

Geneva Declaration

concluding the international Symposium
« *Patrimoine universel / Revendications locales* »
held at the University of Geneva on February 10 and 11, 2011

An international symposium was organised at the University of Geneva on February 10 and 11, 2011 on the issue of claims relating to cultural property and national treasures, originating in particular from Egypt, Greece, Italy, Asia and Africa;

During two days the participants debated on the history of the constitution of collections, the evolution of international law on the matter, the expression of local claims as well as the search for consensus in this field;

The discussions related in particular to the prevention and resolution of international conflicts pertaining to claims on cultural property, resulting either from the illicit trade in this field or the reparation of the occupation or colonisation of states or communities;

On this basis, the present Declaration proposes to follow two fundamental avenues of reflection and future action in this field:

1. **Prevention of conflicts** : it is essential that all those concerned (international organisations, states, local communities, museums, collectors, dealers, archaeologists, etc.) improve the information and education of the public regarding questions raised by claims on cultural property and national treasures;

By education, the authors of the present declaration mean all levels of teaching and instruction, from primary school to University and beyond.

2. **Resolution of conflicts** : a « platform » for the resolution of conflicts should be set up in order to encourage the arbitration, mediation, conciliation or negotiation, assisted or not, between the parties to conflicts relating to claims for the return or restitution of cultural property;

The basis of such a platform should be as broad as possible, enabling decision makers to solve conflicts relating to such claims, taking into consideration all parameters relating to the particular case at hand;

Such a platform should cooperate actively with the international organisations and institutions, specialised or not, which deal with the resolution of conflicts in this field and have already set up similar structures.

It appears that the prevention and conflict resolution activities described above could also be developed from Geneva. They would thus benefit from the international dimension of this city, host to numerous international organisations, governmental and non-governmental, and promoter, notably since the famous Alabama arbitration in 1872, of a long tradition of international dispute resolution.

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