



**Statement by ICBS on the international support pledged for the reconstruction of the Cultural Heritage in Afghanistan  
March 14<sup>th</sup> 2003**

The situation in Afghanistan has been dramatic in many respects. Many people have suffered severely.

It has also been a difficult time for Afghanistan's cultural heritage. All of us were stunned into speechlessness when we received the news of the destruction of the famous Bamiyan Buddhas. But this was not the only harm done to the Afghan heritage. Many monuments were damaged, documents disappeared and the illicit traffic of cultural artifacts was rampant. The National Museum was already destroyed a long time ago and much of its collection stolen or looted.

The situation has certainly changed for the better now, but it is still dramatic. Shocked by the events many people, organisations and countries pledged assistance.

Active people from Afghanistan itself and from other countries, full of hope to rebuild the country have decided to roll up their sleeves and start the Herculean task of the reconstruction of the national heritage.

The National Museum appeared among the priorities. The building needs to be rehabilitated, the staff trained, the inventory reconstituted and eventually lost collections brought home. Not only the National Museum, but various other monuments, sites libraries and archives need to be reconstructed.

Notwithstanding the fact that several organisations and individuals are already actively supporting the Afghan people, the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) notes with distress that essential pledges made by governments have not yet been honored. The National Museum for instance can still not function at a basic level.

Hence the ICBS urges all governments that have made those pledges to honor them as soon as possible so that the reconstruction of Afghanistan also includes its valuable cultural heritage.