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**PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN  
ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL CENTRE FOR THE RESEARCH AND  
SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE,  
IN CHINA, AS A CATEGORY 2 CENTRE  
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO**

**SUMMARY**

This item has been included in the provisional agenda of the 179th session of the Executive Board at the request of China.

An explanatory note together with a proposed decision are attached.

Decision proposed: paragraph 18.

## Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific region possesses rich intangible cultural heritage, with many items having been proclaimed “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO between 2001 and 2005. Many countries in this region have accumulated successful experiences in safeguarding such heritage. Meanwhile, with the rapid development of regional economies, economic globalization, urbanization and the transformation of people’s lifestyle and attitudes, many elements of intangible cultural heritages are confronted with the danger of extinction.

2. With a history of 5,000 years, China boasts rich intangible cultural heritage. With the effective efforts of the Chinese Government at all levels and support from all walks of life, China has obtained some successful experience in the area of safeguarding and researching intangible cultural heritage in recent years. As a developing country, China has witnessed rapid economic development and social stability in the last decade. In this time, the Chinese Government has been increasingly allocating its resources to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, and increasing its cooperation with other Asia-Pacific countries in the safeguarding and research of intangible cultural heritage. An effective mechanism has taken shape with regard to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in such aspects as laws and regulations, policy, administration and management, research, professional training and personnel training. The Chinese Government hereby proposes to create in China an Asia-Pacific Regional Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO, with the purpose of further developing the safeguarding and research of intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region and strengthening multilateral, regional and international cooperation at all levels.

3. The Asia-Pacific Regional Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter referred to as the Centre) will provide the following support for the Asia-Pacific region:

- (a) to support the safeguarding of elements that have been inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding;
- (b) to support Member States in the Asia-Pacific region in their safeguarding efforts at the national level, including the drawing up, in a manner geared to their own situations, of one or more inventories of the intangible heritage present in the territories of those States;
- (c) to support programmes, projects and activities carried out at the national and regional levels aimed at safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region;
- (d) to support multilateral, regional and international cooperation and promote capacity-building through exchanges and personnel training at the international and regional level, improve the management of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the region and fulfil the objective of sustainable development.

## Objective and functions

4. The overall objective of the Asia-Pacific Regional Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage is to facilitate safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the region:

- (a) to coordinate with UNESCO in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and strengthening institutions for intangible cultural heritage safeguarding, research and training, with the Asia-Pacific region as the key service region;
- (b) to assist in safeguarding elements that have been inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding;

- (c) to provide capacity-building with regard to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, such as training administrative staff, local government officials, educators and technicians;
- (d) to promote the visibility of intangible cultural heritage and improve the public awareness of safeguarding;
- (e) to strengthen cooperation with UNESCO and with related institutions in other countries and regions.

5. The main functions of the Centre will be:

- (a) to coordinate activities that will lead to improved safeguarding and research of intangible cultural heritage in the region;
- (b) to create conditions for effective participation of Member States in international ICH safeguarding in the context of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- (c) to assist States Parties to the Convention in their implementation of the Convention at the national level, and in their preparation of nominations to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding;
- (d) to organize specialized training, including short-term and long-term (degree) training, and combining theoretical and practical training, for those involved in safeguarding intangible heritage;
- (e) to host academic symposiums and international or regional conferences of various types and organize workshops concerning the intangible cultural heritage of humanity;
- (f) to support cultural policy analysis and to strengthen knowledge in the region about relevant international legal instruments;
- (g) to collect and publicize with the help of the Internet information on safeguarding activities in the region.

### **The nature and status of the Centre**

6. According to Chinese law, the Centre will be a non-profit and independent institution. It will be a category 2 centre that functions under the auspices of UNESCO and mainly serves UNESCO Member States in the Asia-Pacific region. In the initial phase of development, the Centre will carry out its work with the help of the China Academy of Art and the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Centre and other related institutions in China. Professionals, scholars, experts (including UNESCO experts) of the host institution and other institutions will be involved in conducting the activities of the Centre.

### **Governance of the Centre**

7. The governance framework for the Centre includes:

- a Governing Board to guide the activities of the Centre and to oversee its operations and management;
- an Executive Committee whose members are chosen from the Governing Board, and representing the Board between meetings;

- an Advisory Committee offering technical advice on the Centre's training and research projects;
- a Secretariat, functioning as headquarters of the Centre, shall be composed of a Secretary and any other staff required for the effective operations of the Centre.

**The Governing Board shall:**

- (a) approve the constitution of the Centre;
- (b) decide on the composition of the Executive Committee;
- (c) approve the initial development strategy and working methods of the Centre necessary in the early phases of work to coordinate the efforts of its principal founding institutions;
- (d) approve the long-term and medium-term programmes of the Centre;
- (e) approve the annual work plan and budget of the Centre, including staffing provisions, infrastructure requirements and operating costs;
- (f) examine the annual reports submitted by the Secretary of the Centre;
- (g) issue the rules and regulations and determine the financial, administrative and personnel management procedures of the Centre.

The Governing Board shall meet in ordinary session at regular intervals, at least once every calendar year. It shall meet in extraordinary session if summoned by the Chairperson, either at his/her own initiative or at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO, or at the request of half of its members.

The Governing Board shall adopt its own rules and procedures. For its first meeting, the procedure shall be established by the Government of China and UNESCO.

8. The Governing Board, under the direction of its Chairperson, a representative of the Government of China, shall be composed of the following members:

- a representative of the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China;
- a representative of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO;
- representatives of UNESCO Member States in the Asia-Pacific region;
- a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO;
- representatives of Chinese universities, research institutes and local authorities;
- representatives of any other intergovernmental organizations or international non-governmental organizations, making a substantial contribution to the annual budget of the Centre, who can be accorded a seat by decision of the Governing Board.

9. The Governing Board shall determine the composition of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may include up to six members, all of which are chosen from within the Governing Board, as follows:

- the Chairperson of the Governing Board;
- one representative of the Ministry of Culture of China;

- one representative of the Director-General of UNESCO;
- one to three ad hoc members of the Governing Board, to be named by the latter.

The Secretary of the Governing Board shall handle the day-to-day business of the Centre and he/she shall participate in the Executive Committee as a non-voting member.

10. The Secretariat (functioning as the Headquarters of the Centre) shall be composed of a Secretary, appointed by the Chairperson of the Governing Board in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO, and any other staff required for the effective operations of the Centre.

### **Capabilities of relevant institutions of China to host the Asia-Pacific Regional Centre for the Research and Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

11. The China National Academy of Art, which includes the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Centre, has the capability of training professionals in planning and implementing ICH safeguarding and research. The China National Academy of Art, which belongs to the Ministry of Culture, is an accredited organization, founded in 1951, which integrates art research and education in China. There are nearly 30 professional research institutes including 300 experts. It is devoted to recording, collecting, preserving and studying Chinese traditional and ethnic culture. From 2001 to 2005, the China National Academy of Art was responsible for submitting to UNESCO nominations of heritage for recognition as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

12. The China Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Centre is a new body established in 2005, under the China National Academy of Art. The Centre consists of a general administration department, the application and project management department, a training department, a department for the organization of exchange programmes, a department for policy research, and a database management centre. The Safeguarding Centre's main task is the undertaking of relevant work for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage all over the country. This includes organizing the evaluation of nominations to the national list of protected intangible heritage of first and second level, implementing consultations on safeguarding policy, organizing exhibitions, holding academic conferences, supporting academic publications and the training of personnel, and spreading awareness among the general public about the protection of the national intangible cultural heritage.

13. The Graduate School of the China National Academy of Art aims at training researchers through formal education, including Ph.D. and Master's degrees, with a new degree programme established in 2006 for Safeguarding ICH. Meanwhile, the Graduate School actively organizes postgraduate courses of ICH safeguarding for cultural officers in different local bodies all over China. Such training combines theoretical and practical instruction, and includes both classroom training and field practicums. At present, postgraduate courses of ICH safeguarding have been held twice, a total of 40 senior managers participating in the courses. In addition, the China National Academy of Art and its China Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Centre actively organize workshops and other ICH training activities all over China, involving its own experts and other members of the Expert Committee on National Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding, which play a positive role in promoting ICH safeguarding.

### **Undertaking of the Government of China**

14. The Government of the People's Republic of China will take the necessary measures for the establishment of the Centre.

### **Financial arrangement of the Centre**

15. The Chinese side will provide the necessary staff, office space, facilities and equipment and will cover the regular operating costs, including the salaries of the Institute's staff and expenditure

for safeguarding work, training activities, research and publications. The Chinese side will provide annual funding of at least \$500,000 to cover the Centre's implementation of its activities and functions as well as its administrative costs (including communications, utilities and maintenance costs). The Chinese side will be responsible for the expenses of a feasibility study to be carried out by the Director-General. The Centre may, with the approval of the Governing Board, receive donations, gifts and bequests that will be used for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the region and for training, research and information activities.

16. The Chinese Government will actively seek support for the Institute from other international and national organizations. The Institute will welcome contributions made by the countries in the region and States Parties to the Intangible Heritage Convention in the form of secondment of experts and specialists and will seek UNESCO's assistance for training and other activities.

### **Cooperation with UNESCO**

17. UNESCO will not be legally or financially responsible for the Centre. Considering that the establishment of the Centre is in accordance with UNESCO's objective to strengthen disciplinary competence and basic capacity of all countries and regions, and the specification in Chapter V of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, viz. "support for programmes, projects and activities carried out at the national, subregional and regional levels aimed at the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage", it is suggested that UNESCO provide support in the form of expert consultation and technical assistance. The Centre, in close cooperation with UNESCO, will serve the region and other Member States in enhancing the implementation of the Intangible Heritage Convention and in contributing to the attainment of UNESCO's strategic objectives relating to safeguarding intangible heritage.

### **PROPOSED DRAFT DECISION**

18. In the light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 33 C/Resolution 90 of the UNESCO General Conference,
2. Further recalling Article 19.2 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in which States Parties "recognize that the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is of general interest to humanity, and to that end undertake to cooperate at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels",
3. Welcoming the proposal by the Government of China for the establishment in China of an Asia-Pacific regional centre for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO,
4. Having examined document 179 EX/44,
5. Considering that the establishment of the Centre might enhance capacity-building and safeguarding activities among countries in the region,
6. Taking note that two Member States, namely China and the Republic of Korea, have submitted proposals to the current session of the Executive Board to establish regional category 2 centres for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Asia and the Pacific,
7. Requests the Director-General to carry out a feasibility study on the proposed category 2 centre in line with the criteria for category 2 institutes adopted by the General Conference at its 33rd session and to present the results of study, indicating clearly the respective specializations of each centre, to the Executive Board, if possible at its 180th session.