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The Honorable Joseph Biden
Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
201 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Biden,

The Lawyers' Committee for Cultural Heritage Preservation is an association of attorneys, law students and the interested public who have joined together to promote the preservation and protection of cultural heritage resources in the United States and internationally through education and advocacy. The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is the oldest treaty that deals exclusively with cultural heritage protection and was modeled on United States' actions to preserve European cultural heritage during World War II. This Convention aims to protect historic structures, archaeological sites and repositories of cultural objects during armed conflict and occupation. Although President Clinton transmitted the Convention to the Senate for ratification in 1999, no further action has as yet been taken.

The Lawyers' Committee strongly supports ratification of both the Convention and the First Protocol in its entirety. We therefore urge the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to begin consideration of the Convention by scheduling hearings as soon as feasible and proceeding to an affirmative recommendation on ratification. Ratification of this Convention will indicate that the United States truly cares about the heritage of nations with diverse cultural histories and backgrounds. This is often cited as one of the steps that the United States government could easily take that would improve our standing and image in the world.

Thank you for your consideration. The Lawyers' Committee is available to assist in any way to see through the ratification of this important international instrument.

Sincerely,

Patty Gerstenblith
President, Lawyers' Committee for
Cultural Heritage Preservation

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