

### III. Science and Culture

# Schiller Institute Presents Petition to UNESCO Demanding Cultural Cooperation with Afghanistan and All Nations

by Marcia Merry Baker and Karel Vereycken

Feb. 24—A delegation of representatives from the Schiller Institute and the Ibn-e-Sina Center for Research and Development delivered a petition Feb. 22 to the world headquarters in Paris of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, calling on UNESCO to re-establish relations with Afghan-

The petition is titled, “International Call To Lift Sanctions Against Cultural Heritage Cooperation.” [Full text below.] It states in its concluding points:

3) We regret that UNESCO, which should raise its voice against any new form of “cultural and

*Before the gates of UNESCO headquarters in Paris. A Schiller Institute delegation, led by its founder, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, brings an appeal signed by nearly 600 Afghans and others, calling for a return to normal scientific cooperation among all nations in the study of world cultural heritage. Below, Karel Vereycken and Helga Zepp-LaRouche show the appeal before going inside to present it to the Secretary General, Feb. 22.*



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istan in order to help save the numerous cultural relics which are in danger from terrorist groups and other predators. The petition further demands that UNESCO re-establish activities of cultural heritage cooperation with all nations, such as Syria, where the agency has selectively imposed sanctions and bans.

scientific apartheid,” has repeatedly worsened the situation by politicizing issues beyond its prerogatives. 4) Therefore, we call on the international community to end immediately 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.

Schiller Institute founder and leader Helga Zepp-LaRouche and Paris Schiller Institute leader Karel Vereycken led the delegation, and issued statements to the media outside UNESCO headquarters after the documents had been delivered. [See transcript below].

Zepp-LaRouche said,

If the sanctions continue, it would mean to continue the geopolitical game which has been played with Afghanistan for a very long time. Our common cultural heritage must be above ephemeral strife, so we will fight for this, for the sake of our own one identity as one human species, or as one common heritage.

The delegation released a statement from the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), which was delivered to UNESCO Feb. 22. IEA Deputy Minister of Culture and Art Mowlavi Atiqullah Azizi said in the Jan. 31 statement,

This Ministry asks UNESCO and other international organizations, working on preservation of the world's tangible and intangible cultural heritage, to support Afghanistan in preservation of its tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including the ones belonging to Islamic and non/pre-Islamic periods of its history.... [Full text below]

Following the total boycott of the IEA in Fall 2021 by the United States, UNESCO also cut off contact with Afghan authorities, and ceased funding cultural and related projects, despite the fact that many other UN agencies continued activities in Afghanistan, and function there to this day. As they attest, security has actually markedly improved since 2021 in Afghanistan for archeological activity.

## Historical Treasures

The historical treasures of Afghanistan are legendary, with its being on the Silk Road, and with thousands of years of differing religions, cultures and economic practices. Helga Zepp-LaRouche wrote, in a November 2022 Schiller Institute discussion paper,

In the entire region between Mesopotamia and the old India one finds traces of entire cities of the Bronze Age, traces of almost entirely vanished civilizations, which must be unearthed with the greatest care, since they will give clues to one of the earliest cradles of our human civilization.

The Harappan civilization, for example, developed the first accurate system of standardized weights and measures. They created sculpture,

seals, pottery and jewelry from materials such as terracotta and metal. The entire area which had several high points in its history, and was named the "Land of a Thousand Cities," has by far not been studied sufficiently from the standpoint of its groundbreaking contributions to the universal history of mankind.

One of the most important locations along the Ancient Silk Road, the 5,000 year-old historical heritage site Mes Aynak, is a fountain of treasures from different periods, which must be protected as one of the most important parts of Afghan history. It is assumed that it contains 19



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*Karel Vereycken, artist, historian, and journalist of the Schiller Institute France, at the 2023 Kabul conference, "Operation Ibn Sina: The Coming Afghan Economic Miracle."*

different archeological sites, including two small forts, a citadel, four fortified monasteries, several Buddhist stupas, a Zoroastrian fire temple, ancient copper workings, smelting workshops, a mint, and miners' habitations.

Mes Aynak also contains remnants of earlier civilizations, going back to the 3rd Century BC. It will open up insights into the early phases of the science of metallurgy, mining, and tool-making, going back thousands of years.

## Operation Ibn Sina

At a conference in Kabul November 6–8, 2023, on economic reconstruction, attended by a Schiller Institute delegation (from Germany, France and the United States), it was decided by a group of history specialists from Afghanistan and other nations that world

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.*