

Subject: Suggestions and Ideas Regarding the Decisions Adopted at the 1st Session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

In connection with the decisions adopted at the committee session in Algeria and your request for our standpoint, we would like to send the abovementioned suggestions and ideas.

Regarding Decision 1.COM 7:

Based on the deliberations of experts, which more closely explain why they decided for selected formulations of the proposed criteria for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (as presented in document ITH/06/1.COM/CONF.204/7), it is necessary to acknowledge the method which they used in formulating the criteria and selecting the actual concepts.

Our opinion is that the proposed criteria reflect deep experience with the variability of the ICH items; it takes into consideration many other alternatives and justifies the selection favored by the experts.

1.

In connection with the two separate lists whose establishment the Convention anticipates we propose incorporating the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage requiring urgent protection ("List 2") into the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity ("List 1").

Reasons:

The items on List 2 (in addition to the criteria of urgent protection) should meet the same representative criteria as the items on List 1. Regarding value, without ranking the ICH items, we continue to refer to the equivalent ICH items in both lists. It seems to us that in order to simplify the administration and emphasize their equivalency in terms of content it would be beneficial to keep one list with an internal classification or differentiation of those ICH items requiring urgent protection. This would eliminate the need to consider the transfer of the ICH items from one list to another under changes of conditions of their existence. Our opinion is that this would not contradict the wording of the pertinent provisions of the Convention

2.

Regarding the national representative lists, our opinion is that it is necessary to allow these States Members certain space and time to manage this process. It should not be considered as a duty but as a voluntary useful tool that is in the interest of the States Members and that will simplify the procedure in the event of the candidacy of the ICH items on the Representative UNESCO List.

But the criteria for inscription on the list from this aspect should not imply the obligation that the ICH items proposed by the States Members for inscription be incorporated into any national lists. We do not consider it important to set norms for the research methods, documentation and recording of the ICH items on the national level.

3.

Although we understand the logic of the argumentation in favor of the limitation of the duration of ICH inscription on the lists, we think that the inscription should be permanent and the list should be considered as open in an essentially endless system. The ICH elements on the list have a positive effect on raising public awareness regarding the ICH value in general and correspond with the goals of the Convention pursuant to its Article 1.

In order to keep the cost and functioning of the system within reasonable limits it shall be necessary to make the monitoring and assessment of inscriptions more efficient. The length of the inscription on the list could play a role in this process.

4.

We do not consider it effective to further discuss *the automatic incorporating of all* Master works of the oral and intangible cultural heritage of humanity into the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as stipulated by Article 31 of the Convention.

5.

We consider criteria (iii), (iv) and (v) as presented in document ITH/06/1.COM/CONF.204/7 to be extremely significant and well formulated in perceiving the characteristic features of ICH and its social aspects.

Regarding Decision 1.COM 6:

1.

In connection with the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage we suggest that special attention be dedicated to the terminology issues, the definitions of concepts and their introduction into the national legislation of the States Members.

The proposed umbrella advisory organ, in cooperation with the open participation of experts “at the disposal” of the UNESCO commissions in the individual Member States, may prepare the solutions for this task (pursuant to the actual requirements for solving the specific issue).

2.

We favor the principle of rotation of the representatives of groups and communities of practitioners and bearers of tradition in the umbrella advisory organ instead of the establishment of a separate organ.