MEDIA RELEASE: 22nd June, 2016
PROTECTION OF THE AREA OF KAVO SIDERO IN EAST CRETE

The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) expresses its serious concern 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 Kavo Sidero in East Crete. This area, designated by the European Union as a NATURA 2000 site in need of special protection and also as a UNESCO Geopark, contains many important 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. WAC President Professor Koji Mizoguchi stated: “We are extremely concerned because this area is a unique archaeological landscape, in urgent need of special care and preservation.”

As Professor Yannis Hamilakis explained to WAC, 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. Six square kilometre of the area under development is outside the Itanos archaeological survey area, 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.

Professor Koji Mizoguchi pointed out: “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 guaranteeing at the same time sustainability and continuous growth.”

WAC urges the Greek Authorities 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. Professor Koji Mizoguchi concluded: “The protection of the area of Kavo Sidero will safeguard both long-term financial benefit for local people, and sustainable preservation of this exceptional cultural and ecological asset.”

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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.