



## Press Release

### **Martin Kobler closes the International Expert Meeting on the Safeguard of Libyan Cultural Heritage**

*Practical actions to engage civil society, municipalities, customs and security services in protecting Libya's numerous cultural heritage sites and in combating illicit traffic*

**Tunis, Tunisia, 11 May 2016** – The International Expert Meeting on the Safeguard of Libyan Cultural Heritage ended today in Tunis.

The three-day workshop sought to identify practical actions to engage civil society, customs and security services in protecting Libya's numerous cultural heritage sites and in combating illicit trafficking through projects designed to safeguard the country's shared cultural assets.

The meeting was organized by the Libyan Department of Antiquities, the Rome-based International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), with the support of the United States Embassy to Libya in Tunis.

Various local and international experts, representing a broad range of backgrounds and experiences, participated in the discussions. The gathering included over 30 Libyan stakeholders representing heritage sites, historic cities and civil society, along with several scientific missions in Libya and a number of international organizations.

In addressing the audience, Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) said: "The role of culture as a soft power is central to peace building and development. It is critical to achieving social cohesion." He added, "Civil society's role in the planning and implementation of this action plan will be vital to its success. It is also crucial to engage youth in efforts to advance cultural heritage preservation of Libya's immensely rich cultural heritage."



Several speakers also made remarks at the meeting's closing session. The list of speakers included Dr. Stefano de Caro, Director-General of ICCROM; Mrs. Helen LaFave, Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy to Libya; Mr. Mohamed Ould Khattar, Representative of the Assistant Director-General for Culture at UNESCO; Mr. Nasser Al-Deeissy, Representative of the Ministry of Culture, Information and Antiquities, Government of Libya; and Dr. Zaki Aslan, Director of the ICCROM-ATHAR Regional Conservation Centre in Sharjah, UAE.

The priority action plan devised by the participants addresses four main areas: archaeological sites, museum collections and archives, historic cities, and intangible heritage. Elements of the plan include:

- The enhancement of data and inventory management to include damage and risk assessment, using up-to-date technology and standards;
- Institutional capacity building and the improvement of governance for heritage protection, through enhanced legal provisions and their enforcement, and training of stakeholders (such as the police, customs officials and managers of sites and museums);
- The development of security and protection methods and systems for collections, archives, archaeological sites and historic buildings, including building of security fencing and equipment and measures against intentional damage, as well as involvement of local communities, municipalities and government partners;
- The design and implementation of advocacy and outreach activities aimed specifically at engaging civil society institutions, schools and the media.

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### **About ICCROM**

ICCROM is the only institution of its kind with a worldwide mandate to promote the conservation of all types of cultural heritage. ICCROM is an intergovernmental organization at the service of our Member States. It contributes to this endeavour by providing knowledge, tools and training to those who are working hard to conserve culture. ICCROM works at the international and governmental level, and with institutions and professionals on the ground.



Through selected outreach activities, ICCROM aims to engage and inform new generations of upcoming professionals and the general public with an interest in heritage. ICCROM also maintains an active, engaged network of professionals from around the world who are passionate about heritage and its protection.

### **About ICCROM-ATHAR**

ICCROM-ATHAR is a regional conservation centre founded by ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), Rome, Italy, and the Government of the Emirate of Sharjah, UAE. ICCROM-ATHAR has dedicated its activities since its launch in 2004 to the protection of cultural heritage in the Arab region and to broadening access, appreciation and understanding of its rich history.

Basing its philosophy, goals and activities on its wide knowledge and experience in the field of cultural heritage in the Arab region, the ICCROM-ATHAR Regional Centre is working today to enhance the capacity of official heritage institutions to manage heritage sites, historic monuments and museum collections on a sustainable basis. These objectives are foreseen to be achieved through a series of regional educational and field activities including capacity building, consultation, dissemination of information, symposia, workshops and seminars.