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**Comments solicited by the 1st Intangible Heritage Committee:
VIET NAM**

**Re: Comments and Recommendations of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the
Intergovernmental Committee for the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the
Intangible Cultural Heritage**

At the request by the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture on January 3, 2007 on draft summary record of the First Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Letter Ref. CLT/CH/ITH06/538).

Basing on recommendations by experts of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee, which was established upon the recommendations by UNESCO,

Taking into account of requirements for the First Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,

The followings are some of our opinions:

1. The Outline for Operational Directives (Item 5)

- We are aware of the importance, necessity, practical implications, and the need to concretize and elaborate the terms and provisions of the Convention. Therefore, we agree with the Outline for Operational Directives, which is composed of six chapters and eight annexes.
- We, the Vietnamese side, are concerned and are expecting that UNESCO would specify the Operational Directives for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), as they would help us focus on the objectives of and measures for safeguarding ICH and would facilitate the implementation of safeguarding projects.
- We also anticipate the Convention to be early and drastically implemented in the next two years, owing to the delicacy of ICH, the pressure of socio-economic development on intangible cultural heritage, and the urgent need to protect cultural diversity. Initiating activities in the first years are important and meaningful in laying foundations for the implementation of the Convention. Therefore, it is necessary to take account of using financial and human resources. Expert meetings, regional workshops, pilot study/project, consultancy, etc. organized by UNESCO are necessary and will strongly influence national policies on the safeguarding of ICH, which include those of Vietnam.

2. Advisory Assistance to the Committee (Item 6)

- Because of the diverse, distinguished, and greatly complex nature of ICH, in our opinion, the establishment of an advisory body to the Intergovernmental Committee is of necessity. The invitation of some NGOs as well as some private persons with recognized competence in the various fields of the intangible cultural heritage to the Committee's meetings for consultation on specific matters (as proposed in Article 7, ITH/06/1.COM/CONF.204/6) is suitable.
- We suggest that consultative role of the community should not be placed in permanent structure of the advisory body to the Committee, but should be considered placed in a flexible consultative mechanism on specific matters, in order to select the right party for consultation.

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3. Criteria for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. (Item 7)

- We highly appreciate outcomes from the Expert Meetings and the great efforts by UNESCO Secretary in preparing this instrument. The proposed criteria for inscriptions on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in the document entirely embody the Convention's spirit. We express our unanimity and commitment to actively participate in the activities as a State Member to the Intergovernmental Committee.
- Based on Vietnam's experience, we would like to propose the following:
 - The domains listed in Paragraph 2 of Article 2 obviously do not embrace all aspects of the ICH. There are traditions that belong to various domains. Therefore, in the implementation of the Convention, each State Party to the Convention should take the initiative in further specifying the five domains listed at Article 2.2.
 - There is a need for further emphasis and specification on the role of artist/artisans (tradition-bearers) as living human treasures. Should there be an additional paragraph on this in criteria 3?
 - The role of the community and its involvement are embodied in most of the criteria. This is quite practical and necessary since it will ensure the sustainability of ICH. As cultural tradition creators and tradition-bearers, the communities play an exceedingly important role in implementing projects of safeguarding ICH. However, this also is the responsibility of researchers and managers in culture. How should this be exemplified in detailed guidelines? This shows that we should not rigidly place emphasis on community involvement. Among weaknesses of various projects is the lack of community involvement in many aspects. Owing to the inefficiency in methods and approaches at both macro and local levels, and to the inadequate awareness of the role of tradition bearers, activities were conducted by the wrong parties - not the tradition bearers themselves, unsatisfactory measures were proposed for them. Either too much focus was placed on restoration, documentation, or inventory while there were less necessary for the maintenance, transmission, and dissemination of ICH. Some of the projects were not sustainable due to the lack of community involvement. However, in order that the communities are the real masters and the protectors of their own ICH, they need a bit more time to move forward with the processes. First, there is a need for assistance by experts in identifying, restoring, preserving, and even transmitting the ICH - especially, in raising awareness and helping them understand issues in management, integration to contemporary life - which is intrinsically unfamiliar to them. Therefore, in our opinion, depending on subjects of the communities, on objectives and scope of projects, the relationship between local communities and other stakeholders is accordingly adjusted. In particular, an appropriate mechanism should be established, in which governmental institutions, NGOs, and individual persons could be able to support and provide guidelines to communities on methods for implementing specific activities.
 - Inventory making is without a doubt an important measure in the safeguarding of ICH. However, the awareness, measures, and results from inventories are diverse

among countries. Therefore, it is suggested that UNESCO should limit the scope of work as well as inventories to be annexed to submission profiles.

- We consider that status of the Masterpieces has been well recognized. With a condition for one to be a Member State to the Convention, the Masterpieces will be integrated into one or both of the Lists. There should be no need for evaluation criteria but registering procedures.
- There should be a clarification of the term "representativeness" in order to highlight the values of ICH as equal to "outstanding universal value" of tangible cultural heritage.
- There should be a limit in number of traditions to be inscribed in the Representative List. At first hand, prioritized consideration should be paid to those on the Tentative Lists, which were required as an attachment of the candidature submissions for the Masterpieces. UNESCO should publicize the list of traditions and the modalities for inscriptions on the Representative List early.

Vietnam is now undergoing the transition in the awareness of and its activities in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. We do believe that with the directives proposed by the Intergovernmental Committee, together with the determination and efforts of ours, the State Parties to the Convention, we will surely achieve success in the implementation of the Convention

Commissioner

**National Committee for the Convention on the
Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Le Thi Minh Ly, PhD