

## III. History

FRANCE

# Schiller Institute Leads Appeal Against UNESCO Ban on Afghan Cultural Heritage Cooperation

PARIS, Feb. 13—On February 22 representatives of the international Schiller Institute, founded and led by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, will gather mid-day in front of the world headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris. They will present an appeal, endorsed by both Afghans and respected personalities of five continents, to the Director General and other officials of UNESCO. The appeal calls for a full restoration of

members of the Schiller Institute, suggested launching a common appeal to UNESCO and Western governments to “lift the sanctions against cultural heritage cooperation.”

### From the Call

The call states,

We profoundly regret that the Collective West,



EIRNS

*Participants in the Archeology workshop at the Ibn-e-Sina Conference on the reconstruction of Afghanistan, showing several of the initiators of the UNESCO Afghanistan Petition, including Karel Vereycken (5th from left). Kabul, Afghanistan, Nov. 2023.*

cooperation among all nations on cultural heritage.

### How It Started

At the time of a highly successful conference in Kabul in November 2023, hosted by the Ibn-e-Sina Research & Development Center on the reconstruction of Afghanistan, a group of senior archaeologists, including members of the Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan (ASA), in discussion with invited experts, and

while weeping crocodile tears over destruction of the world’s cultural heritage, has imposed a selective ban of scientific cooperation on nations mistakenly considered as “opposed to its rules and values.” The complete freeze of all cooperation in the field of archaeology between France and both Syria and Afghanistan is just one example of this tragedy....

The dramatic neglect of international cul-

tural institutions and donors to Afghanistan, the lack of sufficient funds in the field of cultural heritage protection, and the political treatment of international cultural heritage institutions have seriously endangered Afghanistan....

Specifically,

UNESCO, which should raise its voice against any new form of “cultural and scientific apartheid,” has repeatedly worsened the situation by politicizing issues beyond its prerogatives.

To conclude, the signers—

call on the international community to immediately end this form of “collective punishment,” which creates suffering and injustice, promotes ignorance, and endangers humanity’s capacity for mutual respect and understanding.

### **Living Spirit of Afghanistan**

To date, over 550 signatures have been collected, mainly from both Afghan male (370) and female (140) citizens, whose socio-professional profiles indicate they truly represent the “living spirit of the nation.”

Among the signers: 62 university lecturers, 27 doctors, 25 teachers, 25 members of the Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan, 23 merchants, 16 civil and women’s rights activists, 16 engineers, 10 directors and deans of private and public universities, 7 political analysts, 6 journalists, 5 prosecutors, several business leaders, and dozens of qualified professionals from various sectors.

### **International Support**

On five continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America), senior archaeologists, scientists, researchers, members of the academies of sciences, historians, and musicians from over 20 countries have welcomed and signed this appeal.

Professor Pino Arlacchi, a former member of the European Parliament and the former head of the Unit-



JFK Presidential Library and Museum

*Gandharan-style stucco head of Buddha. Hadda, Afghanistan, 2nd Century AD. Ancient Gandhara was centered on the Peshawar and Swat valleys in modern day Afghanistan and Pakistan.*

ed Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), was the first to sign. Award-winning American filmmaker Oliver Stone is a more recent signer.

Among the signers in France, Syria, Italy, the UK, and Russia one finds senior researchers suffering the consequences of what some have identified as a “New Cultural Cold War.” Superseding the very differing opinions they have on many questions, the signatories stand united on the core issue of this appeal: For science to progress, all players, beyond ideological, political and religious differences, and far from the geopolitical logic of “blocs,” must be able to exchange ideas and information freely, and cooperate, in particular to protect mankind’s historical and cultural heritage.

Testifying to the firm commitment of the Afghan authorities, the petition has also been endorsed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Culture and Arts, and the Minister of Agriculture, as well as senior officials from the Ministries of Higher Education, Water and Energy, Mines, Finance, and others.

Stated Karel Vereycken of the Schiller Institute in Paris:

The 46th session of UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee, to be held in New Delhi in July this year, offers UNESCO the opportunity to announce Afghanistan’s full return into world heritage cooperation, if we can have our voice heard. We certainly will not miss transmitting this appeal to H.E. Vishal V. Sharma, India’s Permanent Representative to UNESCO, recently nominated to make the New Delhi 46th session a success.

For all information, interview requests in English, French, and Dutch: Karel Vereycken, Schiller Institute Paris, +33 (0)6 19 26 69 38.

A complete list of signers is available upon request, and will soon be posted on all websites of the Schiller Institute: in [French](#) and [English](#).