**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**TRAINING OF TRAINERS WORKSHOP FOR CAPACITY BUILDING**

**Closing Remarks**

**Mr Josiah J. Mhlanga**

**Secretary General, Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO**

* Mr Frank Proschan, Programme Specialist, Intangible Cultural Heritage Section, UNESCO Headquarters**;**
* The Chairperson, Oral Tradition Association of Zimbabwe and its members,
* Distinguished Workshop trainers and trainees
* Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to begin by congratulating all of you for the commitment you have shown throughout this week in this training workshop.

I am aware that the last five days have been exhausting but also stimulating, as you tried to master the information that was exposed to you. When I received the bag with the three big books on the first day of the workshop and was told that it represented the materials that were going to be used during the five days, I became sceptical.

I must congratulate the facilitators for a job well done. I would also like to congratulate you for your willingness to learn. You now understand better the role you can play in the continent-wide effort to strengthen national capacities for implementing the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The knowledge you have gained regarding the convention will be shared in the coming months and years with policy makers and legislators so that they are aware of the obligations of States Parties to this convention. Such information should also be used to guide review and revision of legislation and policy by integrating ICH safeguarding. For those countries that have not yet ratified, it is our expectation that you will have the occasion to be ambassadors of this Convention to impress upon them the importance of safeguarding intangible heritage and the reasons for ratifying the convention.

The knowledge you have been given on the implementation of the Convention and the different modalities of implementation, including examples from different countries should give our ten regional experts a solid base for presenting workshops at which stakeholders throughout Africa can learn about safeguarding measures, projects and activities. This workshop provided you a platform for collective reflection on experiences and challenges in safeguarding ICH, including the importance of involving communities and other actors, and I know that you will serve as messengers to pass on the fundamental principles and objectives of the Convention to people in countries throughout the continent.

With particular reference to inventorying, the experiences shared about UNESCO pilot community based inventorying projects in countries such as Malawi, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia has provided you precious experience that can be used by experts, UNESCO Field Office colleagues, and national counterparts who will be implementing similar inventorying training and activities in the coming year.

As we learned on the first day of the workshop, at the last Intergovernmental Committee meeting in Nairobi, not one element from Africa was submitted to either of the Lists of the Convention. Inscription is not the purpose of the Convention, but it serves as an indicator of the overall implementation of the Convention among African States. I am pleased to see the UNESCO Secretariat’s concentrated efforts to strengthen capacities across the board, including the specific skills needed to prepare nomination. Yesterday, you were walked through sample files of Urgent Safeguarding List nominations which you examined. In my opinion such a simulation should already have you exploring what could possibly be nominated from the communities of your respective countries, and how you can assist others to gain the necessary skills so that they can prepare convincing and successful nominations.

With such knowledge and information, and with the capacity-building commitments that UNESCO has taken on, I am confident that we will begin to see, in the months and years to come, increasingly effective implementation of this 2003 Convention in many African countries and increasing participation by them in the mechanisms for international cooperation that the Convention establishes. And any State that has the will and the commitment to implement the Convention, but lacks the resources, should take heart that the Convention makes available International Assistance to support safeguarding efforts. You have all heard for yourselves how the Intangible Heritage Fund is under exploited, and I think you share my optimism that this strategy of capacity-building can make it possible for more and more States to gain access to those resources.

Together you can achieve more, and therefore networking and continued sharing of experiences will be crucial. This is true in every direction: regional experts need to communicate among themselves and with the UNESCO Field Offices; the Field Offices need to communicate with one another and with their national counterparts in the UNESCO National Commissions and Ministries concerned. And I am confident that we can continue to count on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Section to support that communication and to keep us all abreast of the latest developments in the Convention’s life.

As for the participants from Zimbabwe, you have a huge responsibility in front of you. We will look to you for the necessary activism that will make it possible for Zimbabwe to play a leading role on the international scene in the safeguarding of ICH and implementation of the 2003 Convention, both here at home and at the international level. I hope that I speak on behalf of all of the Zimbabwe participants in thanking UNESCO for deciding to organize this important regional workshop here in our country, and in so doing to allow us to benefit so generously from the expertise gathered here in this room, from throughout the continent and beyond. I know that our Zimbabwean members have enjoyed stimulating interactions with colleagues from many other countries, and I trust that the enjoyment was mutual, as visitors came to understand our own perspectives and experiences.

Finally, I hope we have been good hosts. I hope you have been able to see and experience a bit of Zimbabwe through the eyes of Harare. I hope you can come again.

Once again, my congratulations to you all and I wish you all safe journeys.