

**Statement from the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), American Alliance of Museums (AAM), American Anthropological Association (AAA), American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), Society for Classical Studies (SCS), U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield (USCBS), and U.S. National Committee of ICOMOS (US/ICOMOS) Regarding the United States of America's Intention to Withdraw from UNESCO.**

On October 12, 2017, the United States announced its decision to withdraw from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2018. A founding member of the Organization in 1945, the United States has benefited from UNESCO's guiding precepts and principles in its efforts to preserve humanity's shared heritage.

The United States was the first State to ratify UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention. The 23 U.S. World Heritage sites reflect the universal values of our natural and cultural heritage. These sites include Philadelphia's Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were signed, the Statue of Liberty, which stands at the entrance to New York Harbor as an international symbol of freedom, and sites that reflect our country's multicultural past from the dwellings and ceremonial buildings of the Pueblo Indians, to the defensive architecture of San Juan, to Jefferson's plantation at Monticello. The United States' unique contribution was recognition that natural wonders from Glacier Bay to the volcanoes of Mauna Loa and Kilauea and from the redwood forests to the Smoky Mountains serve as a bridge among generations and peoples in America and around the world.

Provisions of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict serve to protect archaeological sites, historic structures, and repositories of cultural material from looting and destruction both during armed conflict and transfer through the international market. The 1970 Convention also facilitates loans of cultural objects from museums around the world in order to inform American audiences about the heritage of those outside our borders. Throughout the world, UNESCO supports the protection of culture in the face of terrorist attacks, armed conflict, and natural disasters, recognizing its symbolic power to link communities and strengthen their resilience in the face of war and hardship.

The United States has long strived to protect heritage around the world. Through participation in UNESCO the United States has signaled the importance of international cooperation in education, science, cultural awareness and communication, all of which serve to strengthen ties among nations and societies. These messages stand at the heart of American democracy and underlie the activities of our organizations. Despite its regrettable decision, we call upon the United States to continue to work with UNESCO and the broader international community to promote appreciation of the outstanding value of our shared cultural heritage.

*The Archaeological Institute of America promotes archaeological inquiry and public understanding of the material record of the human past to foster an appreciation of diverse cultures and our shared humanity. Founded in the AIA has nearly 220,000 Members and more than 100 local societies in the United States, Canada, and overseas.*

*The American Alliance of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. Representing more than 35,000 individual museum*

*professionals and volunteers, institutions, and corporate partners serving the museum field, the Alliance stands for the broad scope of the museum community.*

*Founded in 1902, the American Anthropological Association, with 10,000 members, is dedicated to advancing human understanding and applying this understanding to the world's most pressing problems.*

*The American Schools of Oriental Research, founded in 1900, is an international organization of archaeologists, historians, linguists, and cultural heritage professionals who initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the cultures and history of the Near East and wider Mediterranean.*

*The Association of Art Museum Directors advances the profession by cultivating leadership capabilities of directors, advocating for the field, and fostering excellence in art museums. An agile, issues-driven organization, AAMD has three desired outcomes: engagement, leadership, and shared learning. Further information about AAMD's professional practice guidelines and position papers is available at [www.aamd.org](http://www.aamd.org).*

*The Society for Classical Studies, founded in 1869 as the American Philological Association, is the largest scholarly society in the field of Classics in North America. Its mission is to advance knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the Greek and Roman world and its enduring legacy.*

*The U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield is dedicated to preventing destruction and theft of cultural property during armed conflict and natural disasters worldwide. The name, Blue Shield, comes from the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which specifies a blue shield as the symbol for marking protected cultural property. USCBS is an affiliated national committee of Blue Shield (International).*

*The U.S. National Committee of ICOMOS is part of the worldwide ICOMOS network of people, institutions, government agencies and private entities who support the conservation of the World's heritage. Since 1965 US/ICOMOS has worked to deliver the best of international historic preservation and heritage conservation work to the U.S. domestic preservation dialogue, while sharing and interpreting for the world the unique American historic preservation system.*