

International Expert Meeting
Intangible Cultural Heritage: Priority Domains
for an International Convention

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 22-24 January 2002

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Noting with satisfaction* the adoption of 31C/Res.30 which, on the one hand, stipulates that the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage 'should be regulated by means of an international convention' and, consequently, invites, on the other hand, the Director-General 'to submit to the General Conference at its 32nd session a report on the situation of intangible cultural heritage 'calling for standard-setting and on the possible scope of such standard-setting, together with a preliminary draft international convention' ;
2. *Duly taking into account:*
 - i) the views expressed by a large majority of Member States at the 31st session of UNESCO General Conference on the necessity to elaborate an international standard-setting instrument enabling the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, inspired by the 1972 Convention on the protection of Natural and Cultural World Heritage; and
 - ii) the opinion expressed by some delegates during the 161th session of the Executive Board and the 31st session of the General Conference on the need to first further clarify the concept of 'intangible cultural heritage' and, second, to ensure close co-operation with other international bodies in order to avoid overlaps;
3. *Noting* however, with the same utmost attention, that :
 - i) the specific nature and needs of intangible cultural heritage differ significantly from the elements of heritage covered by the 1972 Convention;
 - ii) consequently, the useful model offered by the Convention requires certain adaptations;
4. *Pleased with* the unanimous adoption of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, greeting with gratitude the efforts of the Director-General for this outcome, and bearing in mind that the provisions of this Declaration are relevant to the elaboration of the future convention ;

5. *Aware* of the value, the importance, and the significance of intangible cultural heritage as a fundamental factor in maintaining cultural diversity world-wide, especially with regard to increasing globalization;
6. *Recognising* that the action plan, approved by the International Round Table on 'Intangible Cultural Heritage – Working Definitions', organized by UNESCO (14-17 March 2001, Turin, Italy), and examined by the Executive Board at its 161th session and the General Conference at its 31th session, defines intangible cultural heritage as follows : "peoples' learned processes along with the knowledge, skills and creativity that inform and are developed by them, the products they create, and the resources, spaces and other aspects of social and natural context necessary to their sustainability; these processes provide living communities with a sense of continuity with previous generations and are important to cultural identity, as well as to the safeguarding of cultural diversity and creativity of humanity";
7. *Congratulating* the Director-General for the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and the impact it has had upon the agents/creators concerned;
8. *Having evaluated* the experience drawn from the first Proclamation and from the detailed criteria elaborated by the International Jury on the basis of the preceding experience;
9. *Having examined* the activities developed and measures taken by governments as well as by international and regional intergovernmental organizations, in the different domains of intangible cultural heritage;
10. *Taking into account* the following conclusions of the present meeting of experts :
 - (i) A flexible conception of safeguarding should be adopted, one that :
 - respects the internal dynamics of the particular cultural expression, the diversity of all expressions of intangible cultural heritage expressions, and of the contexts in which they evolve.
 - requires a variety of approaches in different domains, including training, raising public awareness, public and private subsidising, methods of documentation and the creation of archives ;
 - emphasizes the importance of the preservation of intangible cultural heritage as testimony of the cultural diversity of humanity, a source of creative inspiration, and as a potential resource for sustainable development ; and
 - meets the three criteria inherent in the action plan adopted at the Turin International Round Table:
 - it should engage the active agency of relevant culture bearers in all stages of project identification, resource allocation, planning, and execution;
 - it should be based on a people- and process-centred understanding of intangible cultural heritage;
 - it should mobilize international efforts aiming at the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and based on universally recognized human rights, principles of equity and sustainability, and on respect for all cultures that equally respect other cultures ;

(ii) during the procedure of preparing the future international convention, the following should be highlighted:

- a) the future convention should be considered an important element in the implementation of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity ;
- b) policies concerned with the safeguarding and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage should pay special attention to the fact that this heritage often exists in contexts that have been profoundly modified from political, economical, social or environmental points of view ;
- c) better use of modern technologies in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage ensuring their accessibility to actors/creators and local agencies should be fostered ;
- d) intangible cultural heritage, while requiring a specific approach and methodology, should be considered as closely linked to physical dimensions of cultural and natural heritage ;
- e) actions concerned with the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, should encourage innovation and creation ;

(iii) The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage should encourage :

- a) the identification, documentation, transmission and revitalization of different elements of intangible cultural heritage, together with the implementation of policies and programmes -at local, national and regional levels- aimed to improve safeguarding, disseminating, transmitting, revitalizing and promotion of intangible cultural heritage ;
- b) the coherence and articulation of the cultural, environmental, social and educational dimensions of its relating policies. The role and responsibility of States is to provide a framework allowing for complementary and synergetic interventions of the different actors involved in safeguarding actions (governmental and local authorities, NGOs, local communities) and to encourage partnerships ;

(iv) The future convention should integrate a mechanism to enable national and international communities to reach a better understanding of various aspects of intangible cultural heritage, identifying these aspects on the basis of internal criteria (importance of the heritage to the identity-making of a social group) and external criteria (its compliance with human rights and its capacity to foster intercultural dialogue).

(v) The meeting reinforces the crucial link between cultural diversity and the maintenance of biodiversity, with special reference to indigenous peoples as stipulated particularly in article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We, the participants to the international meeting of experts ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage: Priority Domains for an International Convention’, recommend UNESCO to:

- A) *Actively pursue* the legal process leading to the elaboration of an international convention for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage as rapidly as possible;

[Framework of a Convention]

- B) Utilise and draw upon the definition of intangible cultural heritage established at the Turin International Round Table (March 2001) in the international convention ;

- C) In view of the need to safeguard intangible cultural heritage at a national level:

- i) *Underline* that each State will determine, consulting with non-governmental organizations and concerned communities, and following criteria that it judges appropriate, the domains for protection, being free to revise them periodically or as deemed necessary.
- ii) *Take into consideration*, in order to facilitate the identification of intangible cultural heritage domains to be covered at a national level, the scope of domains suggested during the Turin International Round-Table (oral cultural heritage ; languages ; performing arts and festive events ; social rituals and practices ; cosmologies and knowledge systems : beliefs and practices about nature) ;

- D) Concerning the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage at an international level :

- i) *Maintain* a close link with the Proclamation Programme of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in order to take into account the experience already acquired on the basis of the proclaimed masterpieces; and more particularly, the detailed selection criteria drawn up by the Extraordinary International Jury Meeting (Elche, 21-23 September 2001); the safeguarding seek the advice of NGOs and local agencies to support Member States in determining domains of intangible cultural heritage to be safeguarded.
- ii) *Modify* the terminology used for the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, replacing “oral and intangible heritage of humanity” by “intangible cultural heritage” ; and
- iii) *Replace* the definition of this term used in the Proclamation Program by the one adopted during the Turin Round-Table, in order to harmonize the terminology and concepts used in the Proclamation Program with those of the future international convention ;
- iv) *Continue* to further enrich the Proclamation Program with a view to drawing on the practical experience gained in this program for safeguarding and protecting cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression at the local and national levels for the benefit of elaborating the international convention and intensifying co operation and cultural exchanges;
- v) *Consider* the relationship between the development of an international convention on intangible cultural heritage and the program of the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in light of the evaluation of the functioning and effects of the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage on the occasion of its 30th anniversary.

[Approach to be taken]

- E) Ensure that the objectives of the instrument already approved by the General Conference at its 31st session be respected in the preliminary draft of the international convention ;
- F) *Continue* co-operation with other relevant intergovernmental organizations, each with its own constituent domains of competence, and avoid overlaps;
- G) *Address*, within the framework of the international convention, the question of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage from a holistic cultural perspective;
- H) *Ensure* that the process of elaborating the international convention be undertaken with the full involvement of all parties concerned, especially at the grass-roots level, respecting the agency, dignity and significant rights of the creators and sustainers of intangible cultural heritage, and ensuring that adequate measures be taken to support their socio-economic well-being;
- I) *Remain attentive* to different views, constraints and realities of Member States while elaborating the international convention with a view to its acceptability to as many Member States as possible;
- J) *Ensure* conceptual and terminological coherence and continuity throughout all stages of the elaboration and the conclusion of the international convention;
- K) *Ensure* that the international convention encourages and facilitates the adoption of national legislation in the field of intangible cultural heritage while encouraging activities to implement national measures;

[Preparation Process]

- L) *Convene*, in compliance with the adopted timetable, a restricted drafting group, consisting mainly of legal experts, to draft a general framework and possible scope for the future convention, together with a preliminary draft which will be submitted to the General Conference at its 32d session (October-November 2003). Members of the drafting group are identified by the Director General in consultation with the Chairman of the present expert meeting in order to ensure the continuity of the reflection engaged;
- M) *Convene* in the following order and in compliance with the adopted timetable, the following meetings:
 - (i) a meeting of the restricted drafting group
 - (ii) an international meeting of experts (category VI)
 - (iii) an *ad hoc* working group of the representatives of the State members, in order to examine the political acceptability of the preliminary draft Convention

- N) *Encourage* Member States, from now on, to adopt or to develop policies relating to intangible cultural heritage and to start drawing up national registries in order to ensure the identification and safeguarding of this cultural heritage.
- Q) To foster the development of an ethical framework for safeguarding and disseminating intangible cultural heritage;
- R) Establish a brief operational glossary for the purpose of developing an international convention on intangible cultural heritage.