



## **The World Archaeological Congress**

Please reply to:

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JAPAN

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The Rt. Hon. Alexis Tsipras  
Prime Minister of Greece

(To be published)

Dear Alexis Tsipras,

The World Archaeological Congress, following serious concerns expressed by archaeologists in Greece, would like to state our deep worry about the planned building of a Luxury Golf Resort by the Loyalward Ltd, a subsidiary of the British company “Minoan Group”, in the area of Kavos Sidero in East Crete.

We have been following this development for a number of years now, and have previously written to your predecessors, PM Karamanlis (2008) and PM Samaras (2014). When, several years ago, this proposal was first made public, the world academic community expressed its concern, pointing out that the initial project involved the building of a 7000-bed resort, along with three golf courses, in an extremely arid area which has been designated by the European Union as a NATURA 2000 site, in need of special protection. Moreover, the area likely contains several archaeological sites. Indeed, archaeologists have termed this cultural landscape a ‘time capsule’, and a unique locale in the Mediterranean in terms of the density of ancient features (habitation and ritual sites, agricultural terraces, check dams, quarries, and many more) and their exceptional preservation. The area was also recently designated a UNESCO Geopark.

The development was halted by the Council of State in 2010 but a revised plan has been resubmitted by the developer, and although the number of beds is significantly reduced, the nature of the development remains the same (it is still a golf resort), and occupies the same area as before. Moreover, its footprint is potentially larger than before, occupying more than 1/3 of the 25 square kilometre area under development.

More importantly, we are extremely concerned because as noted above this area is a unique archaeological landscape, in urgent need of special care and preservation. In Zones A1 and A2 of the proposed development project, where the developer plans to build the hotels and the various supporting infrastructure, there are at least 44 archaeological sites, in addition to the many features of the cultural landscape, such as ancient agricultural terraces and check dams. These data were collected and published by a team of expert and highly renowned professional archaeologists, including Professors Jennifer Moody and Oliver Rackham, world authorities on the Cretan landscape and on environmental and landscape archaeology. WAC is also concerned that 6 square kilometre of the area under development is outside the Itanos archaeological survey area (the area surveyed by Moody and Rackham), and as such, it has not yet been investigated. It is likely to contain many more archaeological sites, which will be destroyed if the project goes ahead. In 2014, Moody and Rackham have also prepared, at the request of the Greek Ministry of Culture, a very detailed report on the archaeological significance of the area and the vast potential damage of the development.


We learn that a new court appeal has been now submitted (10 May 2016) by many concerned archaeologists who work in this area, other professionals, local groups and citizens, and more importantly, the Association of Greek Archaeologists (SEA), the body that represents the state archaeologists in Greece. We stand by our colleagues and support them in their efforts to halt this project. We urge you to listen to your own expert/public servants in their efforts to protect the cultural landscape of Greece.

We understand that, as recently as April 2014, you yourself have publicly opposed this development, and have emphasized its destructive impact (*Avgi*, 24 April 2014). We very much hope that you still stand by this public declaration, and halt this catastrophic process.

We appreciate that Greece is going through an extremely difficult time, and the attraction of foreign investment can be seen as a way out of the current crisis. However, to allow the destruction of protected areas and unique archaeological landscapes will harm both the heritage and the economy of the country in the long term. Our experience shows that the protection of valuable cultural and natural landscapes is the best assurance for long-term, sustained economic growth. Indeed, properly managed cultural and heritage assets attract hundreds of thousands or even millions of visitors, contributing immensely to the local and national economy, and guarantying at the same time sustainability and continuous growth.

We thus urge you not to approve the plans for such an infrastructural development, and to engage with the archaeological and conservation community in finding ways to register, manage and promote this unique landscape. This will safeguard both long-term financial benefit for local people, and sustainable preservation of this exceptional cultural and ecological asset.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Mizoguchi', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Koji Mizoguchi (President)

**Background information**

The World Archaeological Congress, with members in more than 90 countries, is the only fully international and representative organisation of practicing archaeologists. WAC's mission is to (1) promote professional training for disadvantaged nations and communities; (2) broaden public education, involving national and international communities in archaeological research; (3) develop archaeological practice so that it empowers Indigenous and minority groups; (4) contribute to the conservation of archaeological sites threatened by looting, urban growth, tourism, development or war; and (5) re-dress global inequities amongst archaeologists.