

public opinion should be brought to bear to change the UNESCO decision against Afghanistan. The heritage there—and in other nations wrongfully sanctioned by UNESCO—must be protected.

The 2023 conference was sponsored by the Ibn-e-Sina Research and Development Agency, a non-government, pro-development group founded two years ago by Afghans, both within the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and abroad, who want to see reconstruction and prosperity in their homeland. The Kabul conference titled, “Operation Ibn Sina: The Coming Afghan Economic Miracle,” brought together over 500 participants, to discuss all aspects of economic reconstruction and growth, including culture and education.

The [petition](#) that was formulated following the conference now has nearly 600 signatures, including many Afghan experts—women as well as men, joined by specialists and laymen from five continents. There are archeologists, historians, artists, diplomats, teachers, economists, musicians and leading personalities

from dozens of countries. Signatories range broadly from members of the Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan, to famed filmmaker Oliver Stone. For example, a signer is Italian Prof. Pino Arlacchi, who as Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (1997–2001), worked with the Taliban to eliminate opium poppy cultivation in 2000, and today is calling for world support to Afghan farmers and the Kabul government, which for two years have succeeded in eliminating opium cultivation.

The Feb. 22 Paris delegation of the Schiller Institute and the Ibn-e-Sina R&D Center and friends presented to the staff of UNESCO the full list of signatories on the petition, its text, and the statement from the IEA Ministry, of appreciation of the efforts of the Ibn-e-Sina R&D Center. The Schiller Institute invites more people to join this international effort. Details are on the respective websites of the Schiller Institute in France, the United States, and elsewhere.

[Sign the petition](#)

Petition to UNESCO

International Call to Lift Sanctions Against Cultural Heritage Cooperation

Feb. 24—Following the international conference on the reconstruction of Afghanistan, in Kabul, Afghanistan, organized by the Ibn-e-Sina Research & Development Center in early November 2023, a group of researchers launched the following petition: “International Call to Lift Sanctions Against Cultural Heritage and Cooperation,” which had nearly 600 signatories from five continents, as of its presentation to UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), at its Paris headquarters Feb. 22, 2024.

We, the undersigned, researchers and experts in the domains of the history of civilizations, cultural heritage, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and many other fields; and other enlightened citizens of the world, in Afghanistan, Syria, Russia, China, and many other countries, launch the following call:

1) We regret profoundly that the “Collective West,”



Schiller Institute/Stephan Ossenkopp

In the courtyard of the National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul: For a nation to live, its culture must breathe.

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.

2) We request particular attention to the case of Afghanistan. Its neighboring countries, national and international institutions, and countries involved in international conventions for the protection of cultural and natural heritage, are committed to cooperation in the field of guarding cultural heritage sites and artifacts and to preventing their smuggling and destruction.

Therefore, it is expected that in the current situation they will fully play their role in the protection of Afghanistan's cultural heritage in accordance with international laws and conventions. However, the dramatic neglect of international cultural institutions and donors to Afghanistan, the lack of sufficient funds in the field of cultural heritage pro-



CC/Zde, own work
Statue of a standing bodhisattva with halo, 3rd–6th centuries CE. Found at Mes Aynak, southeast of Kabul, which had a large complex of Buddhist monasteries.

tection, and the political treatment of international cultural heritage institutions have seriously endangered Afghanistan. Undoubtedly, the non-recognition of the Afghan government has dimmed the attention of cultural institutions.

Considering the above, we expect these international institutions to renew their full support to protect both the tangible and the intangible cultural heritage of Afghanistan.

3) We regret that 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.

4) Therefore, we 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.

The progress of scientific knowledge, in a positive climate permitting all to share it, is by its very nature beneficial to each and to all, and to the very foundation of a true peace.

IEA Ministry of Information and Culture: Preserve All Cultural and Historical Heritage

Feb. 24—As Western researchers, based on what has happened in the past, wondered about the current Afghan government's actual policy on the issue of preservation of cultural and historical heritage, the Ibn-e-Sina Research and Development Center questioned the relevant authorities in Kabul of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

At the end of January 2024, the Ministry of Infor-

mation and Culture completely clarified the matter for the Ibn-e-Sina R & D Center and for the world, in a hand-signed letter from Mowlavi Atiqullah Azizi, Deputy Minister of Culture and Arts. [Emphasis in the letter is in the original.]

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
Ministry of Information and Culture
Letter N° 220, Jan. 31, 2024