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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the second session of the Intergovernmental Committee  
for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

**Tokyo, Japan, 3 September 2007**

Mr Minister of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology,  
Mr Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Mr President of the General Conference of UNESCO,  
Mr Chairperson of the General Assembly of the States Parties,  
Mr Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Committee  
for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and immense pleasure for me to welcome you to my own country, Japan, for the second session of the Intergovernmental Committee.

I should like, first of all, to thank the Japanese authorities, in particular the Minister of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology, Mr Bunmei Ibuki, and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Itsunori Onodera, who honour us with their presence today, for their warm welcome and their efforts in organizing this meeting.

This is yet another example of the leading role that Japan has played for many years now in promoting the intangible cultural heritage.

Indeed, well before it ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, of which it was a committed architect, Japan had engaged in concrete and effective work to safeguard the various living manifestations of its own cultural heritage.

It has also shown an outstanding spirit of generosity and solidarity beyond its borders, aware that we are collectively responsible for preserving this valuable and fragile heritage.

On three occasions, Japan's intangible heritage has been recognized internationally, as three forms of traditional theatre have been proclaimed by UNESCO masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity: Nôgaku in 2001, Nigyo Johruri Bunraku in 2003 and Kabuki in 2005.

It is therefore fitting that the second ordinary session of the Committee, which has significant implications for the future implementation of the Convention, is being held here.

Today, I am in the company of some very eminent persons, whose unfailing loyalty and support for our common cause I wish to commend. They are the President of the General Conference of UNESCO, Mr bin Jaafar bin Hassan, the

Chairperson of the Committee and Ambassador of Japan to UNESCO, Mr Seiichi Kondo, and Mr Bedjaoui, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria and Chairperson of the General Assembly of the States Parties.

It is largely due to Mr Bedjaoui, and his patience and wisdom, that there is now a major convention on the world's cultural diversity. His country hosted the Committee's very first session, and the work begun there was then pursued to completion in China at the Committee's first extraordinary session.

I also commend and thank all States that have ratified the Convention and all those which have contributed so substantially to the Committee's debates since its first session in November 2006. Finally, I should like to welcome those who are preparing to become States Parties to the Convention.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Your presence here is proof, if proof were needed, that the intangible cultural heritage is central to the international community's questions about the consequences of what is generally known as globalization. How, in this globalized world, can we preserve that which imparts a sense of identity and cultural continuity to communities, groups and individuals. I am referring to this living heritage whose fragility gives cause for concern but whose richness is a source of pride.

For more than 25 years, UNESCO has been endeavouring – with some success, albeit modest in comparison with the prestige of world heritage – to alert the international community to the importance of the living cultural heritage, which not only attests to the impressive wealth of human cultures, but also guarantees that cultural diversity can persist into the future.

Through the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO's General Conference in 2003, the Member States wished to display this new awareness and commitment to act jointly before it was too late.

To date, 79 countries have ratified it and have resolved to formulate and implement policies and legislation to ensure the viability of this heritage. Among these undertakings, the establishment of inventories and the launch of awareness-raising campaigns hold pride of place.

We all know, however, that the Convention also requires greater efforts to promote both financial and technical international cooperation.

Accordingly, to ensure that the Convention is genuinely operational, a number of procedures must be drawn up by your Committee and submitted for adoption at the next session of the General Assembly, in June 2008.

Many issues arose during your in-depth discussions in Algeria and China, and they have been documented carefully by the Secretariat for consideration at this session.

This is a crucial stage in preparations for the implementation of the Convention, the objective being to launch its operational phase as early as the closure of the next session of the General Assembly, at the very beginning of summer 2008.

The session's agenda is both heavy and complex. One of the most important items of the agenda is without doubt the discussion of the operational guidelines for inscription on the lists of the Convention. The document drafted by the Secretariat as the basis for your debates sets out the procedures that might be followed.

As to arrangements for the inclusion of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity in the Representative List, a document drafted by the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs has been distributed to you, as you requested, as have the comments of States Parties received by the Secretariat. I hope that all of these documents will assist you in deciding on the most appropriate form of inclusion.

Following the adoption of the financial regulations of the special account for the intangible cultural heritage, three documents on the use of the account are also submitted to you for consideration and decision.

In accordance with the decisions taken at the first extraordinary session, documents are also submitted to you on the arrangements for communities or their representatives, practitioners and experts, centres of expertise, research institutes and NGOs to participate in the implementation of the Convention, on the graphic charter to be considered for the emblem of the Convention and on the establishment of the subsidiary monitoring body.

Your work will therefore be particularly important to the future of the Convention, and I am certain that, as in the past, you will be determined to spare no effort to reach wise, considered decisions.

Therefore, I shall not delay further the inception of your discussions and I congratulate you in advance on the tangible results that you will achieve.