

A historical black and white photograph of the Smithsonian Institution building, a large, ornate structure with multiple towers and arched windows. In the foreground, a group of people, including women in long dresses and hats, are walking across a paved area. The image is slightly faded, giving it a vintage appearance.

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2021**

**Smithsonian Institution  
Office of International  
Relations**



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

It's January 2022 and who would have guessed we would all still be working from home, on Zoom, with little in person international travel. No visiting with colleagues, experiencing new museums, scientific field sites or cultural wonders. As we celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, the Smithsonian's global presence has never looked quite like this. However, this last year has taught everyone the same basic yet incredible lesson – we are absolutely resilient.

We kept pivoting – discovering we could still make deep new connections, listen and learn from experts from all over the world, and engage with audiences in ever more meaningful and impactful ways. We pushed harder to meet the goals of the Smithsonian to focus on greater global reach, relevance, and impact. I personally couldn't be more proud of the Office of International Relations team and the leadership of the Smithsonian for all we have accomplished together in 2021.

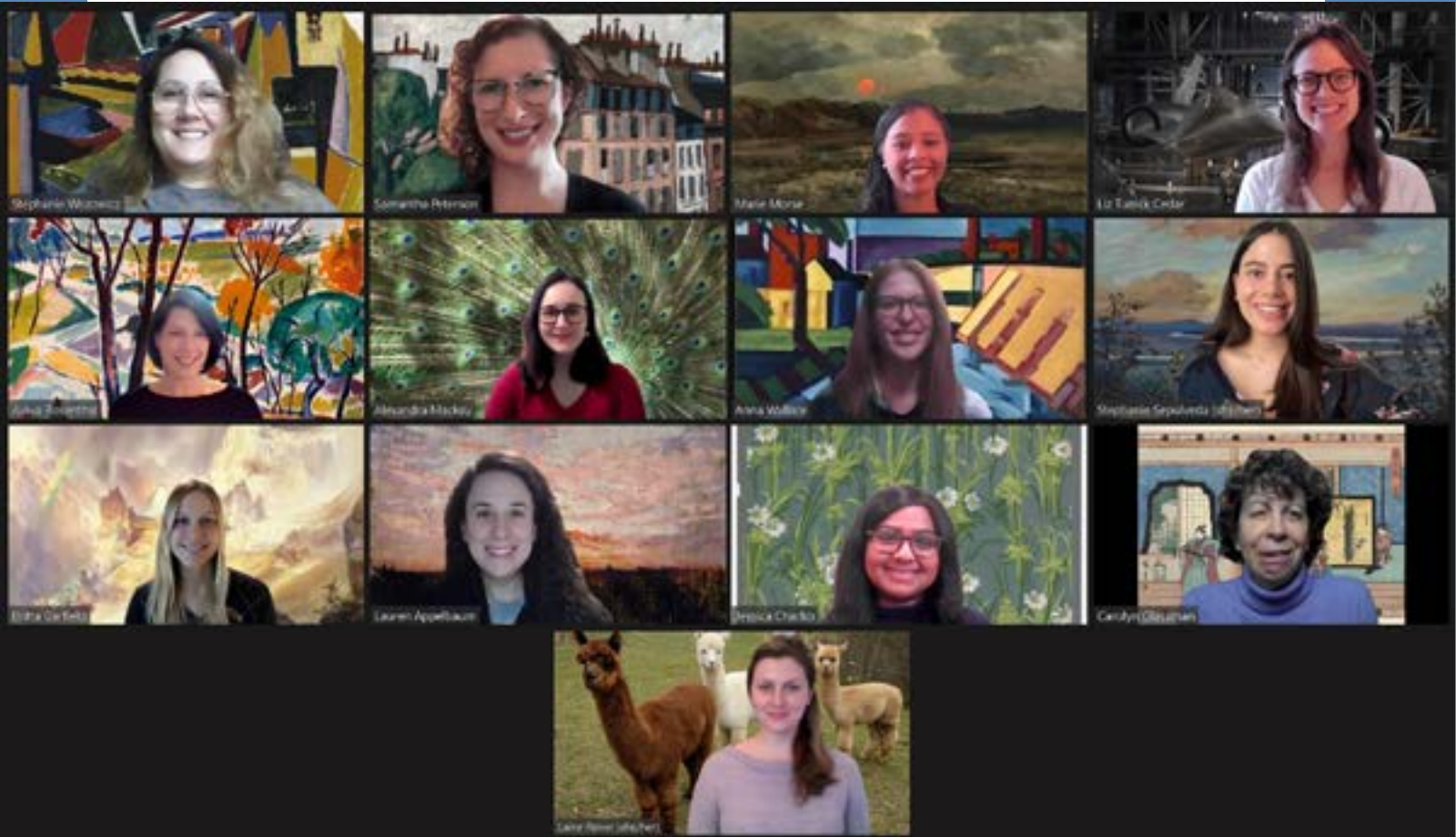
As you will read in this report, the Office of International Relations continued to make vital global connections, launch new programs and projects, and engage with key communities. However, I am most proud of the development and rollout of the Institution's first ever International Strategic Framework, which Secretary Bunch launched internally to the Smithsonian community last summer. This Framework, and a new corresponding tracking process to streamline our understanding and cataloguing of Smithsonian's global footprint, has already set us all on a course to be more intentional in our international activities. We, a vast and diverse community of 21 museums and dozens of research centers, can now confidently progress towards the same shared objectives. Our researchers, curators, educators, and conservators can all speak with one voice as we articulate our global Institutional impact to partners and audiences. And most importantly, we now have a clear mandate to be a true partner in the world's efforts to increase and diffuse knowledge: the Framework guides us to listen, learn, and exchange with communities around the globe.

The Smithsonian's international efforts continue to be significant in volume and multi-disciplinary in nature. We are working in over 100 countries each year, and on every continent, collaborating with scientific partners; developing the next generation of art, culture, science, and education leaders; and connecting with communities in new ways through exhibitions and our collections. And those exchanges are mutual: our international work connects both our own staff and our US audiences with cultures, traditions, and histories on a global scale.

I look forward to you engaging with this report. As always, we want to hear from you – either to connect more around these programs, serve as a thought partner with you on a new concept, or create lasting relationships that deepen our collective reach. Here's to an even more robust 2022 and a hope that we can meet in person soon.

Warmly,

Aviva Rosenthal  
Director, Office of International Relations



Office of International Relations staff with virtual backgrounds from the Smithsonian's Open Access collection.  
Not pictured: Matt Lutkenhouse. Photo: Smithsonian Office of International Relations



# OUR MISSION + VISION

*Greater Reach. Greater Relevance. Profound Impact.*

These ideas guide the Smithsonian in its ambitious mission to pursue “the increase and diffusion of knowledge” for all people. Working on all seven continents and in more than 100 countries, we are a truly global organization uniquely positioned to harness the collective power of the world’s knowledge, creativity, and innovation.

The Office of International Relations works to support the Institution’s mandate by linking the deep expertise of the Smithsonian’s body of researchers, curators, educators, and professionals with partners and colleagues around the planet. It is through our collections, research, and strategic partnerships that the Smithsonian can most effectively address our world’s increasingly complex challenges—and also stimulate meaningful, lasting impact both at home and across the globe.

## OIR works to fulfill its mission in four priority areas:

- ✳ Optimizing Smithsonian Global Engagement
- ✳ Promoting Smithsonian Global Thought Leadership
- ✳ Supporting Smithsonian Global Programs
- ✳ Coordinating Smithsonian Global Operations

1881



2021



*Top photo:* Interior of the main hall of the the US National Museum in 1881. Photo: Smithsonian Institution Archives.  
*Bottom photo:* Visitors at the *FUTURES* Exhibition in the Arts and Industries Building, formerly the US National Museum. Photo: FUTURES.



# OPTIMIZING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

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“As the world’s largest museum, research, and education complex, we have a responsibility to engage on the pressing global challenges of our time – from climate change and public health, to economic disparities and issues of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion – the solutions to which require an international vision and perspective.”

- *Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*

When we at the Smithsonian Institution (SI) join together with our colleagues at home and abroad, we collectively transform big ideas into bold action and deeper impact. To advance our mission of forging and strengthening international partnerships, OIR serves as the central convener and coordinator of global activity at the Smithsonian, helping our global partners navigate the Institution and helping our own colleagues maximize their international networks and impact.

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## International Strategic Framework

In 2020, Secretary Lonnie Bunch of the Smithsonian charged the Office of International Relations (OIR) with the development of an **International Strategic Framework**, the Institution’s first. The Smithsonian has been inherently global in its approach and its activities since its very founding, but our global footprint has lacked a shared vision of success. The Framework, developed in consultation with hundreds of colleagues across the Institution, was officially launched by Secretary Bunch in June of 2021. It articulates a shared set of values, aims, objectives, and areas of work to sets a clear vision and purpose for the full spectrum of the Smithsonian’s global activities. The Framework was well received by the Smithsonian community and its implementation over the past year has helped facilitate decision making, streamline Institutional support, and foster a unified approach to the critical work we carry out all over the world.



From the video *Orchids: Preserving the Jewels of Palau*. Photo: Smithsonian Global

## Global Activities Tracking Process

In 2021, in correlation with the International Strategic Framework, OIR officially launched the **Global Activities Tracking Process (GATP)**, in coordination with the **Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP)**, the **Office of the General Counsel (OGC)**, and the **Offices of the Under Secretaries**. Together, these units form the **Global Activities Committee (GAC)**, who review, advise on, and track proposed international activities submitted through the GATP. This new process allows for greater transparency and recognition of the breadth of international work occurring at SI, and provides a platform for mission-enabling units to provide coordinated program support and risk management. One especially exciting outcome of the GATP launch is the **Global Activities Dashboard**, a dynamic visualization of all international activities across the Institution. The activity database that forms the basis of the Dashboard, and which will be informed by the GATP going forward, was developed through close collaboration with SI units who worked with OIR to make sure the entirety of their recent global work was reflected in this living inventory. The Dashboard will be a vital internal resource, streamlining pan-Institutional collaboration and reducing the duplication of effort, as well as providing SI leadership with evidence-based strategic insight into our global impact.

# Object-Based Diplomacy: The Smithsonian as Global Convener

## Historic Repatriation of the Gilgamesh Tablet

The Smithsonian was proud to host the [repatriation ceremony](#) for the Gilgamesh Dream Tablet from the United States to the Republic of Iraq at the National Museum of the American Indian in September 2021. The Smithsonian's participation in the event, which was presented by the US interagency **Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee (CHCC)** and coordinated by OIR and the Smithsonian's **Office of Special Events and Protocol (OSEP)**, signaled the many years of successful collaborations between the Institution and various cultural heritage entities in Iraq.

The Gilgamesh Dream Tablet is an ancient Mesopotamian clay artifact inscribed in cuneiform with a portion of the Epic of Gilgamesh, one of the world's oldest epic poems. As one of the oldest surviving forms of literature, fragments of the Epic of Gilgamesh are rare, and the Gilgamesh Dream Tablet is unique among them as it provides insight into regional variations of the story. The ceremony and return of the tablet represent years of effort spearheaded by Homeland Security Investigations and the Department of Justice after the artifact's seizure from the Museum of Bible in 2019. Featured in the ceremony were the tablet itself and a Sumerian ram sculpture, returned at the same time: the objects were just two of the more than 17,000 items that the United States returned to Iraq in 2021, the largest ever repatriation of Iraqi antiquities.

The Gilgamesh Dream Tablet awaits repatriation during a ceremony coordinated by the Smithsonian.  
Photo: Michael Barnes.



Iraqi, European, and US officials at the Gilgamesh Tablet repatriation ceremony in September 2021, hosted by the Smithsonian and moderated by Richard Kurin, Distinguished Scholar and Ambassador-at-Large (*far right*).  
Photo: Michael Barnes.

## Sports Diplomacy in Action: Baseball and Rodeo at the US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue

In November, OIR participated in the United States-Qatar Strategic Dialogue at the US Department of State. At a session focused on the 2022 FIFA Mena's World Cup, OIR, in collaboration with the **National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)**, presented a gift of two hats to the US Embassy in Doha. The hats, a Pittsburgh Pirates cap and a traditional cowboy hat, reflected the centrality of baseball and rodeo sport culture in American life. The baseball cap carried particular symbolic weight, as Sam Khalifa, the first Arab and first Muslim player in Major League Baseball history, played for the Pirates.

OIR also joined a session on Education and Culture, during which senior Qatari cultural officials announced the Smithsonian's initial collaborations in support of the U.S-Qatar 2020 Strategic Dialogue Memorandum of Understanding. These activities seek to engage and inspire future generations through cultural exchanges and STEM education focused on innovation and invention.



# PROMOTING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

With thousands of scientists, curators, researchers, historians, and scholars, the Smithsonian is a deep repository and generator of knowledge. Our world-class professionals are a trusted source of expertise, inspiration, and innovation.

That reputation enables us, as an institution, to stimulate discussions around the big questions that affect us all. Working closely with Smithsonian leadership, OIR facilitates conversations on these critical issues between our experts and partners around the globe, with the aim of multiplying success, enacting sustainable change, and turning ideas into reality.

OIR brings Smithsonian expertise to critical platforms and global stages where we can move the needle on issues as diverse as climate change, accessibility, biodiversity conservation, and cultural heritage protection.



The Smithsonian Global website shares stories from across the Institution with key international partners, and features **43** projects, **20** videos, and **75** staff from across the Smithsonian.



*This page:* From the video *Orchids: Preserving the Jewels of Palau*. Photo: Smithsonian Global  
*Facing page:* The SI Global website interactive map highlights projects by location. Photo: Smithsonian Global

## Smithsonian Global Website and Video Series

In 2021, the [Smithsonian Global website](#) was refreshed to make it even more even more intuitive and relevant to the needs of both Smithsonian staff and the public. Highlighting international projects from across the Smithsonian, the site now has an even more dynamic interactive map which can be used to sort international projects by country, region, and thematic area, as well as a new blog and other updated functionalities.

OIR supported the creation of an Apple Maps Guide featuring different projects from the Smithsonian Global website about international ocean conservation called [Saving the Seas of the Americas](#). The guide, which featured projects by the **National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)**, the **Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI)**, the **Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC)**, and the **Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI)**, reached 285,000 views and was shared 14,000 times.

The SI Global International Video Series continues to expand its reach, highlighting some of the impact of the Smithsonian’s work around the world and featuring projects from across museums, disciplines, and continents. In 2021, Smithsonian Global published a new video featuring the Smithsonian North American Orchid Conservation Center’s Palau Orchid Conservation Initiative: [Orchids: Preserving the Jewels of Palau](#). The Smithsonian Global and **Working Land and Seascapes** video *The Heartbeat: The Salmon & People Project* featuring the **Smithsonian Environmental Research Center’s** Salmon and People Project in Alaska was accepted into the 2021 [Wildlife Conservation Film Festival](#), held in New York City.



Engagement with UN Global Bodies

As Co-Chair of the **Consortium of Scientific Partners on Biodiversity**, the Smithsonian facilitated the joint fifth **Science-Policy Forum for Biodiversity** and the eighth **International Conference on Sustainability Science** held virtually from April 13 to 23, 2021, working closely with the **Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, the **Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People’s Republic of China** as the host of the **Conference of the Parties (COP15)**, and several other leading scientific institutions from around the world. The goal of this event was to convene scientists, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders to discuss how science, technology and innovation could contribute to the effective implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in order to bend the curve of biodiversity loss and foster transformative change towards achieving the 2050 Vision. The sessions were attended live by **more than 2000 participants** (with traffic to the website and the conference from approximately **140 countries**), and a [summary report](#) was submitted for consideration at the CBD subsidiary meetings.

The office of the Under Secretary for Science and Research, OIR, and the Smithsonian’s Earth Optimism Initiative also supported the Smithsonian’s engagement with the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and collaborated with several different units to develop a virtual side event entitled ***Our Shared Future: Life on a Sustainable Planet*** which was broadcast at the U.S. Center at UNFCCC COP26 on November 5. The session introduced *Our Shared Future: Life on a Sustainable Planet* and detailed how this new signature initiative bridges science, technology, and culture to design natural climate solutions leading to reduced emissions, enhanced adaptation, and increased resilience. Following a keynote by Ellen Stofan, SI’s Under Secretary for Science and Research, the session included two panels focused on “Advancing Climate Science for Impact” and “Engaging Youth and Reaching Diverse Audiences.”



Smithsonian experts speak on the “Advancing Climate Science for Impact” virtual panel as part of the *Life on a Sustainable Planet* event broadcast at the US Center at UNFCCC COP26. Photo: Sarah Sutton, Sustainable Museums.

In October 2021, OIR worked with Smithsonian Under Secretary for Science and Research Ellen Stofan to deliver key messages on behalf of the scientific community and academia during the virtual High-Level Segment of Part One of CBD COP15. The meeting focused on the theme “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth” and attracted almost **3000 in-person delegates** in Kunming, China, and **more than 2000 on-line participants**. In coordination with other leading scientific and technical institutions from around the world, Ellen’s statement highlighted the critical role of science. She called for increased funding for education, training and career opportunities in biodiversity and scientific research, including support for enhanced taxonomic expertise and for building research infrastructure in developing countries. She also encouraged investment in international partnerships as well as transdisciplinary research collaboration and emphasized the importance of data sharing. The Smithsonian’s active involvement in the CBD, through many key units, has demonstrated the institution’s expertise, convening power, and thought leadership in the field of biodiversity conservation.

“The Smithsonian has the unique capacity to bridge history, arts, culture, and science which is critical in the understanding and mitigation of climate change. From culture-based solutions to nature-based solutions, we are applying our scientific and cultural expertise, our role as a convener, and our public-facing programming to accelerate climate action.”

- Ellen Stofan, Under Secretary for Science and Research

**Smithsonian-France Focus Forum: Earth Optimism: Our Shared, Sustainable Future**

Throughout 2021, the Smithsonian, together with the **US Embassy in Paris**, has offered a series on inclusivity, diversity and sustainability conducted in two phases. In Spring 2021, OIR hosted five Franco-American conversations that connected museum professionals, educators, and civil society leaders who engage with the public, and with youth in particular, on questions of social justice and the future of the planet. Sessions addressed critical issues facing museums, schools, and cultural and scientific institutions. The program highlighted the role of cultural leaders in helping us understand our relationship with the natural world and our own communities, fostered cross-cultural exchange, and spurred interest in new collaborations in both science and humanities between the US and France. Topics were wide-ranging and included those that are relevant regardless of what continent we live on: race, inclusive cultural practices, climate change and communication, ocean conservation, public engagement, as well as bridging arts and sciences. In Fall 2021, OIR convened students and teachers for a bi-national learning program focused on sustainable communities led by the **Smithsonian Science Education Center (SSEC)**. 800 students from French and U.S. classrooms paired up, and all classrooms participated in live virtual sessions and asynchronous activities via an online portal. Expert voices throughout, including the **Director of Public Engagement** of the **Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC)** and the **Mayor of Grenoble**, helped students to explore ways to make an impact in their own communities and inspire action, hope, and change through this experience.



**“Both our nations have complicated and inhumane histories, and it was enlightening to see the similarities and differences in how we grapple with those complexities both internally and with our audiences. The transatlantic conversations about DEAI, decolonization, and community-centered co-creation efforts confirmed that the Smithsonian has the momentum and resources to be both a leader and a learner in the global museum community.”**

**- Program Specialist from the National Museum of American History, on participating in “Talking about Tough Topics in Museums”**

*Facing page: Secretary Lonnie Bunch speaks virtually with attendees of the opening session of the *France in Focus* series, titled “Telling Stories That Matter For Our Shared Future.” Photo: OIR.*

**Dialogues and Discourses: Talking about Tough Topics in Museums**

In May 2021, OIR helped organize a moderated international discussion that served as a follow-on to a Transatlantic Seminar that SI hosted in 2019. This virtual conversation was co-developed by SI, Germany’s **Leibniz Association**, and **Fulbright Germany** with panelists and a moderator from the **Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History (NMAH)** and **National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)**, **Indiana University**, the **State Art Collections Dresden**, and the **Germanisches Nationalmuseum**. More than **150 participants** attended the panel, with the majority from the United States and Germany, but also included attendees from South Africa, Canada, Switzerland, and Ireland. Speakers discussed topics including museum practices of collecting, interpreting, and connecting with underrepresented audiences. Attendees broke into small groups in breakout rooms to discuss which tough topics their institutions are addressing and the related challenges.



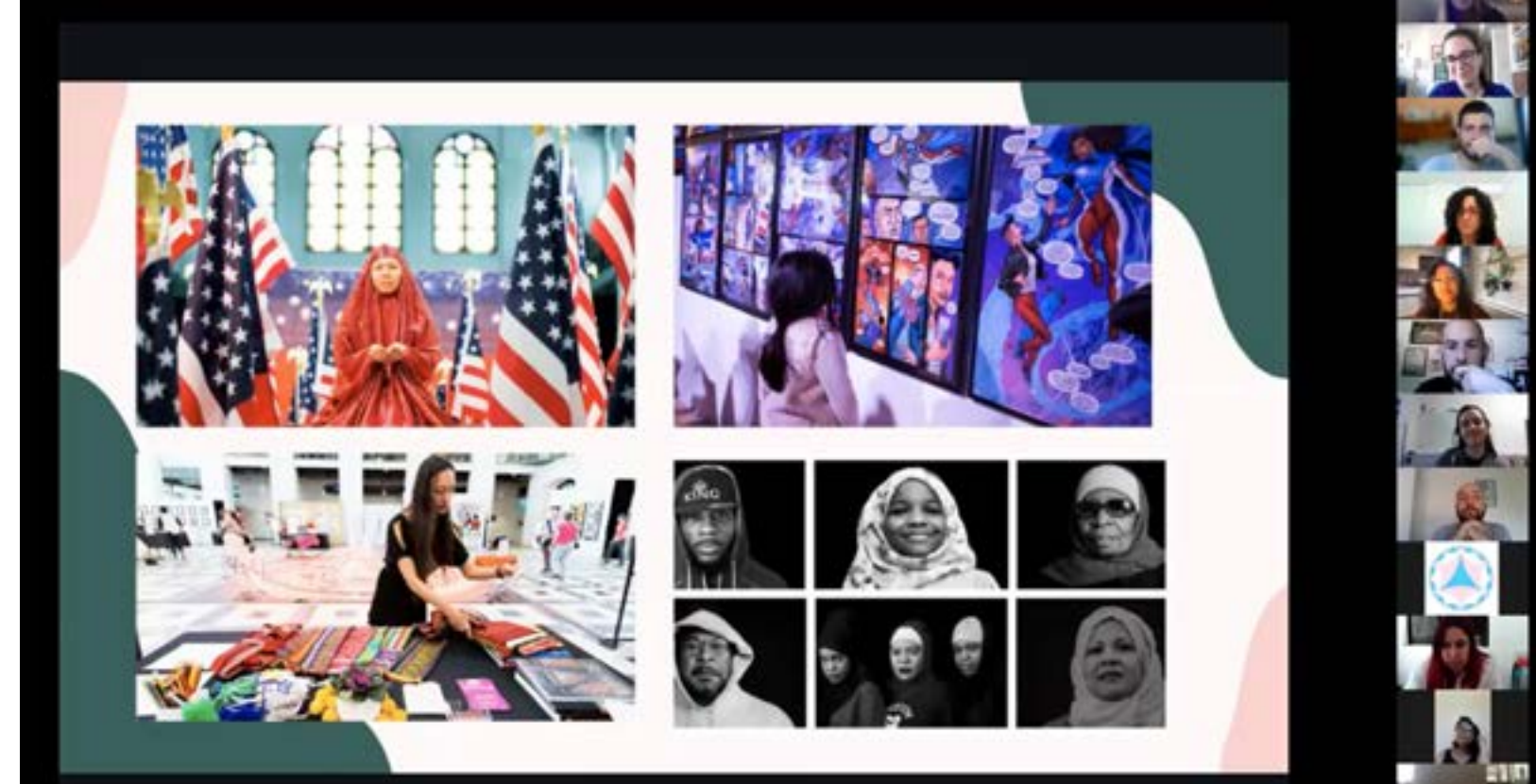
# SUPPORTING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL PROGRAMS

Through understanding the priorities of our museums and research centers, OIR aims to expand institutional opportunities and engagement in relevant regions and countries.

OIR partners with units across the Institution to craft successful strategies and proposals for new initiatives and programs, and to secure new opportunities to amplify our impact in the world. We cultivate new ideas and ways of working, and engage across the SI community to address the most pressing challenges of our time.

## Museums as Spaces for Social Discourse and Civic Engagement

Through a longstanding relationship with the **US Embassy in Buenos Aires** and **Argentina's Ministry of Culture**, OIR developed a six-session virtual exchange series for museum professionals. The series, *Museums as Spaces for Social Discourse and Civic Engagement*, connected **19 Argentinian institutions** from across Argentina and focused on diverse topics with Smithsonian professionals from the **National Museum of American History (NMAH)**, **Asian Pacific American Center (APAC)**, and **Smithsonian American Art Museum and Renwick Gallery (SAAM)**. Sessions focused on ways that cultural organizations can create opportunities for audiences to engage in complex conversations and encourage civic dialogue and calls to action. Each week the cohort discussed reparative history, accessibility, community care, and justice transformations in museums. Taking place each week from October to December 2021, the sessions provided the opportunity for reciprocal learning, continued connection, and strengthening of professional networks.



Nafisa Isa from the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center leads a session of “Museums as Spaces for Social Discourse and Civic Engagement” on community and human-centered design in museum programming. Photo: Nafisa Isa.

## Law Enforcement Training on Trafficked Cultural Heritage

To address the threat of cultural property looting, theft, and trafficking, the **US Department of State's Cultural Antiquities Task Force (CATF)** and the Smithsonian Institution held its annual training program for US federal law enforcement personnel. Since 2009, the Smithsonian has worked closely with State's **Cultural Heritage Center (CHC)**, as well as the CATF interagency members, to conduct an annual in-person training workshop for approximately 25 law enforcement personnel per training. The 2021 iteration of the four-day workshop, “Preventing Trafficking and Protecting Cultural Heritage,” was held virtually and served as a refresher and update for seasoned agents who had previously gone through the annual training and worked on cultural property cases. The training was organized in partnership with the **Cultural Property, Art, and Antiquities Program at Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)** and the Smithsonian Institution's **Museum Conservation Institute (MCI)** and Office of International Relations. This annual training was also complemented this year, for the first time, by a miniseries of more targeted workshops that trained law enforcement personnel to work with specific types of cultural heritage materials, such as coins and manuscripts. This miniseries was a partnership among SI, CHC, HSI, and the **Federal Bureau of Investigation's Art Crime Program**.

Iraq Cultural Heritage Projects

Smithsonian’s Iraq Team – consisting of staff from the **Museum Conservation Institute (MCI)**, **Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI)**, and OIR – continued supporting recovery efforts from afar, holding virtual meetings, working through partners in country, and collaborating on site-specific efforts through varied virtual exchanges. We continued working with the **Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage**, which hosted participants who were carrying out a Collections Assessment for Preservation (CAP) Program for the **Syriac Heritage Museum** in Ainkawa, Erbil. Smithsonian instructors taught participants about the CAP methodology, which helps a museum examine its collections and buildings, as well as its policies and procedures relating to collections care. Remotely, SI also continued supporting efforts to stabilize and recover the ancient city of Nimrud, as well as supporting training and supplies procurement for the recovery and reopening of the **Mosul Cultural Museum**. At the end of the year, the team, together with the **National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA)** and **Smithsonian Exhibits (SIE)**, also launched an exciting new collaboration with the **Iraq Museum** in Baghdad to co-design a virtual exhibition and looks forward to reporting on progress in 2022.



SPOTLIGHT: SMITHSONIAN CULTURAL RESCUE INITIATIVE (SCRI)

Supporting Local Disaster Response: 2021 Haiti Earthquake

With the humanitarian response underway, the **Quisqueya University Cultural Conservation Center** in Port-au-Prince sprang into disaster response mode after the August 2021 earthquake, clocking in at 7.2 magnitude. SCRI was founded based on work the Smithsonian did in the 2010 earthquake and quickly joined the Center in its plan. The western part of the country is mountainous. The quake had shaken loose rocks and mud, rendering many places inaccessible. Making these areas visible called for the expertise of SCRI, the in-country team, and the **Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab** at the **Virginia Museum of Natural History**. Using satellite data, the team pinpointed damaged heritage sites, saving hours of manpower. As a next step, the Center, with SCRI support, will conduct a stabilization and salvage workshop for heritage stewards. Participants will immediately deploy to affected archives, museums, and other historical sites to begin recovery of collections. Projects like this illuminate how the Smithsonian can boost local disaster response. SCRI will continue to expand thoughtful use of technology and give communities new tools to save heritage.

Amplifying Voices: The Leadership Network Sharpens Skills for Virtual Training

The need for disaster preparedness during the pandemic didn’t stop and neither did the determination of SCRI’s **Leadership Network** to help communities with heritage under threat. The network, facilitated by SCRI and the **Prince Claus Fund**, draws from a worldwide group of cultural first aiders and focuses on professional development in resource mobilization and communication skills for heritage stewards. When the world pivoted to virtual during the pandemic, many in the network were tapped for virtual teaching and technical assistance. At one of their regular meetings with SCRI, network members requested a short course focused on honing skills to work in digital spaces. Enter Debbie Ford, Leadership Course Instructor and Associate Vice-Provost at Creighton University, who worked with SCRI to design the *Introduction to Developing Online Training for Cultural Heritage Stewards*. Participants also received individual consultation on specific projects. SCRI looks forward to more collaboration with the network and contributing to best practices in the field.

*Facing page:* The Cultural Conservation Center at Quisqueya University is helping with the recovery of more than 10,000 books impacted by the August 2021 earthquake. This is the collection of the IPDEC Library in the city of Les Cayes. Photo: Cultural Conservation Center at Quisqueya University, Port-au-Prince, Haiti



# Changing the Conservation Conversation: Elevating and Activating Smithsonian Science

**Working Land and Seascapes (WLS)** is a network of Smithsonian scientists that share a vision for conservation science that recognizes humanity’s relationship to nature. WLS builds platforms and partnerships both within and beyond the Smithsonian with the goal of fostering healthy, resilient, and productive landscapes and seascapes for the benefit of people and nature. In 2021, WLS convened thought leaders from the fields of natural, social, and economic sciences to empower the conservation community across sectors. Examples of WLS activities in 2021 include:

## A Theory of Change for Biodiversity Work in Peru

Though the Smithsonian has been conducting research with partners in Peru for decades, there has not been a cohesive effort to unify and amplify the impact of disparate projects. Working Land and Seascapes worked with Impact by Design to develop a Theory of Change to guide the program’s efforts to bridge the gaps between science, implementation, and policy that results in co-benefits for people and nature.

## Advancing Agroforestry and Sustainable Cocoa Production

The three-day *Sweet Sustainability: Cocoa Agroforestry Advantages* conference brought together over 60 leaders in science, industry, advocacy, and policy to break down the science behind cocoa production practices that benefit forests and farmers. The conference ended with a call to action: industry, government, farmers, and researchers must work together to ensure that cocoa agriculture provides living wages to farmers while protecting forests, biodiversity, and important environmental services. To help kickstart this international effort, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and Mighty Earth launched the [Cocoa Agroforestry Library](#) to compile available scientific literature on sustainable cocoa.

“Earth Optimism shows us how to find hope in the face of odds that might seem overwhelming. It reminds us that change happens when we focus on what works—when we collaborate to find solutions and celebrate our successes.”

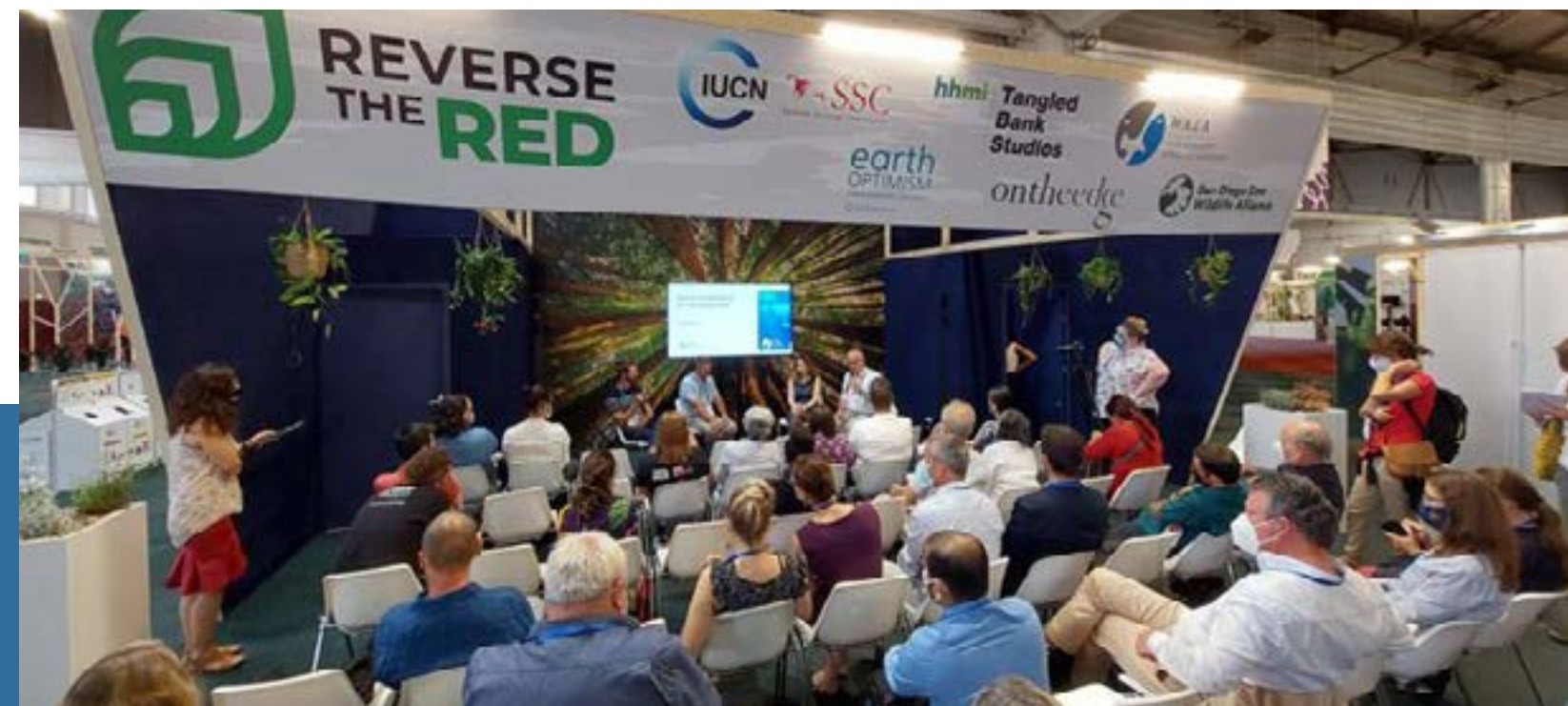
- Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary of the Smithsonian

## Earth Optimism at the World Conservation Congress

A cornerstone initiative of the Smithsonian Conservation Commons, **Earth Optimism (EO)** is a global movement focused on changing the conservation conversation from one of “doom and gloom” to one of “optimism and opportunity.” Through the art of storytelling, this movement focuses on sharing solutions around scientific data, discovery, and community-led interventions about environmental conservation, sustainability, and climate successes with audiences around the world.

In 2021, the Earth Optimism initiative led the Smithsonian’s participation in the **World Conservation Congress** in Marseille, France, the flagship event of the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, held every four years. EO contributed programming to the event’s [Reverse the Red Pavilion](#), including panels, workshops, and film festivals featuring the Smithsonian Global Video Series.

Smithsonian experts participate in the Reverse the Red Pavilion programming at the World Conservation Congress in Marseille, France. Photo: Earth Optimism.





My Armenia Program

In 2021, the Smithsonian completed the final year of the **My Armenia Program (MAP)**, a six-year interagency agreement with the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**. MAP was jointly managed by OIR and the **Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH)**, and aimed to build and strengthen cultural heritage tourism in Armenia through research, documentation, and storytelling. In 2021, MAP continued to build on the success of previous years by providing material and technical support to local museums, festivals, guides, tour operators, artisans, experience owners, and other cultural tourism stakeholders in Armenia. MAP also continued to support local partners and beneficiaries to cope with and recover from the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Activities in 2021 included *Signature Experiences of Armenia*, an initiative in partnership with the **Armenian Tourism Committee** to improve cultural heritage tourism products to meet international quality standards, as well as the formal creation and startup support of regional Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to better organize and present regional offerings outside of the capital. MAP continued its work with local museums and artisans, supporting the reopening of two improved museum shops, enhancing exhibitions and experience programs at nine regional museums, and hosting the fourth annual **My Handmade Armenia Festival**. MAP also worked with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and City Research Center (CRC) to create the [Kumayri Virtual Exhibition](#), which launched in December 2021. MAP officially closed out as of December 31, 2021 and leaves an incredible legacy of partnership with the Armenian people to cherish, preserve, and share their cultural heritage.

Traditional craft on display at the 2021 *My Handmade Armenia Festival*.  
Photo: My Armenia Program.



**Clockwise from top:**  
Traditional Armenian dancers perform at the *My Armenia Program* concluding event.  
US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracey speaks to the press at the *My Armenia Program* concluding event.  
Children enjoy community craft projects at the 2021 *My Handmade Armenia Festival*.  
Artisan craft on display at the 2021 *My Handmade Armenia Festival*.

All photos: My Armenia Program.





# COORDINATING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL OPERATIONS

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The Office of International Relations plays a critical role in safely sending our scholars and experts abroad while welcoming international colleagues and visitors to our Institution in order to foster the exchange of ideas, practice, and perspectives across disciplines.

In collaboration with operations teams all over the Smithsonian, we work to ensure a nimble and responsive infrastructure that allows our colleagues and partners to deliver impactful programming all over the world.

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## Global Operations Team

In September 2021, the Global Operations Team held its inaugural meeting. Building upon the goals outlined in the International Strategic Framework and the Global Activities Tracking Process, the Global Operations Team was created to serve as a forum to advise units on international operations, share ideas, voice concerns, and collectively address issues by pooling international expertise from across all areas of the Smithsonian. It is a pan-institutional team, chaired by OIR, and its membership is comprised of one to two representatives from each of the mission-enabling units.

Since this first meeting, the Global Operations Team has finalized its charter which outlines the team's mission, goals, and objectives. Additionally, it has created monthly digests shared amongst team members with relevant global operations information. Using member feedback, the Global Operations Team is currently working to gather resources and form working groups that will target key challenges and identify how team members can best aid in improving global operations across the Institution.



The Smithsonian welcomed Ukrainian Ambassador Oksana Markarova and representatives from the Junior Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (JASU) to discuss shared commitments for inspiring inventive scientific learning.

*Pictured from left to right:* Arthur Daemmrich, Director, Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation; Carol O'Donnell, Director, Smithsonian Science Education Center; Monique Chism, Smithsonian Under Secretary for Education; Ambassador Oksana Markarova; Oksen Lisovyi, General Director, JASU; Yevhen Kudriavets, Deputy Director for International Relations and Special Projects, JASU; and Lauren Appelbaum, Global Program Manager, OIR. Photo: OIR.

## Official and Diplomatic International Visits

Despite continued limitations on travel and gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OIR continued to find ways to engage with international visitors and to connect them to various units across the Smithsonian. In 2021, OIR facilitated visits for more than **20** international delegations, **17** of which were in person. Over **170** visitors from **18** different countries participated in meetings and tours with 14 different Smithsonian museums and units. OIR continued its collaboration with the Department of State's **International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP)** by welcoming five delegations of current and future global leaders to engage with Smithsonian colleagues in a series of virtual panels and discussions. Topics ranged from conservation and biodiversity to civic engagement for youth and the preservation of cultural heritage.

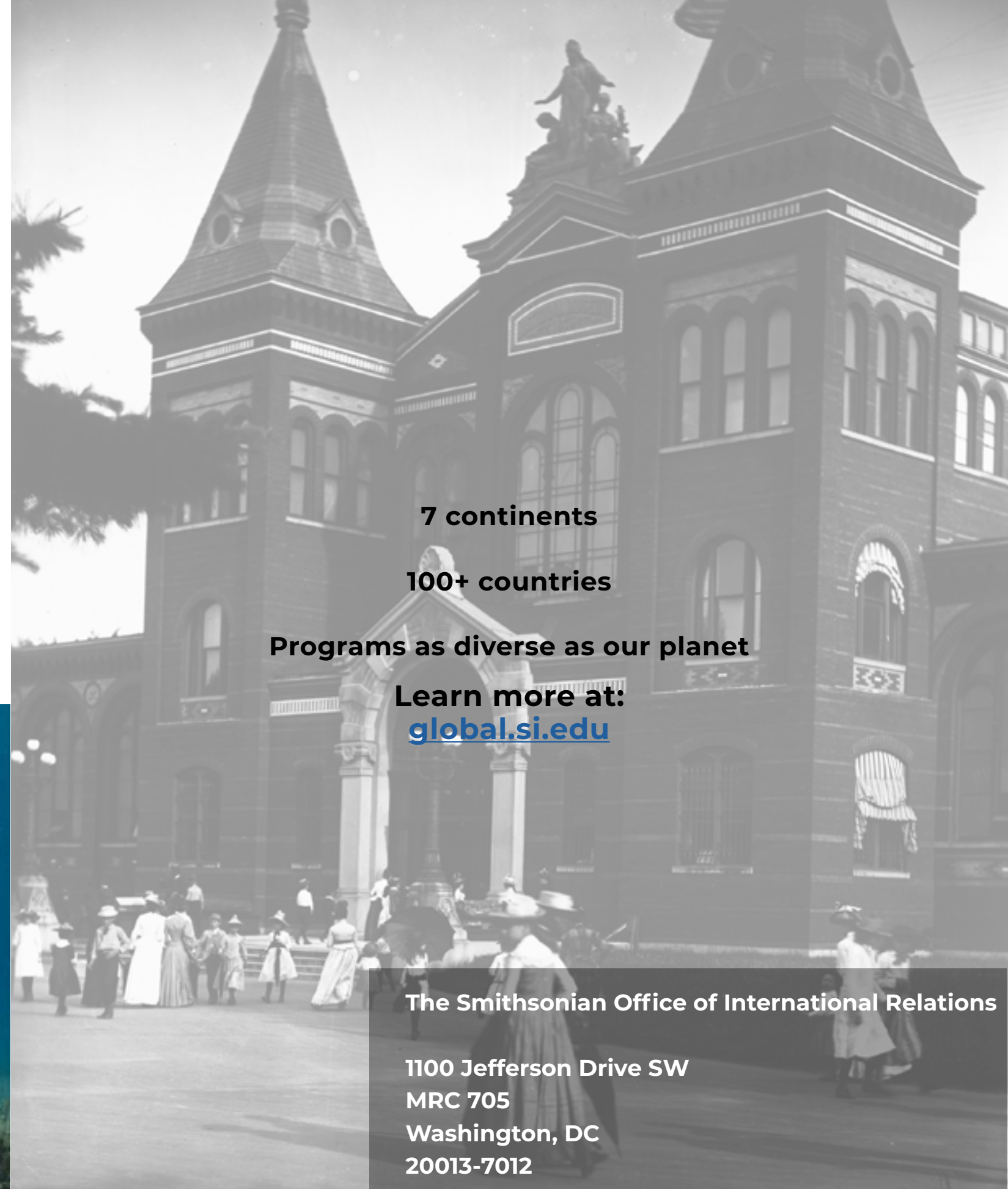
This year saw a substantial number of VIP delegations and diplomatic visits to SI facilitated by OIR, including the **Minister of Culture of Colombia**, the **Ukrainian Ambassador to the US**, the **French Ambassador to the US**, the **Minister of Culture of Iraq**, the president of **Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Doha**, and many more.

## J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

OIR manages the Smithsonian's **J-1 Exchange Visitor Program**, a visa program that enables foreign researchers to travel to the Smithsonian to collaborate with our curators, scholars, scientists, and practitioners. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, **82** J-1 Scholars representing over **30** countries participated in programs sponsored by the Smithsonian. Like many other SI initiatives, our ability to invite foreign national fellows, interns, and staff was adversely affected by COVID-19. While in FY2020 we saw about 20-33% of our normal volume of exchange visitors, FY2021 saw a further decrease of roughly 40%. The reduced volume has given OIR an opportunity to assess how we track important information and allowed OIR to streamline communications moving forward. In 2021, OIR improved our Prism intranet site for internal knowledge sharing, improved pre-arrival communication for our scholars, and launched the International Webinar series. We hope these efforts will allow us to more effectively welcome back our usual volume of international visitors in 2022.

*This page:* Underwater archaeology research in St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, a site of current research for the Slave Wrecks Project of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Photo: Paul Gardullo.

*Facing page:* Visitors stroll outside the North entrance of the US National Museum Building (now the Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building) in 1900. Photo: Smithsonian Institution Archives.



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