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**DECLARATION BY THE PRESIDENCY ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON
THE PRESERVATION OF AFGHAN CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The European Union is deeply concerned about threats made by certain representatives of the Taliban side to blow up the "Blind Buddhas of Bamiyan", which are silent witnesses of Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage of incalculable archaeological value.

The European Union deplores the destruction of archaeological sites and historical monuments.

The European Union warmly welcomes the recent assurances of leading representatives of the Taliban that the two Buddhist monuments will not be destroyed.

The European Union would like to recall the Convention of 23 November 1972 for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. As a State Party to that Convention, Afghanistan has recognized its primary duty to ensure the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of, inter alia, the cultural heritage situated on its territory.

In the context of that Convention, the European Union firmly appeals to all Afghan parties to take appropriate steps to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against cultural property of the Afghan nation.