

**Hundred and fifty-seventh Session**

157 EX/8  
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**INTERIM REPORT ON THE PROJECT CONCERNING THE  
PROCLAMATION BY UNESCO OF MASTERPIECES OF THE ORAL  
AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF HUMANITY**

**SUMMARY**

The present document has been prepared by the Director-General pursuant to 155 EX/Decision 3.5.5, which invited him to submit a report to it at its 157th session on the progress of the project relating to the proclamation by UNESCO of “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.

Decision required: paragraph 8.

## INTRODUCTION

1. In application of resolution 23 adopted by the General Conference at its 29th session, the Director-General proposed to the Executive Board at its 154th session the introduction of international recognition and criteria for the selection of cultural spaces or forms of popular and traditional cultural expression that might be proclaimed by UNESCO to be masterpieces of the oral heritage of humanity (154 EX/13). During the debates, the speakers made a point of stressing that the oral heritage is inseparable from the intangible heritage, and the Executive Board thus requested that the phrase “and intangible” be added in the title between “oral” and “heritage”. The distinction to be bestowed was from then on entitled “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.

2. Furthermore, by 154 EX/Decision 3.5.1, the Executive Board invited the Director-General: (i) to establish, in consultation with all the regions, more precise criteria for choosing cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression with a view to proclaiming them “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity” and to define a detailed selection procedure and funding methods, with a view to their submission to the Board at its 155th session; (ii) to study means of disseminating, preserving and protecting these immaterial or intangible cultural spaces for the benefit of the communities of origin; and (iii) to seek public or private donors for the creation of a prize that would be awarded by UNESCO in order to ensure the preservation and promotion of cultural spaces or forms of oral cultural expression proclaimed “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.

3. The Director-General submitted to the Executive Board at its 155th session a new draft of the Regulations relating to the proclamation by UNESCO of “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity” (155 EX/15 Add. and Corr). The Executive Board adopted the Regulations and invited the Director-General: (i) to establish procedures for the proclamation of “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”, taking all necessary steps to implement the above-mentioned Regulations and, if appropriate, in association with certain aspects of the Memory of the World programme linked to the oral heritage; (ii) to seek public or private donors in order to obtain extrabudgetary resources which will serve to encourage the creation of prizes or the work of safeguarding, protecting and revitalizing cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression once they have been proclaimed “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”; and (iii) to submit a report to it at its 157th session on the progress of this project.

## **ACTION UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE 155TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

4. After the 155th session of the Executive Board the Secretariat conducted consultations on the membership of the international jury responsible for evaluating submissions for the proclamation of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity, taking into account the need to select qualified individuals, to ensure the most equitable possible geographical representation and to achieve as good a balance as possible between creators and experts and between the various disciplines represented. The Secretariat was also concerned to ensure adequate representation of women and young professionals. On the basis of these consultations, the Director-General has decided to designate for four years, as of 1 September 1999, the following individuals as members of the jury:

Ms Ugné Karvelis (Lithuania)  
Writer, specialist in oral literature

Ms Zulma Yugar (Bolivia)  
Director-General of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport

Ms Munojat Yulchieva (Uzbekistan)  
Singer of traditional music

Mr Kwabena Nketia (Ghana)  
Director, International Centre for African Music and Dance, University of Ghana

Mr Juan Goytisolo (Spain)  
Writer

Ms Dawnhee Yim (Republic of Korea)  
Professor of History and Dean of Women's Studies, University of Dongguk

Mr Ralph Regenvanu (Vanuatu)  
Director, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, anthropologist

Mr Richard Kurin (United States of America)  
Director, Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution

Mr Hasan M. Al-Naboodah (United Arab Emirates)  
Director, Zayed Centre for Heritage and History.

5. On the basis of the recommendations of the meeting of experts held by UNESCO in Marrakesh (June 1997), which took as a case study the Jemaa-El-Fna Square, and on the basis of the consultations undertaken by the Cultural Heritage Division (Intangible Heritage Unit) with specialists in every region and concerned NGOs, a draft guide to the preparation of files for the submission of candidatures was produced. The draft will be examined by the international jury, which will submit it to the Director-General for approval after amendment and adoption, in accordance with the Regulations relating to the proclamation by UNESCO of "masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity".

6. The Secretariat has contacted several States that might provide extrabudgetary funds to strengthen the implementation of the project. On the one hand, some governments have made a written commitment to provide financial support to activities in the field of the safeguarding, protection and revitalization of the oral and intangible heritage: Italy, United States and Japan. On the other hand, during his visits to the Republic of Korea and Bolivia, the Director-General signed letters of intent for the creation of prizes that could be awarded to "masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity". Likewise, the United Arab Emirates warmly support the idea of creating a Prize on this theme. The regulations concerning the prizes will be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration and approval at its 159th session.

7. The issues surrounding the means of disseminating, preserving and protecting immaterial or intangible cultural spaces for the benefit of the communities of origin (154 EX/Decision 3.5.1, para. 12) were studied at an international Conference organized jointly with the Smithsonian Institution and held in Washington D.C. (United States) in June 1999. The experts taking part in the Conference analysed the findings of the regional studies carried out since 1995 on the application of the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989) and proposed to the Director-General a plan of action to be implemented in the framework of UNESCO's Programme and Budget for 2000-2001 (30 C/5).

8. Taking into account the various elements mentioned above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 157 EX/8,
2. Noting with satisfaction the information communicated to it by the Director-General on the initial steps already taken by the Secretariat since its 155th session,
3. Welcomes the interest shown by several States in the safeguarding, protection and revitalization of the oral and intangible heritage, in the form of the allocation of funds;
4. Takes note of the composition, as decided by the Director-General, of the jury responsible for evaluating submissions that could be accepted by UNESCO as masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity;
5. Invites the Director-General to continue to seek extrabudgetary funds from the public and private sectors that could be used to encourage the creation of prizes or the funding of actions to safeguard, protect and revitalize “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.