

Hundred and sixty-fourth Session

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**STUDY WITH A VIEW TO THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF CONSOLIDATED ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT CONCERNING
THE “PROCLAMATION OF MASTERPIECES OF THE ORAL
AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF HUMANITY”**

SUMMARY

Pursuant to 161 EX/Decision 3.4.3, the Director-General submits to the Executive Board for its approval a study with a view to the establishment of consolidated administrative and financial procedures for the implementation of the project concerning the “Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”. The Director-General also informs the Board of progress made in establishing national organs for the protection of the intangible heritage, extending the database and setting up for that purpose an audio/video library of the masterpieces proclaimed.

Decision required: paragraph 20.

I. BACKGROUND

1. In accordance with the Regulations relating to the proclamation by UNESCO of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity, approved by the Executive Board (155 EX/Decision 3.5.5), the Director-General designated, in August 1999, the nine members of the International Jury for the Proclamation. On 15 June 2000 the Director-General convened an extraordinary meeting of the Jury, followed immediately by a meeting for contact and dialogue between the Jury members and representatives of Member States from all regions. Pursuant to 160 EX/Decision 3.5.3 by which the Executive Board approved an increase in the number of jury members from nine to 18, the Director-General appointed in January 2001 nine new members to the Jury responsible for evaluating candidature files in preparation for the first Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

2. At its 154th, 155th, 157th and 160th sessions, the Executive Board requested the Director-General to continue his efforts to encourage Member States and public and private donors to work towards the safeguard, revitalization and promotion of examples of the heritage to be proclaimed by UNESCO “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”, through extrabudgetary resources and the creation of prizes. At its 161st session, the Executive Board approved the general rules governing the award of prizes to encourage the safeguarding and revitalization of forms of cultural expression proclaimed as “masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity” and took note of the interim report on the progress made in processing the candidatures and the action plan for the safeguarding, protection and promotion of cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity (161 EX/Decision 3.4.3). In that same decision, the Executive Board invited the Director-General to carry out a study with a view to the establishment of consolidated administrative and financial procedures for the implementation of the project concerning the “Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”. The Executive Board also invited the Director-General to study the question of extending the database on cultural spaces and forms of expression of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity and of setting up for that purpose an audio/video library, safeguarding the recordings of all candidatures presented for the competition without exception. The Executive Board further invited Member States to consider as appropriate the establishment of national organs for the protection of the intangible heritage, composed of artists, creative workers and any other actors involved at local level.

The first Proclamation by UNESCO of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity

3. In the course of 2000, thanks to a funds-in-trust arrangement with Japan, more than 40 Member States, from all geographic regions, received financial support for the preparation of their candidature files for the first Proclamation by UNESCO of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

4. The Secretariat received 36 candidatures. Following an administrative review, a number of non-governmental organizations well known internationally for their scientific expertise (ICTM, ISSC, ICPHS, UNIMA) were called upon to evaluate, from a technical and scientific standpoint, the candidature files that had been submitted by the Member States. All the evaluations were submitted to the International Jury which, after study and deliberation, recommended to the Director-General a list of cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression.

5. The Director-General proclaimed, for the first time, 19 masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity on 18 May 2001. The experience of the first proclamation was highly instructive: first of all, it demonstrated the Member States’ great interest in this project and,

secondly, it enabled the Secretariat to identify more clearly the real needs of Member States and the priorities to be set for the further implementation of the Proclamation project. It also showed that effective implementation of the project would depend on several factors. One is that the Secretariat needs a permanent source of funding to enable it to carry out the planned activities and so meet the expectations of Member States. Another is that it is essential to strengthen staff in currently existing Secretariat structures and to reinforce their operating mechanisms.

Action taken since the first Proclamation

6. Bearing in mind the wish expressed by several Member States at the 161st session of the Executive Board and in accordance with paragraph 4(b) of the Regulations relating to the proclamation, the Director-General convened an extraordinary meeting of the International Jury for the Proclamation. The meeting, held in Elche from 21 to 23 September 2001, thanks to a generous contribution from Spain, had the following aims: (i) to define detailed criteria for selection of the Proclamation candidates; (ii) to make recommendations with regard to the candidatures carried forward to 2003; and (iii) to suggest improvements in the Jury's procedures. The detailed selection criteria were defined and a revised guide was published and distributed to all Member States, providing them with all the information needed for the submission of candidature files for future proclamations.

7. The impact of the first Proclamation was assessed at the end of December 2001. The replies received from countries in which spaces or forms of cultural expression have been proclaimed as masterpieces of the intangible heritage show that the Proclamation had a powerful and immediate impact not only on the safeguarding of the proclaimed masterpiece itself but also on the formulation and implementation of national policies for the protection of the intangible heritage. The effects were clearly felt both at the local community and at the national and regional levels.

8. Pursuant to 161 EX/Decision 3.4.3, the Director-General: (i) entrusted to an expert a feasibility study with a view to the establishment of consolidated administrative and financial procedures for the Proclamation project (July-August 2001), the conclusions of which are presented herein to the Executive Board for its approval; (ii) invited Member States to establish national organs for the protection of the intangible cultural heritage (15 October 2001); and (iii) undertook a study with a view to an extension of the database and the creation for that purpose of an audio/video library of the masterpieces proclaimed (November 2001).

9. The expert's feasibility study contained several constructive suggestions for improving various proclamation procedures such as the method for submission of preliminary lists, the format of candidature files, preparatory assistance projects and action plans, the presentation of administrative, scientific and technical assessments and the rules of procedure of the Jury. These suggestions have already been taken into account by the Jury and the Secretariat.

10. The study stressed the need to circumscribe the domains covered by the intangible heritage since the excessively broad scope is causing selection and management difficulties both for the Member States and for the Secretariat. Observations on the broad scope of the domains covered by the Proclamation were examined at the Jury meeting held in Elche, Spain, from 21 to 23 September 2000. The Jury recommended that, within the vast field covered by the intangible cultural heritage, the following domains, without being exclusive, might be considered for the Proclamation: forms of cultural expression closely linked to languages, oral traditions, the performing arts and the skills associated with forms of expression of the cultural heritage. Languages, per se, could no longer be submitted as candidates.

II. ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE PROPOSED BY THE STUDY

General considerations

11. UNESCO has adopted a “double-track” system to deal with the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage: on the one hand, there is the long-term objective to establish a new normative instrument following the widely supported 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Furthermore, the General Conference at its 31st session decided that the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage should be regulated by means of an international convention (31 C/Resolution 30), and invited the Director-General to submit to the General Conference at its 32nd session a report on the possible scope of such an instrument and a preliminary draft international convention. On the other hand, the Proclamation project on Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, which was successfully launched in 1998, in its rather short time of existence, has become operational.

12. Furthermore, the International Experts Meeting: “Intangible Cultural Heritage: Priority scope of domains for an international convention”, held in Rio de Janeiro (22-24 January 2002) thanks to the generous contributions of Brazil and Japan, recommended that (i) a close link be maintained between the Proclamation Programme and the elaboration of the international convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage; (ii) there be a modification of the terminology used for the Proclamation, replacing “oral and intangible heritage of humanity” by “intangible cultural heritage”; and (iii) the definition of this term, as used in the Proclamation Programme, be replaced by the one adopted during the Turin Round Table, in order to harmonize the terminology and concepts used in the Proclamation Programme with those of the future international convention.

Consolidation of the administrative procedures

13. In accordance with the Regulations adopted by the Executive Board at its 155th session, in 1998, the selection of masterpieces is made by an international Jury composed of 18 members appointed by the Director-General in their personal capacity.

14. The Proclamation project is administered by the Intangible Heritage Section of the Cultural Heritage Division. In addition to the Proclamation project, the Section implements a wide range of programmes and projects such as: the Human Living Treasures Programme, the implementation of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, the collection of the world traditional music, the Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture and the endangered languages programme. The Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity is considered as the single largest activity of this section, which will further expand from 19 Proclamations during this biennium to 150 at the end of 2007. Already last year a total of 36 application files had to be processed by the Secretariat which have been submitted by 36 countries. A total of about 60 requests for international assistance was received by the Secretariat, out of which 32 were mainly funded by extrabudgetary resources. The Proclamation project is presently handled by three Professional staff (one P/5 and two P/2s, and four Professional posts are under recruitment), two General Services staff and four consultants. This small Section would need, in addition to regular programme staff requirements, highly specialized inputs in the work of the Section needed to be made by consultants. The Section may have to be further reinforced in the years to come along with the rapid increase in the number of application files which need to be processed as well as request for international assistance and information. In the long term, an independent unit which has no other task than to serve the Proclamation project could be created.

15. As regards the establishment by Member States of national organs for the protection of the intangible heritage, the Director-General, pursuant to paragraph 10 of 161 EX/Decision 3.4.3 invited Member States, in circular letter 3603 of 15 October 2001, to establish national organs for the protection of the intangible heritage, composed of artists, creative workers and any other actors involved at local level. Such organs would be responsible for safeguarding, revitalizing and enhancing the intangible cultural heritage and activities relating to the selection, submission and follow-up of candidatures for the Proclamation. Furthermore, once the masterpieces have been proclaimed these organs would then advise the relevant national authorities on how to elaborate a detailed action plan to safeguard the masterpiece and to ensure its implementation. A consultation of Member States was carried out by the Secretariat to obtain information on initiatives taken at the national level to establish these organs.

Consolidation of financial procedures

16. Within the Section of Intangible Heritage, an amount of \$425,000 has been allocated from the regular programme to the Proclamation of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity for the present biennium (2002-2003). In addition to this, an important Japanese funds-in-trust gives financial support to preparatory assistance projects and the implementation of action plans for the safeguarding of proclaimed Masterpieces. This financial support has proved essential, since the regular programme does not provide support for preparatory assistance to prepare candidature files nor operational assistance to implement the action plans. At this stage, the Japanese contribution has largely contributed to the sustainability of activities related to the Proclamation, since a number of countries need assistance for compiling inventories of intangible heritage, preparing candidature files and implementing action plans. Quite obviously, greater stability and diversity of funding are important targets for the future of the project. In addition, some countries have created prizes such as Bolivia, Republic of Korea, United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan to support the implementation of the action plans for the safeguarding of proclaimed Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

17. It is proposed for the future to diversify funding in the following way:

- (a) The regular programme should cover the cost of functioning of the Secretariat, including core staff costs, expenditures for statutory meetings, experts group meetings, staff missions, communication and equipment costs;
- (b) Funds-in-trust arrangements should be negotiated with donor countries for larger projects. This has already been done successfully with Japan;
- (c) Special account: the Director-General will consider the establishment of a special account for the Proclamation Project into which would be included all smaller voluntary contributions (e.g. less than \$100,000), whether they come from Governments or the private sector. The advantage of a special account is that smaller amounts of money could be assembled together to finance larger projects. Furthermore, contrary to an additional appropriation, funds can be carried over from one biennium to another. A list of projects shall be prepared for support under the special account. When specially requested by a donor, a funds-in-trust project may be concluded also for a smaller amount (i.e. less than \$100,000);
- (d) Member States should also be invited to contribute in-kind by seconding qualified staff and/or providing equipment and other resources to UNESCO for safeguarding projects;

- (e) Additional support can be mobilized through partnership projects such as twinning of cultural spaces, that have been proclaimed by UNESCO and which share the same concerns regarding the safeguarding of oral or other intangible cultural expressions;
- (f) The extrabudgetary funding potential of the intangible cultural heritage can only be fully tapped if the Organization makes considerable investments in project identification, formulation and presentation.

III. SETTING UP A CLEARING HOUSE FOR THE PROCLAMATION PROJECT.

18. Pursuant to 161 EX/Decision 3.4.3 (para. 9) of the Executive Board, the Director-General has taken steps to extend the database on cultural spaces and forms of expression of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity and to set up an audio/video library of the candidatures so as to keep digital archives of the application files submitted by Member States for the Proclamation. A feasibility study on this question was undertaken with the principal aim of setting up an information management system relating to the Proclamation of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. The system will handle data and information and will be associated with each stage of the Proclamation process through the compilation of an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage of Member States. The database will be composed of two parts. The first part, to be known as the *Digital media library*, will consist of a series of DVD-ROMs on which all the information (texts, photographs, sound recordings and audiovisual material) contained in the candidature files will be recorded. This part will have limited access only and will be open for consultation at UNESCO by authorized experts. For the archiving of the candidature files, the Secretariat will be equipped with proper documentation and archiving facilities to ensure that the candidature files submitted for the Proclamation are safeguarded and preserved under the best possible conditions. The second part of the database, to be known as the *Virtual Gallery*, will be accessible to the public and will display online a selection of documents (texts, photographs, sound recordings and audiovisual material) drawn from the candidature file of each masterpiece proclaimed. These Web pages, designed for the general public, will be incorporated into the Culture Sector's Internet site and will comprise, for each masterpiece proclaimed, a description of it, the principal aspects of the safeguarding plan, about ten photographs, a thirty-second video clip and a one-minute musical selection.

IV. CONCLUSION

19. As recommended by the feasibility study commissioned by the Secretariat and by the expert meeting in Rio de Janeiro, the Director-General considers it appropriate to: (i) set up a special account in order to establish consolidated administrative and financial procedures for the project; and (ii) amend for that purpose the Regulations relating to the proclamation of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

20. After having examined the present document, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 161 EX/Decision 3.4.3,
2. Having examined document 164 EX/18,
3. Thanks the Director-General for this study;

4. Takes note of the conclusions of the study;
5. Invites the Director-General to submit to it at its 165th session the financial regulations of the special account for the “Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”;
6. Also invites the Director-General to submit to it for approval at that same session amendments to the Regulations relating to the proclamation by UNESCO of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity, in the light of discussions at the current session of the Executive Board.