

SAFE RALLIES TO PROTECT CHINA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE AT CPAC

WASHINGTON, DC FEBRUARY 28, 2005—The non-profit group SAFE (Saving Antiquities for Everyone) attended the February 17 public session before the US Cultural Property Advisory Committee (CPAC) in support of the People's Republic of China's request for restrictions on importation of Chinese archaeological and ethnographic material to the US.

SAFE Founder and Executive Director, Cindy Ho, and two other SAFE representatives gave testimony at the State Department. Cindy Ho said: "The looting of cultural heritage and the illicit antiquities trade are man-made problems...it is our duty to put an end to this problem—or at least try to stem the illegal traffic—which is now damaging China's most valued non-renewable resource: its 7,000-year cultural heritage."

In addition, nearly 500 signed petitions collected, in less than three weeks, through SAFE's website were presented. The petitions are tangible public support for China's request for assistance from the US Government under Article 9 of the 1970 UNESCO Convention to help stem the loss of its cultural heritage. The loss is a direct result of a rapid surge in the illicit trade market. In support of China, during the public testimonials at CPAC, Princeton University Professor Robert W. Bagley, Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology, said: "I guess you could call smuggling a form of cultural exchange, but I don't think it's the kind of cultural exchange the U.S. government wants to be supporting."

China is the 12th country to apply for cultural heritage support from the US since Congress passed the 1983 Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA). CPIA, the legislative means by which the United States implements the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, contributes to greater international cooperation and understanding of our shared cultural heritage. Only two Asian nations, Cambodia and China, have sought assistance thus far. Latin America remains the largest region where assistance has actively been sought.

Patty Gerstenblith, former public representative for CPAC and currently Professor of Law and Director, Program in Cultural Heritage Law, DePaul University, also stated: "SAFE's presence at the public session goes a long way towards raising public awareness about cultural heritage loss. The idea of an online petition is also a first."

About SAFE

Saving Antiquities for Everyone (www.savingantiquities.org), the volunteer group dedicated to raising public awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritages worldwide. SAFE is a nonprofit group of professionals in communications, media, and advertising working together with experts in the academic and museum community. SAFE is sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), a 501(c) (3) corporation. Any contributions made to the Foundation on behalf of SAFE are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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SAFE has no political affiliations.