

Minutes of the IARPS Annual Meeting

Date: 6th October 2013

Held at: The Acropolis Museum, Athens

Attended By: **Australia:** David Hill, Damian Hill, Linda Atkinson
Switzerland: Prof Sidjanski, F.Micalizzi, Patricia van Gene, Spyros Mercouris
Sweden: Krister Kumlin, Mrs Christina von Arbin, Mrs Kerstin Wedelin Mantzas
Germany: Dr. Reinhard Stupperich
Cyprus: Anna Marangou
United Kingdom: Matthew Taylor, Maria Koutsikou

Apologies: **USA:** Dennis Menos
Serbia: Diogenis Valananidis

AGENDA ITEM	RESOLUTION
<p>1 Developments since last IARPS meeting (June 2009):</p> <p>1.1 By way of background David Hill explained that as Culture Minister in June 2009, Andonis Samaras had begun to explore the option of Greece lodging a legal claim for the return of the Parthenon sculptures. Following the change of Government later that year the Papandreou government continued the exploration at meetings in London in 2011. In 2012 Hill met with PM Samaras and in June 2013 Hill and the executive colleagues met again with Samaras. The PM said that he was interested in exploring further the legal claim but his senior coalition partner Venizelos would need to be consulted</p> <p>1.2 Dusan Sidjanski approached Venizelos on this subject. Mr Venizelos stated that he was against litigation and in favour of a more diplomatic approach.</p> <p>1.3 Since the initiation of the UNESCO process no further other options have been explored. Current Minister of Culture, Mr Panos Panagiotopoulos has requested that all other efforts are left aside and instead support is shown for the UNESCO mediation process.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>2. Strategies for the reunification of the Sculptures</p> <p>2.1 A robust discussion was had about the merits of various alternative strategies as well as the currently proposed strategy.</p> <p>2.2 Mr Spyros Mercouris made a statement saying that before doing anything else Greece and the IARPS should ask the British government to engage in a meaningful dialogue. His belief is that whether the British side responds or not, it will work in favour of the Greek side.</p>	<p>At the request of the minister, no alternative strategies will be pursued at present as they may distract from the UNESCO mediation process.</p>

<p>3. A discussion was had about the proposal received from Eddie O'Hara & the BCRPM</p>	<p>Members welcomed the positive proposals from Eddie O'Hara. While there was not enough support for a change of name it was agreed all efforts should be made to maximize the effectiveness of social media as proposed by Eddie O'Hara and that Matthew Taylor will talk to Eddie about achieving this.</p>
<p>4. Address by Mr Panos Panagiotopoulos, Greek Minister of Culture The Minister appraised the current strategy (UNESCO mediation process), and requested that at this point no other ideas be introduced as they may distract from current ongoing efforts.</p>	<p>The IARPS delegates welcomed this important step forward and agreed to back the Greek government in their current endeavour.</p>
<p>5. Discussion of the process for the election of the IARPS Executive Board for the 2014-2015 time frame</p> <p>5.1 Elections have not been held for the 2011-2013 period, and as a result the previous executive committee has remained in power by default.</p> <p>5.2 Krister Kumlin and Dusan Sidjanski suggested that an electorate committee should be appointed with the aim of canvassing existing members and forming a proposed nomination list for the new executive board. The current executive board should remain until the upcoming election in June 2014.</p> <p>5.3 David Hill proposed that all members should be contacted electronically to confirm that they are happy with the extension of the current executive board until June 2014.</p>	<p>All members will need to be contacted electronically to confirm their approval of the extension of the current executive board until the elections in June 2014. If this approval is secured then a nomination committee will be set up to explore options & draw up a shortlist of candidates prior to the elections. David Hill has agreed to chair the nomination committee, as and when it is formed.</p>
<p>6. Discussion with the Hellenic Advisory Committee on how the IARPS can help with mediation</p> <p>6.1 Mr Evangelidis noted that the letter has been sent out, but at this stage do not know Britain's reaction to it. He believes that during this waiting period, actions should be undertaken to encourage the British side to respond positively.</p> <p>6.2 Ms Elena Korca requested that all committees contact their ambassadors inside UNESCO to urge them to help. She also added that journalists and museum people should be contacted and informed of this situation and urged to help put pressure, each in their own way, to force the British side to respond.</p> <p>6.3 David Hill asked the Hellenic committee for a one page briefing on the initiative in order to help direct everyone's effort in supporting the mediation.</p> <p>6.4 Both Ms Korca and Mr Evangelidis showed some concern in issuing such a brief. They are worried that by doing so, they would be going against the mediation guidelines. However, they reluctantly agreed to draft a non-paper (unofficial) brief.</p> <p>6.5 Anna Marangou suggested that Greece use its upcoming European presidency to create a campaign and promote the issue of reunification. The Hellenic committee did not think this was wise, as such an action might be considered an abuse of their presidency.</p>	<p>The Hellenic Advisory committee will issue an unofficial (non-paper) brief of the initiative. Upon receiving this, the IARPS will suggest possible actions that can be taken by its members to help promote mediation. The Hellenic Advisory committee will review these propositions and give feedback.</p>

Appendix

Key points of Greek Culture Minister's Address

He emphasised the requests for the return of the marbles do not stem from Greek nationalism: "This is not an effort that starts from nationalism, this is not an effort to reinforce the ego of a European Nation. This is an effort that is deeply universal, to restore the unity of a cultural monument for all humanity."

He elaborated on this, to explain that he feels that Greeks realise that their culture belongs to all humanity, and that they see their culture, as their passport for outreach to the rest of the world.

He then went on to inform the committees about the planned use of the UNESCO mediation process, to try and move the issue forward:

He has spoken to Irina Bokova, the current Director General of UNESCO, at a meeting in Paris in the summer. During the meeting, they discussed the case of the Marbles, and he requested that she could initiate the mediation process between Greece and the UK.

He also added that this is a legal process, but more importantly that this is the first case to which this process will have been applied.

A letter has now been sent (from UNESCO) to the following people in the UK, informing them that the UNESCO procedure is being initiated:

- William Haig, the British Secretary of State for foreign affairs.
- Maria Miller, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.
- Neil MacGregor, the Director of the British Museum.

Finally, he touched on the fact that he is aware that the UNESCO mediation process is far from the only possible strategy. He noted that, "In an ideal world, there would not be these kinds of differences. However, I acknowledge that each one of you contributes to this cause with your spirit, your soul & your hearts. So this situation is only natural. I honour all your different views & would like to thank all of you for any proposals that you have made."

However, he pointed out, that at this point in time, the decision to take the UNESCO mediation route has been made. It was underlined that this is an important step forward from Greece, so as a result, we should not let the opportunity slip away, or distract from the main focus of it.

He ended by thanking the supporters of reunification who had attended the meeting, commenting that he felt as though they were "like family" to Greece.