

**Committee:** United Nation of Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

**Country:** The Republic of Niger

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**Topic B:** Antiquities trafficking in conflict zones

Niger has a resourceful ground as its paleontological and archeological sources remains. Several dinosaurs' cemeteries are scattered throughout the desert and numerous fossils and skeletons were found and are still discovered by archeologists. Lot of sites in Niger were registered by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in the red list of archeological remains threaten by looting and robbery, leading to an international illicit trading deeply denounced by the Republic of Niger.

The government is aware of the illicit trading of robbed antiquities. However this underground traffic intricate the encryption of missing and stolen antiquities: only more than 1% of Nigerien Antiquities are traded on the international sphere according to Interpol.

First, the Nigerien government has not the necessary funds to create a specialized structure in charge of antiquities inventory. Furthermore, it is difficult to establish a clear list of antiquities protected by the government due to environmental factors such as the deserts which hide and unveil items depending a variant weather, in addition to a lack of archeologists in Niger (6 for the whole country).

Consequently, it is arduous to recognize an item as robbed and looted from Niger, when it circulates on the international trade sphere.

Moreover, the social factor is a major issue regarding the illicit trading of antiquities. For these reasons, the illicit digging and trade can be seen as destined to assure a vital minimum subsistence level. Indeed, in addition to a difficult access to the comprehension of the law or a total law ignorance, Niger counts one of the lowest GDP in the world (63% below poverty) and a Human Development Index lower than 0,3.

The Republic of Niger is deeply inclined to find solution to resolve the issue of illicit antiquities trade. Indeed, the Nigerien Security and Defense forces, together with the police and customs, play a capital role at the terrestrial and aerial borders. The government adopted legislative and administrative acts fighting and sanctioning the illicit trading of antiquities.

In order to control the diggings, requests for archeological diggings have to be done in order to proceed and are directly addressed to the Minister in charge of research. For the known antiquities, an "Object ID" database is inventorying in order to protect and assure potential licit international trades.

At the international sphere, Niger has joined the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Niger intends to take measures to ratify the 1995 UNIDROIT convention in the coming months. Furthermore, in 2013, Niger designed two conciliators to sit in the UNESCO organ in charge of mediation, return and restitution in case of illicit appropriation.

Niger proposes to sensitize the Nigerien authorities and provide a technical support destined to hasten the ratification process. Furthermore, UNESCO could provide an educational and financial help to the countries threaten by the illicit antiquity trading, as well as information and sensitization about cultural goods traffic to the citizens of the state's parties to the convention.