal practices with respect to art, we have the honour to submit to you two projects now under way which might fall within the Committee's line of action:

The first project is concerned with the study of the legal aspects of spoliation and the restitution of works of art at the international level, and with prescription in the case of offences involving works of art.

This project, in which university specialists in criminology and international law are already involved, might be helpful to the Committee in its work, having regard to the terms of reference set them.

The second project concerns an "international Information Office on the techniques for authenticating works of art".

This project is at present receiving our full attention as far as immediate operational activities are concerned because of the consensus which exists between our Organization, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

It has thus been established that the competence of our Organization should be brought to bear on the promotion of a general appreciation of the problems involved in protecting the cultural and artistic heritage, more particularly through the study of possible means of developing the spread of information and deterrent measures at the international level.

The purposes of this Office have been defined as follows:

- (1) To collate published and unpublished work carried out by scientific laboratories (of universities, museums, the police, etc.) which has made it possible to establish with certainty the authenticity of the most outstanding works.
- (2) To establish a list of the techniques used on the basis of this material.
- (3) To circulate this information, especially to less well equipped centres, with a view to improving their working conditions.
- (4) To collect information on the techniques used by counterfeiters.
- (5) To promote scientific research in connection with specific projects.

It would seem that this body might collaborate with the World Heritage Committee under the terms of the Recommendation concerning the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted on the Report of the Commission for General Programme Matters, at the thirty-second plenary meeting of the General Conference of Unesco, on 16 November 1972, Section VII, particularly paragraph 66 (a): International Co-operation: exchange of information and of scientific and technical publications.

At all events, our Board of Directors is submitting to you its selection of Mr. A. Mocquot, whom it will request to act as the delegate of our Organization to Unesco and to the World Heritage Committee, if you consider our work to be of interest to you and think it worth while to go into the practical arrangements we are making for it.

Mr. A. Mocquot is at present Scientific Director of our Organization, and the Information Office on authentication techniques is his direct responsibility.

Furthermore, he has already been engaged by Unesco as a consultant, for example to advise the organizers of the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture.

Yours faithfully,

Raymond Duchand
Vice-President responsible for
Administrative Matters

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