

Second Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for
the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Speech by the Japanese Minister of Education, Culture,
Sports, Science and Technology

Monday, September 3rd, 2007, 10:00 – 10:45

Tokyo International Exchange Center

Plaza Heisei International Conference Hall

Your Excellency, Mr. Musa Bin Jaafar Bin Hassan

(ムーサ・ビン・ジャーファ・ハッサン),

President of the General Conference of UNESCO,

Your Excellency, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura

(松浦晃一郎、まつうら こういちろう),

Director-General of UNESCO,

Your Excellency, Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui

(ムハンマド・ベジャウイ),

President of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the
Convention,

Ms Françoise Rivière (フランソワーズ・リビエール), Assistant

Director-General for Culture of UNESCO,

National Delegates, Honorable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and welcome to Tokyo.

It is a great honor to attend the opening of this Second Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. As the host country of this session, we would be very much pleased to welcome all of you today here in Tokyo.

The significance of this second meeting is considerable, as we hope to finalize the operational directives for the Convention. It is a tribute to the strong commitment and effort of everyone involved that we were able to reach this stage so quickly, a little more than a year after the entry into force of the Convention in April 2006.

If we had succeeded in enforcing the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as swiftly as this Convention,

the future of humankind could still be more bright – I'm mentioning so not because Kyoto is my constituency.

Throughout the world, countless forms of intangible cultural heritage are being handed down from the generation to the next. This invaluable heritage testifies to the long history and diversity of the cultures where it was born; as such, it provides a spiritual grounding for the people, and participates in shaping their identity.

In Japan, various manifestations of intangible cultural heritage reflect the culture and history of each region. We are very proud to note that in 1950, over half a century ago, our country was one of the first nations to protect her cultural heritage with the establishment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, which covers both intangible and tangible cultural assets.

Japan has relied on its experience to actively participate in international cooperation for the protection of intangible cultural assets. We were also strong supporters of the Proclamation of Masterpieces project, a UNESCO predecessor to the Convention, and still have been promoting the formulation of the Convention itself.

Our country, Japan looks forward to continuing its contribution to the protection of intangible cultural heritage throughout the world.

I would like to conclude these remarks by offering my best wishes for the success of this meeting and to hope you would enjoy the present and historical cultures of Japan while you are staying, if you can find the lucky time.

Thank you very much for your attention.