

Open meeting of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on “Recent Measures to Restrict the Illicit Trade in Cultural Objects” at The British Museum

15 January 2004

There were welcoming addresses from Neil MacGregor (Director, British Museum) and Estelle Morris (Minister for the Arts), and talks by Kevin Chamberlain (legal specialist) Richard Harwood (barrister), Pierre Valentin (solicitor) and Richard Allan, MP. Estelle Morris made the interesting point that the looting of the Iraq Museum brought the illegal trade to public attention. The main focus of the seminar was the new bill introduced by Richard Allan known as The Dealing in Cultural Objects' Act 2003. This makes it an offence to handle items that have been illegally excavated and exported after 30 December 2003. It does not specifically deal with the problem of archaeological material looted from Iraq, but UN Resolution 1483 has been adopted in the UK through the Iraq (United Nations Sanctions) Order 2003 which came into force on 14 June 2003. This prohibits dealing in Iraqi cultural property illegally exported since 6 August 1990.