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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the opening of the 6th Session of
the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of
the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Bali, Indonesia, 22 November 2011

Minister for Education and Culture,

Minister for People's Welfare,

Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy,

Representative of the Governor of Bali,

Chairperson of the General Assembly of States Parties to the *Convention for the
Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*,

Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to open the 6th Session of the *Intergovernmental Committee
for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage* in Indonesia.

We had the honour to host the President of Indonesia, Dr Susilo Bambang
Yudhoyono in Paris on 2 November on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of
UNESCO's *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*.

The President argued that cultural diversity will be a positive driving force of the 21st
century.

But, he reminded us, this cannot be taken for granted.

Cultural heritage and cultural diversity raise essential questions for peace and
sustainable development today.

These must be addressed by States inside their societies and managed together with other States.

How can we harness the power of cultural heritage and cultural diversity for more cohesive societies and a more peaceful world?

UNESCO works with States to tackle this question.

This is one of the goals of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

I thank the Indonesian authorities for their commitment to the success of this meeting. This reflects a deep engagement with safeguarding all expressions of cultural heritage.

I am sure that my very good friend Professor Wirakartakusumah will chair the Committee with wisdom and leadership.

At the Borobudur World Heritage Site a few days ago, I was reminded of the power of intangible cultural heritage.

I was told of the tragic death of Maridjan during the 2010 eruption of Mount Merapi.

Maridjan was the spirit keeper of Mount Merapi, and he chose not to heed the Government call to evacuate.

The royal house of Yogyakarta has appointed Aishono, Maridjan's son, as the new spiritual guardian.

Unlike his father, Aishono evacuated the volcano last year.

His words are revealing:

"I am not just going to take a cultural approach based on the dreams or guidance from the spirits. I will also coordinate with the authorities to protect human life and the environment."

This is how intangible cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation.

Let me say also that I saw this wonderful transmission yesterday, when I visited the Jatiluwih rice fields and the Taman Ayun temple. Here, rituals and ancestral social practices have crossed the centuries. They have created a 'spirit of togetherness' in your culture and communities, as our host explained. Such wisdom has enabled Indonesia to preserve the island's unique environment and to keep its rich cultural traditions alive.

Values are indeed a source of identity and continuity.

But behaviours and beliefs evolve.

As the Convention says, intangible heritage is "*constantly recreated by communities in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history.*"

The Convention is an opportunity to discover living cultural expressions from across the world.

It is a tool for social cohesion and a way to safeguard practices vital for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development.

The Convention has clear starting points. Intangible cultural heritage must be compatible with human rights, it should promote mutual respect among communities, and it should support human, social and economic development.

More than 140 States have rallied around these objectives.

In taking these forward, the Committee carries great responsibility.

It must address proposals from States wishing to see the intangible cultural heritage of dozens of communities recognized and safeguarded.

For the first time, the Committee will examine the reports of five States on the Convention's implementation.

Implementation is complex, but it is central.

It starts with public planning and the legal framework.

It includes identification and documentation, as well as support to practitioners.

It takes in a wide range of training and educational initiatives.

Proposing a new element as we say to the List is the beginning of a journey.

Implementing the Convention is a long-term responsibility.

This is why UNESCO is engaged in a global capacity-building strategy -- to help States safeguard the intangible cultural heritage on their territories by working closely with relevant communities.

I take this opportunity to thank all donors, States Parties and the Committee for their support.

Mesdames, Messieurs,

J'ai eu souvent l'occasion de le dire ces derniers mois -- la Convention court le risque d'être victime de son succès.

Chacun peut observer l'immense intérêt suscité par les listes, et en particulier la Liste représentative, et les défis que cela pose au Secrétariat, aux organes consultatifs et au Comité lui-même.

79 dossiers devront être examinés par le Comité lors de cette session : 18 concernant la Liste de sauvegarde urgente; 39 pour la Liste représentative; 12 pour le Registre des meilleures pratiques de sauvegarde, 4 pour l'assistance internationale, et 6 rapports périodiques sur la mise en œuvre de la Convention.

Soyons clairs. C'est une charge de travail insoutenable.

Cette situation ne peut satisfaire les États parties et les communautés concernées – qui seront fatalement déçus que la Convention ne puisse répondre à leurs attentes, ou que le Comité n'ait pas les moyens de prêter suffisamment d'attention

à chaque élément du patrimoine qu'ils auront souhaité porter à l'attention de la communauté internationale.

Je remercie les États qui ont pris part à ce débat au cours des derniers mois -- en particulier le groupe de travail réuni au Siège de l'UNESCO.

Les tendances majoritaires qui s'en dégagent me semblent prometteuses.

Confier à un organe consultatif indépendant l'examen préalable de toutes les candidatures, y compris celles de la Liste représentative, en veillant à ce que sa composition soit géographiquement équilibrée et renouvelée partiellement chaque année, permettra au Comité de bénéficier d'avis indépendants d'experts, et de prendre ses décisions en toute connaissance de cause.

Considérer qu'une soixantaine de candidatures par an peuvent raisonnablement être traitées dans les conditions actuelles -- tout en adoptant une attitude inclusive et en permettant à chaque État soumissionnaire de voir au moins un de leur dossiers examiné -- me semble également une mesure indispensable.

Il faut à présent que les États fassent preuve de retenue, et que chacun comprenne que le système a atteint, voire dépassé ses limites.

C'est un appel que je lance à chacun d'entre vous.

Pour préserver la crédibilité de la Convention, il faut aussi favoriser une plus grande diversité géographique des inscriptions sur les listes et rehausser l'importance de la Liste sauvegarde urgente.

Il faut soutenir l'effort de renforcement des capacités, en Afrique notamment.

Il faut que chaque État ait à cœur de mettre en œuvre la Convention au niveau national, et pas seulement de proposer des candidatures.

La crédibilité découlera de nos actes et non de nos déclarations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before closing, I wish to raise a point about the time of austerity we are living through, including at UNESCO.

These call on our sense of responsibility to rethink practices and to be creative.

We do not seek to review the statutory mechanisms of our cultural conventions – but I believe we can bring fresh ideas to managing their practice.

New times call for new thinking – about the length of documents, about publication costs, about web-casting and videoconferencing, and about revising the periodicity of committee meetings as necessary.

They call also for more support from States Parties in the form of extrabudgetary funding to the dedicated funds for international assistance and to strengthen their Secretariats.

None of this takes away from the significance of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Indonesia and authorities for expressing support to UNESCO through a 10-million dollar contribution in extra-budgetary funding that was just announced. Thank you for this support to UNESCO's programs, which will in part benefit intangible cultural heritage. It is a wonderful occasion and we can be proud of what UNESCO is doing.

Intangible cultural heritage is our bridge from the past to the future.

It is the way we understand the world and the means by which we shape it.

It is a foundation of wisdom and knowledge upon which to build sustainable development for all.

Intangible cultural heritage is the precious possession of communities, groups and individuals – only they can safeguard it and pass it on to generations to come.

Our role, as international organizations and Governments, is to support these efforts in every way we can.

I thank you for your commitment to this very important work that we are doing together.