SAFE TESTIFIES IN WASHINGTON TO SUPPORT ITALIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

Jersey City, September 1, 2005—The non-profit group SAFE | Saving Antiquities for Everyone is proud to testify at the upcoming hearing of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee (CPAC) in Washington DC on September 8, to support the renewal of a bilateral agreement signed in 2001 with the United States. The renewal secures restrictions on importing certain categories of archaeological material from Italy for another five years. The goal is to stem the looting of archaeological sites that feeds the global illicit antiquities trade.

Through its campaign Say YES to Italy, SAFE has collected close to 1,000 signatures and letters from experts and members of the public which will be presented by SAFE members during the open session, scheduled by CPAC to receive public comments.

“The result of our campaign shows the American public cares about protecting Italy’s rich past as an important part of the world’s cultural heritage. This should be taken into consideration when the State Department deliberates on Italy’s request,” says Cindy Ho, founder and President of SAFE. During the Say YES to Italy campaign, signatures were collected on SAFE’s web site as well as in person by SAFE members who gathered signatures and support at public events. “The response has been overwhelming. Our presence at the State Department also breaks new ground, as these hearings are usually attended only by archaeologists, art historians, dealers, collectors, museum curators, etc.” Ho continues.

The bilateral agreement of 2001 calls for import restrictions on certain categories of archeological material into the U.S., for forfeited material to be returned to Italy and for Italy to encourage interchange of artifacts for study and public appreciation. Although official statistics show that looting has declined since the signing of the bilateral agreement in 2001 much more needs to be done. Italy is a world leader in cultural heritage protection, yet continuous outside support is still needed in order to stop the multi-billion dollar illegal trade of antiquities.

Renewing the bilateral agreement between Italy and the U.S. will help protect Italy’s precious cultural heritage. Please visit http://www.savingantiquities.org/i-safe-mouitaly.php to sign the Say YES to Italy appeal.

About SAFE

SAFE | Saving Antiquities for Everyone creates educational programs and media campaigns to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving cultural heritage worldwide. SAFE is a coalition of professionals in communications, media, and advertising working alongside experts in the academic, legal and law enforcement communities. SAFE has no political affiliations and is sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), a 501(c)(3) corporation.

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