



## UNESCO issues alert over artefacts reported stolen from Egyptian museums



Egyptian Museum, Cairo

15 February 2011 – Amid reports that important artefacts have been stolen from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and other sites in the country, the head of the United Nations agency tasked with preserving humanity's cultural heritage today alerted authorities, art dealers and collectors across the world to be on the lookout for the missing relics.

Egyptian authorities reported at the weekend that several important pieces, including a gilded wood statue of pharaoh Tutankhamen being carried by a goddess, have been stolen from the museum, and that one of its warehouses had been broken into.

"It is particularly important to verify the origin of cultural property that might be imported, exported and/or offered for sale, especially on the Internet," **said** Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**).

"This heritage is part of humanity's history and Egypt's identity. It must not be allowed to vanish into unscrupulous hands, or run the risk of being damaged or even destroyed," she added.

Ms. Bokova said UNESCO will work closely with its international partners, including INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Centre for the Study and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in an effort to recover the stolen artefacts.

"But I would also call on security forces, customs agents, art dealers, collectors and local populations everywhere to do their utmost to recover these invaluable pieces and return them to their rightful home.

"Every possible measure must also be taken to provide the security necessary to protect Egypt's heritage sites and prevent any further thefts," said Ms. Bokova.

She drew attention to UNESCO's 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and the 1995 Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects.

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