San Salvador, 24th of March, 2010

Dr. Héctor Samour
Secretary of Cultura
San Salvador

Subject: a) Damage continues at Cihuatán, Sitio de Jesús and, possibly, Las Marías, b) request for information.

Dear Dr. Samour:

In this setter we inform you of the following three situations which concern damage to the archaeological heritage of El Salvador. We have previously reported these, this month, to the Secretary of Culture.

1. The archaeological site of Cihuatán (Jurisdiction of Aguilares):
   - On the 2nd of March, 2010 we reported the destruction of part of the ancient city of Cihuatán through Works of terracing and construction of houses in a Project sponsored by the Alcaldía of Aguilares, the Viceministerio de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano and the Ministerio de Defensa.
   - On the 12 of March, 2010, we reported that the construction work was continuing without a sign of its being stopped.
   - On this occasion we reported that:
     a. The work on construction of this house building project is continuing, including the installation of permanent household equipment (pilas) and the construction of various other buildings similar to small houses or outhouses (Figure 1). If the work is not suspended we can expect further damages which will be caused by the installation of electricity and, possibly, other amenities.
     b. In the area of the house building project many large stones have been moved to form piles (presumably to then be carried away by
trucks). Many of these stones were doubtless taken from Prehispanic structures. (Figures 2 & 3).

c. Large quantities of stone have already been removed from the area of the Project and around nearby dwellings. (Figure 4). Most of this stone surely came from now destroyed archaeological structures.

d. The new residents of the houses being constructed within the archaeological site of Cihuatán need firewood and are actively destroying the trees of the area, including those within the Archaeological Park of Cihuatán (Figure 5).

e. Another work apparently associated with the construction of these houses has been the construction of two very large water tanks (Figure 6).

2. The archaeological site of Sitio de Jesús (jurisdiction of Guazapa):

- **On the 4th of March, 2010, we reported** that work with heavy equipment threatened the site and that this work was advancing towards an ancient mound.

- **On the 12th of March, 2010, we reported** that this work was continuing without any cessation and that it was very possible that it had already damaged the site. We mentioned that one or two mounds were in immediate danger of destruction.

- **On this occasion we told you that** the work was continuing without any attempt to stop it and we reiterated that possible it had already damaged the archaeological site and that possibly two mounds were in immediate danger of being destroyed (Figures 7 y 8).

3. The archaeological site of Las Marías (jurisdiction of Quezaltepeque):

- **On the 3rd of March, 2010, we reported** that a resident of the site had called and told us that stones were being removed from the Prehispanic ball court of this site. The same person told us that people who said they represented the Secretary of Culture had arrived and expressed an interest in buying the lands upon which the archaeological site is located.

As of this date we have received no answer to these reports. Since FUNDAR is an NGO dedicated to the protection of our archaeological heritage we have a great interest in knowing what has been done and we would like to see copies of the institutional reports.
referring to the three reports of ongoing damages which needed immediate action that we have submitted in the past days. These are, specifically:

- The destruction of Cihuatán.
- The threats and possible damages to Sitio de Jesús.
- The removal of rock from the ball court of Las Mariás.

We wish to reiterate that we are especially preoccupied with the destruction in the ancient city of Cihuatán, in which place there is no doubt whatsoever that the resolution for its protection has been violated as well as the Special Law for Protection of the Cultural Heritage of El Salvador and the Penal Code, including Articles 222, 223, 225 y 253.

We also want to reiterate our suggestion that the entire property in which Prehispanic structures have been destroyed be transferred to the Secretary of Culture in order that it may be protected and administered as part of the Cihuatán Archaeological Park. We also wish to state that permitting the continued occupation of the houses built will continue to result in damages to the archaeological site as set forth in our original report. These modern constructions should be demolished.

We take advantage of this occasion to offer our complete collaboration in these matters as well as in any other matters related to the conservation, protection, and investigation of the archaeological heritage of our country.

With respect to the copies of the reports which we have asked for, those concerning the actions of the Secretary of Cultura in response to our reports on the damage and destruction in Cihuatán, Sitio de Jesús, and Las Mariás, we wait to hear how and when we may collect them. If it should be necessary, we will gladly pay for the costs of reproduction.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rodrigo Brito
President, FUNDAR

cc: Dr. Ramón Rivas
National Director of Cultural Heritage

Lic. Shione Shibata  
Coordinator of the Department of Archaeology

**Figure 1**

Photograph taken March 23, 2010 of new construction. These are outhouses and washing facilities delivered to be installed in the houses,

**FIGURA 2**

Groups of large rocks which have been moved, presumably to be carried off by truck. Many of these stones were, without a doubt, wrenched from Prehispanic structures. (See Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3**

Example of a Prehispanic wall constructed with large rocks, similar to those shown in Figure 2. We note that the construction of
the new houses has destroyed a number of archaeological structures.

**FIGURE 4**
In the subdivisión which neighbors the land where they have destroyed a part of Cihuatán, numbers of residents have obtained small stones which mainly comes from archaeological structures destroyed by bulldozers.

**FIGURE 5**
Example of firewood plundered from trees near the new houses which have destroyed part of Cihuatán. We have been told by workmen that the new inhabitants are plundering trees from within the Archaeological Park and it is suspected that they were responsible for the fires which burned the forest of the park in order to dry the trees out and then to steal them.

**FIGURE 6**
One of the two water tanks recently constructed, apparently related with the house building Project.
FIGURE 7

Heavy equipment continues to move Herat. It has possibly already damaged part of the archaeological site of Sitio de Jesús. This is a general view taken today from the North Trunk Highway.

FIGURE 8

Detail of Figure 7 showing that the work with heavy equipment continues. The earth moving (which continues to advance) probably has already damaged part of the archaeological site. Two mounds appear to be in immediate danger.