



Media Note
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U.S. and Colombia Sign Agreement To Protect Colombian Archaeological and Ethnological Cultural Heritage

On March 15 in Bogota, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes and Colombian Minister of Culture Elvira Cuervo de Jaramillo signed the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Colombia Concerning the Imposition of Import Restrictions on Archaeological Material from the Pre-Columbian Cultures and Certain Ecclesiastical Ethnological Material from the Colonial Period of Colombia*.

Emphasizing America's ongoing commitment to protect and celebrate cultural artifacts around the world, Under Secretary Hughes said, "This Memorandum of Understanding is a witness to the great respect the United States has for Colombia's rich cultural heritage and our keen interest in preserving that past for generations to come."

Minister Cuervo de Jaramillo spoke of the committed efforts by the Ministry of Culture, the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History, and the Ministry of Foreign Relations to contribute to "the protection of our multiple memories and founding identities." She added, "Each piece of the past tells something of what we were or what we are. By enlarging our ties with past generations, we commit ourselves to future generations and we dignify the present."

This bilateral agreement is in response to a request submitted to the Department of State by the Government of Colombia for assistance under the 1970 *UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, an international framework of cooperation to stem pillage and unauthorized transport of cultural objects across boundaries. Both the United States and Colombia are parties to this Convention. The Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs oversees certain statutory functions that culminated in this agreement. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is consistent with the favorable recommendations of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee.

Pursuant to this MOU, new import restrictions come into force and will be supported through the collaboration of both governments through scholarly exchanges, research, technical assistance, and the promotion of education to appreciate, preserve and protect the cultural patrimony of Colombia. Today the Department of Homeland Security published a notice in the *Federal Register* detailing the scope of these restrictions, which cover objects generally associated with the ancient Colombian cultures of the Tairona, Sinu, Uraba, Quimbaya, Muisca, Calima, Malagana, Tolima, Tierradentro, Cauca, San Agustin, Tumaco, and Narino, ranging in date from approximately 1500 B.C. to A.D. 1530. The restrictions also cover ecclesiastical objects from the Colonial Period ranging in date from approximately A.D. 1530 to 1830.

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