



## **Regarding The Suspension of the Archeological Excavations in Ephesus and Limyra**

We are facing a troubling situation in terms of scientific ethics and culture, upon the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's decision to suspend the archeological excavations in Ephesus and Limyra, in reaction to certain Austrian politicians' unfair and aggressive attitude towards Turkey. Scientific activity is autonomous in nature, and independent from politics. Unless proven otherwise, there is no reason to think that scientific research is connected to or responsible for political decisions by governments. In response to the incorrect decisions taken by Austrian officials on political grounds, Turkish officials have taken sanctions against scientists who were not in any way responsible for the said decisions. This has penalized scientific work and also damaged the autonomy of science. Science is autonomous in Austria as in Turkey. Scientific autonomy is a value and token of culture and civilization. Decisions which go against scientific autonomy will inevitably have a negative impact on Turkey's global image. Scientific studies should be left outside the scope of daily political debate.

Archaeology unveils the shared cultural heritage of humanity and helps enhance our common conscience. As such, foreign scientific missions who conduct archaeological work in Turkey contribute not only to science but also to our country's worldwide recognition by unearthing the traces of ancient civilizations, which had lived on these lands. The Ephesus excavation, supported also by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, dates back over one hundred years. The Ephesus Scientific Committee has transformed the 'dead' knowledge hidden under soil into life, practical knowledge, and assumed the restoration and landscaping of the Ephesus archaeological site in response to the Turkish government's demands. As a result, Ephesus has been declared a World Heritage Site.

The disruption of the excavation inflicts almost irreparable damage on the ongoing study. The suspension of the Ephesus excavation, despite the fact that the Scientific Committee is obviously clear of any wrongdoing, poses significant risk for archaeological ruins whose excavation and restoration is in progress. Studies must be documented in detail in order to prevent any damage being done to the heritage. The disruption of this documentation process wreaks havoc on the Ephesus archaeological site. The damage cannot be prevented even if the archaeologists who have dedicated long years to Ephesus are replaced with others, since the latter will not be specialists fully informed on the background of this arduous project. This decision of the ministry of culture will have an impact not on foreign politicians whose attitude towards Turkey is unacceptable, but on Austrian scientists who have dedicated their lives to work in our land, and therefore to scientific study of the invaluable cultural heritage of our country. We hope that this decision will be reviewed and amended.