

## **MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 8, 2021, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

The Executive Committee (“Committee”) of the Board of Regents (“Board”) of the Smithsonian Institution (“Smithsonian”) conducted a videoconference meeting on November 8, 2021. Participating were Board and Executive Committee Chair Steve Case, Vice Chair Dr. Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey, and Committee member John Fahey.

Also present by invitation of the Committee were Secretary Lonnie Bunch, Counselor to the Chief Justice Jeffrey P. Minear, Chief of Staff to the Secretary Greg Bettwy, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Regents Kate Forester, Special Assistant to the Regents Mallory Gianola (recorder), General Counsel Judith Leonard, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer Meroë Park, and Chief of Staff to the Regents Porter Wilkinson.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Board and Executive Committee Chair Steve Case called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and reviewed the agenda.

### **MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the draft minutes of the October 14, 2021, Committee meeting were approved without modification.

### **REGENTS’ ANNUAL PUBLIC FORUM**

As part of the Smithsonian’s ongoing commitment to transparency, the Regents typically host an annual public forum to provide an opportunity for direct interaction with the public. Mr. Case reviewed the format of the Regents’ annual public forum to be held on December 7, 2021. The event will be held virtually in part because of the continuing safety precautions related to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and because it allows the Smithsonian to connect with a broader audience. The topics will include an update on the two new Smithsonian museums, the prioritization of new and ongoing digital initiatives, and the Smithsonian’s strategic plan and vision for advancing Our Shared Future both within the Smithsonian and throughout the global community.

### **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

The Secretary updated the Committee on the state of the Smithsonian. Secretary Bunch first briefed the Committee on the deaccession and repatriation of collection items. The National Museum of African Art (“NMAfA”) has removed its Benin bronzes from display and is planning to seek approval to deaccession and then to repatriate artifacts that were looted by the British in an 1897 raid on the royal palace. The Secretary noted that while NMAfA has not received any formal requests from Nigeria or the Kingdom of Benin to repatriate any of its holdings, other cultural institutions have recently returned African art treasures to Nigeria, and the Smithsonian is similarly committed to repatriation. The Committee discussed the deaccession process for removing the artifacts from a Smithsonian collection, which involve researching the

history or provenance of the objects to confirm their origin and value; discussions with the Kingdom of Benin regarding the return of objects; and ultimately seeking approval from the Secretary and the Board of Regents.

The Secretary concluded his report by briefing the Committee on the Institution's ongoing response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, specifically the impacts of the vaccination mandate and safety protocols on Smithsonian operations. The Smithsonian will require all employees (Federal and Trust), affiliated staff (including volunteers, interns, and fellows), and contractors to be vaccinated by November 22, 2021, except in limited circumstances where a person is legally entitled to a reasonable accommodation.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Committee entered into an executive session at approximately 9:23 a.m. to discuss personnel matters.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business to consider, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Case, Chair