

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS



March 14, 2001

Koichiro Matsuura
Director-General, UNESCO
7 Place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP
FRANCE

Dear Mr. Matsuura:

The American Institute of Architects wishes to add its voice to the thousands in the international community who have protested the violent and senseless destruction of the cultural heritage in Afghanistan.

We plead for an immediate end to the Taliban edict to demolish Afghanistan's cultural heritage, and an immediate cessation of the destruction of any remaining monuments and cultural artifacts. We further urge the Taliban spiritual leader Mullah Mohammed Omar to enter into dialogue with the international community—including the Arab and Islamic governments that overwhelmingly have condemned these actions.

The edict of the 26th of February 2001 to destroy pre-Islamic and Buddhist objects—including the world's largest standing Buddha statues at Bamiyan—runs counter to all the basic principles of respect, tolerance, and the wisdom upon which Islam is based, and is a breach of the Taliban pledge made in 1999. We plead with Taliban authorities to stop this irreversible assault on two millennia of Afghanistan's artistic and cultural achievements, treasured not only as the spiritual birthright of Buddhists everywhere but also as a universal cultural heritage for people of all faiths and nationalities.

The American Institute of Architects subscribes to the appeal issued by ICOMOS and ICOM in an attempt to prevent the destruction of the cultural heritage of Afghanistan and to put an end to the illicit trade in cultural property in that nation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John D. Anderson'.

John D. Anderson, FAIA
President