



**Expert Meeting on the Lists
Established in the 2003
Convention for the
Safeguarding of the
Intangible Cultural Heritage**

**2-4 April 2007 – New Delhi,
India**

**Réunion d'experts concernant
les listes établies par la
Convention de 2003 pour la
sauvegarde du patrimoine
culturel immatériel**

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Inde**

Background Paper

Introduction

The 2003 [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage](#) entered into force on 20 April 2006, and by the end of February 2007 had been ratified by 75 States. The General Assembly of States Parties, the sovereign body of the Convention, at its [first meeting in June 2006](#) requested the Convention's other statutory body, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, to prepare a number of operational directives for the implementation of the Convention ([Resolution 1.GA 7A](#)). Among these operational directives, the Convention calls upon the Committee to “draw up and submit to the General Assembly for approval the criteria for the establishment, updating and publication” of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (the “Representative List”) (Article 16) and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (the “Urgent Safeguarding List”) (Article 17). The Committee and the Secretariat attach the highest priority to the preparation of criteria and other directives for those two lists, in anticipation of being able to begin inscribing new elements as early as possible.

At its [first session in Algiers in November 2006](#), the Intergovernmental Committee discussed a [set of draft criteria](#) for inscription on the Representative List and several general issues relating both to that list and the Urgent Safeguarding List. In its [Decision 1.COM 7](#), the Committee “encourage[d] States Parties to the Convention to submit to the Secretariat comments on abovementioned document before 31 January 2007”, and “request[ed] the Director-General to submit to it at its next session a proposal for a set of criteria for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity which takes into account the suggestions and ideas which emanated from the debates at its first session, and the comments received by the Secretariat”. Subsequent to the Algiers meeting, the Secretariat received written comments from 31 States Parties before the

established deadline, of which 29 specifically addressed the two lists and their criteria. Those [comments](#), as they were submitted by the States Parties, may be consulted at the Convention website. A [document synthesizing the comments](#) of the States Parties has been prepared for the Committee.

Basing its work upon the discussions of the Committee and the written comments of the States Parties, the Secretariat has since elaborated revised draft criteria for the Representative List, for consideration by the Intergovernmental Committee at its extraordinary session in Chengdu, China (23-27 May 2007). At that meeting the Committee will also be asked to consider, for the first time, draft criteria for the Urgent Safeguarding List. In preparing those sets of criteria, the Secretariat relied heavily upon the opinions of experts at two recent meetings convened by UNESCO. The first meeting, [Criteria for inscription on the lists established by the Convention for the Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage](#), was organized by UNESCO on 5-6 December 2005, in Paris. The draft criteria previously considered by the Committee in Algiers were largely the outcome of that expert meeting. The second meeting, co-organized with the Asia/Pacific Centre for UNESCO, [Community Involvement in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage](#), was held in Tokyo from 13 to 15 March 2006. It dealt specifically with the subject of community involvement in inventory making and in the submission of intangible cultural heritage ("ICH") for listing under the Convention.

The present expert meeting

The perspectives and opinions expressed at the two previous expert meetings provided a solid foundation upon which the Secretariat could rely in preparing first drafts of the criteria requested by the General Assembly and Committee. At the same time, it has become apparent that there are a number of fundamental matters that the Committee may need to decide, simultaneous with or even prior to finalizing the inscription criteria, that have not yet been the subject of focused discussion by experts. These fundamental decisions about the nature and modus operandi of each list and the relations between them will doubtless have implications for the specific criteria and the form they will ultimately take.

The present expert meeting is intended to assist the Secretariat to respond to the Committee to facilitate its work on these matters. The experts will be asked to discuss a number of alternatives and to present the strongest possible arguments in favour of each (and in opposition to its contrary or contraries)—to in a sense rehearse or anticipate some of the issues that will come before the Committee.

The experts are not asked to offer a unified recommendation or consensus position on any issue, but to frame as clearly as possible the alternative positions and their anticipated arguments and counter-arguments, so that the Committee may choose among alternatives, or meld them into a desirable alloy. (Should there be certain issues on which a clear consensus emerges among the experts, such will be reported, but that is not the primary objective of the present meeting.)

In the first day of the meeting (2 April 2007), experts will be divided into two groups, each assigned a general topic and set of related issues. Within each group, experts will be asked to begin developing position papers outlining alternative possibilities. A plenary session that afternoon will discuss summaries of the discussions of the two working groups; these will then be prepared in written form for a review by the experts in plenary on the third and final morning of the meeting (4 April 2007).

The first group will examine the relation between the two lists. Considering the respective purposes of the two lists and their distinct identities in the Convention (Articles 16 and 17):

- What should be the relation between the two lists? Should the lists be non-communicating and operate independently? Should they operate interdependently? Should one be subsidiary to the other? For instance, among other possibilities, could an element be inscribed simultaneously on both lists, or should the element be exclusively on one or the other, moving between them as or when conditions warrant? Or should an element, once inscribed on one list, not be considered for the other?
- Should elements that are in need of urgent safeguarding be inscribed only on the Urgent Safeguarding List, and the Representative List be restricted to elements that are healthier or more viable, less in need of safeguarding or not in need of safeguarding?
- When safeguarding has been (or is being) effectively implemented, such that an element is determined to be no longer “in need of urgent safeguarding”, what should occur (such as, for instance, removing it from the Urgent Safeguarding List and/or transferring it to the Representative List)?

The second group will focus more specifically on the nature of the Representative List. Considering that the purposes of this list are *to ensure better visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance, and to encourage dialogue which respects cultural diversity*:

- How should “representative” be understood in Article 16 of the Convention? In one view the list as a whole is representative of human creativity and the diversity of heritage elements in the world. In another view, the element inscribed on the list is a sample or example of a larger class of elements; a selected element thus stands for a larger number of similar elements that could just as well have been inscribed. In a third view, representation implies some determination of typicality, a finding that the element selected is characteristic of the class of elements to which it belongs. And in yet another view, the element is considered to represent the culture or community of which it is an expression. Should elements be selected on quantitative or extrinsic (e.g. distributional or geographic) grounds, or on more qualitative grounds such as typicality or expressiveness?
- Should the Representative List be shorter and more selective, or longer and less selective? What are the respective advantages and disadvantages of a shorter or longer list, particularly with respect to the purpose of the List?
- Would the purposes of the Representative List be served better by a) inscription of elements for indefinite terms (resulting in an ever-growing list); or b) inscription of elements for a fixed term, resulting in a list of limited size whose members rotate, or c) allocation of slots to States Parties, who may inscribe elements for terms of their choosing, rotating or not?

In its second day (3 April), the expert meeting will examine in greater detail proposals for the revised draft criteria that will come before the Committee in Chengdu. In plenary session, the experts will consider the proposed criteria, with particular reference to the implications for each criterion of possible decisions the Committee might make with regard to the larger questions discussed the previous day. For instance, if the Committee were to choose that the two lists be mutually independent, would the criterion addressing “representativeness” be applied only to the Representative List and not to the Urgent Safeguarding List? If the Committee were to choose to allocate slots on the Representative List to

States Parties, how would criteria be revised accordingly? If the Committee were to choose to make the Urgent Safeguarding List effectively subsidiary to the Representative List, which criteria would require revision? The experts will be asked to anticipate the possible consequences of different choices that will face the Committee, so that the Committee's decisions can be informed by the experts' explorations of their implications and entailments.

On the morning of the third day (4 April 2007), experts will review the four written position papers drafted by its members. A final summary discussion will review the work of the preceding two days. It is not expected that the experts will agree on a single "recommendation" or "declaration" at the conclusion of the meeting—rather, the position papers prepared and agreed by them will be made available to the Committee as informational documents.

Experts are reminded that under the [*Regulations for the general classification of the various categories of meetings convened by UNESCO*](#), as adopted by the General Conference, members of an expert committee "*shall serve in a private capacity and will not be considered to be representatives of their respective governments*". Observers are also welcome to "*follow the proceedings of these meetings*", according to those same Regulations, but are requested to inform the Secretariat in advance of their intention to attend. The Secretariat will prepare a report of the outcomes of the meeting.

Provisional agenda

Monday, 2 April 2007 – Some fundamental questions about the lists

Opening

Introduction and objectives of the meeting

Break-out sessions, by groups

LUNCH

Continuation and conclusion of break-out sessions, by groups

Groups present oral reports for discussion

Tuesday, 3 April 2007 – Discussion of proposals to be presented to the IGC

Criteria for inscription on the lists

LUNCH

Criteria for inscription on the lists, continued

Monitoring procedures and criteria for updating the two lists

Wednesday, 4 April 2007 – Review and conclusion

Review of position papers/documents of working groups

Summary discussion and closure of the meeting

LUNCH