Expert meeting on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and
sustainable development at the national level

Istanbul, Turkey, 29 September to 1 October 2014

**Background note and agenda**

At the request of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO is organizing an expert meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, from 29 September to 1 October 2014, generously funded and hosted by the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO. The aim of the meeting is to draw up preliminary recommendations for a possible new chapter of the Operational Directives on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development at the national level.

**Background and context of the meeting**

**The importance of intangible cultural heritage for sustainable development**

**Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has largely been absent from the mainstream sustainable development debate despite its paramount importance to societies and its acknowledged potential to contribute to social, economic and environmental goals. ICH, and the important repository of knowledge it constitutes, is crucial to allowing communities and groups to respond to their basic needs, while providing them a sense of identity and continuity. ICH is also a source of innovation and enables the development of creative approaches to respond to new challenges facing societies in constant adaptation.**

**The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by the international community in 2000 make no specific reference to ICH or even, more generally, to culture. Yet, since that date, the importance of the linkages between ICH and sustainable development has increasingly been recognized. ICH constitutes the foundation of the spiritual values, lifestyles and livelihoods of communities worldwide. As such, it is essential for social cohesion and peace, and its safeguarding strengthens communities’ fundamental rights of access to adequate nutrition, clean water, health care, decent work and quality education.**

**‘Constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history’, ICH also constitutes a major source of resilience, creativity and renewal for our societies. In today’s world, characterized by profound environmental, economic and social changes, this asset is capital.**

Sustainable development within the 2003 Convention

**The concept of ‘sustainable development’ is at the heart of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, whose preamble recognizes ‘the importance of the intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a**

**guarantee of sustainable development’. Article 2.1 of the Convention, dedicated to the definition of ICH, stipulates that ‘consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.’ In light of the post-2015 development agenda currently under elaboration, this means that the scope of the Convention extends to those practices, expressions and knowledge that are compatible with the three fundamental principles of human rights, equality and sustainability (see report** [***Realizing the Future We Want for All***](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTTreport.pdf)**, based on the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference).**

**In addition, the concepts of ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ were integrated into the Operational Directives for the implementation of the Convention when they were first adopted by the General Assembly of the States Parties in 2010. Sustainable development was included in Chapter II concerning the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund. Paragraph 73, discussing contributions to the Fund, stipulates that ‘No contributions may be accepted from entities whose activities are not compatible […] with the requirements of sustainable development’.**

**Sustainable development was further integrated in the Directives with the adoption in 2012 of Chapter IV concerning raising awareness about ICH, including the use of the emblem of the Convention. Paragraph 111 stipulates that ‘The media are encouraged to contribute to raising awareness among the public at large about the diversity of intangible cultural heritage as a means to foster […] sustainable development’. Two paragraphs of the same chapter relate specifically to tourism and commercial activity: paragraph 102 (e) indicates that awareness-raising actions about ICH should not ‘lead to over-commercialization or to unsustainable tourism that may put at risk the intangible cultural heritage concerned.’ And paragraph 117 stipulates that ‘Particular attention should be paid to avoiding commercial misappropriation, to managing tourism in a sustainable way, to finding a proper balance between the interests of the commercial party, the public administration and the cultural practitioners, and to ensuring that the commercial use does not distort the meaning and purpose of the intangible cultural heritage for the community concerned.’**

**The presence of sustainable development in the text of the Convention and its gradual integration into the Operational Directives reflect UNESCO’s broader effort to integrate culture into the international agenda for sustainable development (see:** [**http://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-sustainable-development**](http://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-sustainable-development)**). In 2013, the Chengdu International Conference on Intangible Cultural Heritage organized in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention called upon the international community to pursue its efforts to ‘renew its commitment to the Convention’s fundamental premise that intangible cultural heritage is a guarantee of sustainable development’ (see d**[**ocument ITH/13/EXP/8**](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/ITH-13-EXP-8-EN.docx)**).**

**Nevertheless, as pointed out in the report of the recent evaluation by the Internal Oversight Service of UNESCO’s Standard-setting work of the Culture Sector ‘although the link between ICH and sustainable development is generally considered to be important, clarifying the nature of this link, identifying its potential both for sustainable development and for the viability of ICH and identifying the potential risks that development, if not sustainable, holds for ICH are still very much work in progress’ (see document** [ITH/13/8.COM/INF.5.c](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/IOS-EVS-PI-129_REV.-FR.pdf)).

A new chapter for the Operational Directives

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has discussed the links between safeguarding and sustainable development on numerous occasions during its successive sessions. Such debates were often in the context of specific nominations for inscription on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding or the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, or in its examination of the periodic reports submitted by States Parties on their implementation of the Convention at the national level. The relations among safeguarding, commercialization and sustainable development were the particular focus of debate during its seventh and eighth sessions (see document [ITH/13/8.COM/13.a](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/ITH-13-8.COM-13.a-EN.doc)). Those debates did not, however, lead to the adoption of systematic recommendations or a comprehensive perspective on the topic.

During its eighth session (Baku, 2013), the Committee consequently recommended that ‘a new chapter of the Operational Directives on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development at the national level be drawn up’ (Decision 8.COM 13.a). In order to initiate this important work, the Secretariat has organized the present meeting, generously funded and hosted by the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO.

**Goal and participants**

The goal of the meeting is therefore to draw up preliminary recommendations for a possible new chapter of the Operational Directives. Those Directives should advise States Parties, in the most complete and concrete way possible, about the measures they could implement to give real effect and substance to the Convention’s potential as a tool for sustainable development. Within their existing statutory obligations as parties to the Convention to safeguard intangible cultural heritage at the national level (Chapter III of the Convention), how can States Parties better take account of the linkages between intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development, fully integrating them in the formulation of policies and the implementation of development strategies?

This meeting brings together twelve experts from different UNESCO Member States as well as four members of the Secretariat. This meeting is organized as a category VI expert meeting, in UNESCO’s terminology, which means that the experts participate in a private capacity and not as representatives of any government or organization. Meetings of such an expert committee are private and its recommendations are not ascribed by name to any participant. During the meeting the participants will not make formal presentations but will instead be asked to review, comment and enhance a set of draft directives elaborated by the Secretariat.

The conclusions of the meeting will be presented for debate to the ninth session of the Committee (24 to 28 November 2014). A second revised set of draft directives would then be proposed for adoption to the tenth session of the Committee in 2015 and, if adopted by the Committee, submitted to the General Assembly in 2016, as the body authorized to approve Operational Directives for the Convention.

**Programme and format**

**The expert meeting will be composed of six plenary sessions over the course of three days. The opening and closing sessions will be dedicated respectively to the introduction of the meeting and its conclusions. The other four sessions will aim at reviewing the first draft of Operational Directives elaborated by the Secretariat. Each session will focus in turn on the linkages between ICH and one of the four core dimensions of sustainable development defined in the report** [***Realizing the Future We Want for All***](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTTreport.pdf)**: inclusive social development, environmental sustainability, inclusive economic development, and peace and security.**

Preliminary programme

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| **Monday, 29 September 2014** |
| **09:30 – 10:00** | **Opening** | Prof. Öcal Oğuz, President, Turkish National Commission for UNESCOMs Cécile Duvelle, Secretary of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Chief of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Section, UNESCO |
| **10:00 – 10:30** | **Introduction of the participants** |  |
| **10:30 – 11:00** | **Presentation of the objectives, working methods and agenda** | Mr Frank Proschan, Chief of the Programme Implementation Unit, Intangible Cultural Heritage Section, UNESCO |
| **11:00 – 12:30** | **Overview: Intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development** |  |
| **12:30 – 14:30** | **Lunch** |
| **14:30 – 18:00 (coffee break 16:00)** | **Session 1: Safeguarding ICH and inclusive social development** | Moderator: Ms Adriana Molano Arenas |
| **Tuesday, 30 September 2014** |
| **09:30 – 12:30** | **Session 2: Safeguarding ICH and environmental sustainability** | Moderator: Mr Chao Gejin |
| **12:30 – 14:30** | **Lunch** |
| **14:30 – 18:00 (coffee break 16:00)** | **Session 3: Safeguarding ICH and inclusive economic development** | Moderator: Mr Lovemore C.J. Mazibuko |
| **Wednesday, 1 October 2014** |
| **09:30 – 12:30** | **Session 4: Safeguarding ICH and peace and security** | Moderator: Mr Ahmed Skounti |
| **12:30 – 14:30** | **Lunch** |  |
| **14:30 – 18:00 (coffee break 16:00)** | **Conclusions, next steps and closing** |  |