



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

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Representative List

ICH-02 – Form

REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

**Deadline 31 March 2019
for possible inscription in 2020**

Instructions for completing the nomination form are available at:
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/forms>

Nominations not complying with those instructions and those found below will be considered incomplete and cannot be accepted.

States Parties are further encouraged to consult the aide-mémoire for completing a nomination to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which is available on the same webpage.

A. State(s) Party(ies)

For multinational nominations, States Parties should be listed in the order on which they have mutually agreed.

United Arab Emirates

B. Name of the element

B.1. Name of the element in English or French

Indicate the official name of the element that will appear in published material.

Not to exceed 200 characters

Al Aflaj, traditional irrigation network system in the UAE, oral traditions, knowledge and skills of construction, maintenance and equitable water distribution .

B.2. Name of the element in the language and script of the community concerned, if applicable

Indicate the official name of the element in the vernacular language corresponding to the official name in English or French (point B.1).

Not to exceed 200 characters

الافلاج: التقاليد الشفهية، والمعارف والمهارات المتعلقة بتشبيد وصون نظام شبكة الري التقليدية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة والتوزيع العادل للمياه

B.3. Other name(s) of the element, if any

In addition to the official name(s) of the element (point B.1), mention alternate name(s), if any, by which the element is known.

Al Aflaj

C. Name of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned

*Identify clearly one or several communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned with the nominated element.
Not to exceed 150 words*

All the inhabitants of the oasis and surrounding plain areas of Al Ain, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain, especially the owners of palm groves and farmers, constitute the concerned communities of the Al Aflaj element. The Aflaj are particularly common in Al Ain, which is called the city of Aflaj. Certain tribes, such as the Al Awamir, are more involved in digging the Aflaj tunnel system, while maintaining and safeguarding them. Some individuals have specific responsibilities, such as "Wakeel Al Falaj" who undertakes the administrative and financial responsibilities of the Falaj. He is assisted by "Amin Al Daftar" (the Falaj book keeper). Another important person is the "Arif" who judges over the distribution of water and supervises the farmers. "Al Basir" (the wise man) has special traditional knowledge about the topography of the area, vegetation and sources of underground water. He is also skilled in digging and maintaining the irrigation system.

D. Geographical location and range of the element

Provide information on the distribution of the element within the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s), indicating, if possible, the location(s) in which it is centred. Nominations should concentrate on the situation of the element within the territories of the submitting States, while acknowledging the existence of same or similar elements outside their territories. Submitting States should not refer to the viability of such intangible cultural heritage outside their territories or characterize the safeguarding efforts of other States.

Not to exceed 150 words

There are around 300 Aflaj in the UAE. They are distributed along the foothills of the Al Hajar mountain range, stretching from Abu Dhabi Eastern Region to the northern emirates. Most of them are located near Al Ain oases and in the Al Madam plains. Al Aflaj are found in lesser numbers elsewhere, such in Masfout in Ajman, Falaj Al-Mualah in Umm AlQuwain, Al Dhaid in Sharjah, Khat and Masafi in Ras Al Khaimah, in addition to Falaj Al Huwailat, Al Manayi, Al Bahtna, Al Hail and Sharah.

Al Aflaj are found in the Arabian Peninsula, especially in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman and Yemen, and in Arab countries such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

There are Aflaj irrigation systems in Spain, in Andalusia and Canary Islands, Cyprus, Sicily and Greece as well as Mexico and Chile. In Asia, Aflaj are found in Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia and Turkestan as well as Korea and Japan.

E. Contact person for correspondence

E.1. Designated contact person

Provide the name, address and other contact information of a single person responsible for all correspondence concerning the nomination. For multinational nominations, provide complete contact information for one person designated by the States Parties as the main contact person for all correspondence relating to the nomination.

Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): Mr

Family name: Al Kaabi

Given name: Saeed

Institution/position: Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi/ Director of Intangible Heritage Department
Address: P O Box 94000, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number: 0097125995677
Email address: saeed.alkaabi@dctabudhabi.ae
Other relevant information: Fax: 0097124440400

E.2. Other contact persons (for multinational files only)

Provide below complete contact information for one person in each submitting State, other than the primary contact person identified above.

1. Identification and definition of the element

For **Criterion R.1**, States **shall demonstrate that 'the element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention'.**

Tick one or more boxes to identify the domain(s) of intangible cultural heritage manifested by the element, which might include one or more of the domains identified in Article 2.2 of the Convention. If you tick 'other(s)', specify the domain(s) in brackets.

- ☒ oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage
- ☐ performing arts
- ☒ social practices, rituals and festive events
- ☒ knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- ☒ traditional craftsmanship
- ☐ other(s) ()

This section should address all the significant features of the element as it exists at present, and should include:

- a. an explanation of its social functions and cultural meanings today, within and for its community;
- b. the characteristics of the bearers and practitioners of the element;
- c. any specific roles, including gender-related ones or categories of persons with special responsibilities towards the element; and
- d. the current modes of transmission of the knowledge and skills related to the element.

The Committee should receive sufficient information to determine:

- a. that the element is among the 'practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills — as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith —';
- b. 'that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize [it] as part of their cultural heritage';
- c. that it is being 'transmitted from generation to generation, [and] is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history';
- d. that it provides the communities and groups involved with 'a sense of identity and continuity'; and
- e. that it is not incompatible with 'existing international human rights instruments as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development'.

Overly technical descriptions should be avoided and submitting States should keep in mind that this section must explain the element to readers who have no prior knowledge or direct experience of it. Nomination files need not address in detail the history of the element, or its origin or antiquity.

- (i) Provide a brief description of the element that can introduce it to readers who have never seen or experienced it.

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

Al Aflaj (sing. Falaj) is an irrigation system, which uses an underground tunnel to conduct water over long distances stretching from several hundred meters to more than 15 kilometers from an underground source to a basin, where the community can access it. The water flows by gradual gradient from highlands to flatlands, while the underground tunnels reduce evaporation. Al Aflaj also include the network of surface channels, which distribute water to local farms.

Al Aflaj is an important ICH element and a source of pride for UAE citizens, who have rich oral traditions related to Al Aflaj. They memorize poetic verses, proverbs, riddles jokes, stories, fairy tales and legends about the construction of Al Aflaj, especially the legend of Prophet Suleiman (King Solomon) for which Falaj Al Dawoodi is attributed to.

The Aflaj system is based on inherited knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe. It is also based on traditional skills in finding water sources based on types of vegetation, and other indications, as well as traditional drilling skills of maintaining the irrigation system and ensuring equitable distribution of water, based on night and daytime methods for measuring time depending on the movement of stars, in the distribution of Falaj water rations among farmers.

Al Aflaj system relies on the values of cooperation, and peaceful resolution of disputes. Community members (men, women and children) contribute to maintaining Aflaj and clearing the tunnels of mud. This knowledge and experience has been passed down for generations for 3,000 years.

- (ii) *Who are the bearers and practitioners of the element? Are there any specific roles, including gender-related ones or categories of persons with special responsibilities for the practice and transmission of the element? If so, who are they and what are their responsibilities?*

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

Al Aflaj are mainly linked to the inhabitants of central areas of the UAE. Certain tribes, e.g. Al Awamer, are well known for their experience and knowledge of location of springs and underground water reservoirs. They are skilful at digging wells and tunnels, and its maintenance.

There are a number of individuals and groups closely connected with the Aflaj, on top of them is the Aflaj Committee composed of several old people elected and/ or appointed. These people have profound knowledge about the bases of water division. They use a sundial during the day and the position of stars at nights to regulate the fair distribution of water. The Aflaj committee is also in charge of checking wells, identifying irrigation times, advising and keeping farm owners informed about their shares.

The Falaj agent (Official) also plays an important role in the Aflaj system. He assumes responsibility for daily management together with the falaj book keeper (amin daftar alfalaj) who takes charge of accounting and records all financial matters. Each falaj is run by one or two corporals and an assistant, one for underground service, such as maintenance of the tunnel and wells (Al Thuqba) and the other for above ground service, such as maintenance of shariaa and surface canals. Farmers who benefit from Falaj water in watering their lands and exercising their other economic activities and others who consider Al Aflaj as part of their identity and culture are among the bearers of the element.

- (iii) *How are the knowledge and skills related to the element transmitted today?*

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

Traditional ways of transferring knowledge about the Aflaj are being practiced today. Knowledge connected with Aflaj digging, maintenance, water distribution, knowledge about palm trees, and other matters is transmitted through generations by instruction and shared experience. Some families and individuals possess great knowledge, which is thereby transmitted to younger generations.

Experience and knowledge about Al Aflaj are transferred to new groups of young people, through a committee of experts and consultants of the elderly, who have extensive experience in Al Aflaj water resources, underground feeding channels, surface channels, and work on

transferring all kinds of knowledge related to Al Aflaj to the next generation. This committee is assisted by 25 youth members working as consultants. In addition, a number of youth have been appointed to work in the maintenance, and restoration of Al Aflaj as a traditional irrigation method.

The Department of Culture and Tourism- Abu Dhabi has enrichment programs for many educational subjects. Their content is derived from the heritage associated with Al Aflaj. Field tours to Aflaj are also organized for school students to deepen their knowledge and educational experience gained through these curricula.

The UAE University has included some courses related to Al Aflaj in many departments, which contributed to the completion of documentation studies of walls that protect the Falaj from sand, wind, and dust.

Three books on the Aflaj in Arabic and English were published. In addition, Al Aflaj has become better known among people through the use of social media, in addition to brochures, posters, and films available on the internet.

(iv) What social functions and cultural meanings does the element have for its community nowadays?

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

Throughout the centuries, providing potable water for humans and animals as well as the irrigation of farms in an arid environment represents the main function of Al Aflaj. Al Aflaj enabled people to build permanent settlements that are closely related to the social history of the community.

Strengthening cooperative ties is a social function for communities and groups in Al Aflaj areas. Thus contributing to their safeguarding, and ensuring equitable water distribution. Some owners have put their land and share of water as common property whose proceeds go to the community or charitable purposes.

The Al Aflaj and surrounding oases are important leisure venues for the community. These were the community spaces where the elderly, women and children used to gather to chat and enjoy nature during the weekend.

In the community, there is a keenness to visit the basin (collecting water from the Falaj before distribution) to talk about the events in which they are held, and linking their children and grand children to heritage.

Al Aflaj expresses the creativity and innovation of the community in face of water scarcity in the desert environment, and the provision of life. This is reflected in the cultural functions of the element, which is also reflected in folk literature, including assorted novels, poems, tales, and popular proverbs that tell the story of digging Al Aflaj and its role in providing some of life's necessities.

(v) Is there any part of the element that is not compatible with existing international human rights instruments or with the requirement of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, or with sustainable development?

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

The traditional knowledge and techniques of constructing and maintaining the Al Aflaj are based on communal endeavour and a spirit of cooperation. The communal use of a water resource and a system of equitable distribution of water to the different farms within the oasis is based on agreement, cooperation and mutual respect and this has promoted cohesion within the local community. The communities have devised ways of resolving disputes concerned with water distribution. Thus, the element is fully compatible with international human rights legislation, with the fostering of respect among communities, groups and individuals.

Furthermore, the technology related to Al Aflaj relies on the judicious use of underground aquifers to provide water to the community and its associated farms. It has enabled communities to survive

in an arid climate, and this knowledge has been passed down through generations. The element has thus promoted the sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development.

2. Contribution to ensuring visibility and awareness and to encouraging dialogue

For Criterion R.2, the States shall demonstrate that 'Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity'. This criterion will only be considered to be satisfied if the nomination demonstrates how the possible inscription would contribute to ensuring the visibility and awareness of the significance of intangible cultural heritage in general, and not only of the inscribed element itself, and to encouraging dialogue that respects cultural diversity.

(i) *How could the inscription of the element on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity contribute to the visibility of the intangible cultural heritage in general (and not only of the inscribed element itself) and raise awareness of its importance?*

(i.a) *Please explain how this would be achieved at the local level.*

Not fewer than 100 or more than 150 words

The inscription of Al Aflaj as an intangible cultural heritage element will further raise awareness about other ICH elements, especially those closely linked to Al Aflaj, such as knowledge related to agriculture, plants, rainfall, and some traditions and customs, especially traditions pertaining to social upbringing. The Inscription of this element will also lead to greater interest in aspects of other elements of intangible cultural heritage such as oral literature and oral traditions and expressions, especially popular poetry and folktales. As Al Aflaj are closely related to palm trees, his inscription on the Representative List will greatly contribute to promoting the elements related to palm trees, especially handicrafts associated with palm fronds.

(i.b) *Please explain how this would be achieved at the national level.*

Not fewer than 100 or more than 150 words

The inscription of the Al Aflaj heritage on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO, will contribute to highlighting the significance of intangible cultural heritage at the social level, by raising community awareness of the importance of heritage, and strengthening its role in building national identity, social cohesion, and the need to safeguard and transmit it to future generations. In addition, it will contribute to strengthening community practices and maintaining the role and sustainability of Al Aflaj, in the cultural and social scene at the level of the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, the inscription will help strengthening the capacities of communities, groups and individuals, in the field of elements of intangible cultural heritage. It will also contribute to building national capacity and competencies in the management of intangible cultural heritage.

(i.c) *Please explain how this would be achieved at the international level.*

Not fewer than 100 or more than 150 words

The inscription of the Al Aflaj starts from the leading role which is played by UNESCO in the definition of the heritage of peoples, and raising community awareness of the role of heritage in building a common human civilization.

Al Aflaj is another example of human creativity in adapting to the environment through one of traditional irrigation methods, which along with other creative methods in many regions of the world, enrich the cultural landscape.

Also, the inscription of the Al Aflaj element and its associated knowledge, skills and practices at UNESCO will contribute to enhancing peoples' interest in intangible cultural heritage associated

with the skills and knowledge of sustainable exploitation of natural resources. Furthermore, it will encourage dialogue, and the exchange of experiences throughout the world's communities.

*(ii) How would dialogue among communities, groups and individuals be encouraged by the inscription of the element?
Not fewer than 100 or more than 150 words*

The Al Aflaj system itself is based upon dialogue and cooperation. The inscription of Al Aflaj element on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage will also help the consolidation of dialogue among communities about a water distribution network which relies on mutual cooperation and the selection of respected skillful persons.

The Al Aflaj system depends on the fair distribution of water and its maintenance enhances the spirit of cooperation. The inscription will encourage members of society to learn from this, especially how people developed an effective system to resolve disputes related to land ownership, water shares and mandatory maintenance of the Falaj.

Al Aflaj are also known in more than twenty countries in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Inscription will stimulate dialogue among communities concerned in these regions of the world.

*(iii) How would human creativity and respect for cultural diversity be promoted by the inscription of the element?
Not fewer than 100 or more than 150 words*

The inscription of the Al Aflaj element: skills, knowledge and associated practices will be an added value to the human heritage. It will highlight the cultural diversity in the elements of intangible cultural heritage among peoples, and the diversity and integration of human heritage.

The inscription of the element on the Representative List of intangible cultural heritage of UNESCO will also enhance the values of human creativity, respect and appreciation of human societies and their respective roles in developing the overall civilization of humankind, drawing upon inherited knowledge and skills. Al Aflaj adds to the human effort in investing the environmental resources using innovative and constructive manners.

Through this file, future generations will be introduced to another achievement of mankind.

3. Safeguarding measures

For Criterion R.3, States shall demonstrate that 'safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element'.

3.a. Past and current efforts to safeguard the element

(i) How is the viability of the element being ensured by the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned? What past and current initiatives have they taken in this regard?

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

Al Aflaj have been associated, in terms of their origin and continuity, till this present day to oases found in the Al Ain area amidst others in the United Arab Emirates. Therefore, the attention of communities, groups and individuals was dedicated to maintain the bearers of Al Aflaj and the sustainability of their role as a water provider for their farms. Bearers and practitioners have strengthened this attention through many practices that have contributed to the continuity of Al Aflaj. Among these initiatives:

- The public benefit of its water sources, and the transfer of ownership of a shared benefit to all farms and oases, which is known in the community of Al Ain as an equitable distribution of water.
- To provide the growing needs of Aflaj water through the development of the Falaj springs, the periodic/emergency maintenance procedures pertaining to the canals, the prevention of waste and

water loss by laying channels, as well as the development of distribution procedures throughout the seasons.

-To raise community awareness about the importance of Al Aflaj and the importance of community participation with regards to safeguarding them. The community of Al Ain, including its farmers and "digging" experts, are known for their voluntary contribution, each according to their efficiency and capabilities in the continuous maintenance of Al Aflaj.

-To develop the knowledge and experience of communities, groups and individuals in terms of Al Aflaj safeguarding, and to support a meaningful exchange between these groups, especially with regards to older individuals.

Tick one or more boxes to identify the safeguarding measures that have been and are currently being taken by the communities, groups or individuals concerned:

- ☒ transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education
- ☒ identification, documentation, research
- ☒ preservation, protection
- ☒ promotion, enhancement
- ☒ revitalization

(ii) *How have the States Parties concerned safeguarded the element? Specify any external or internal constraints, such as limited resources. What past and current efforts has it made in this regard?*

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

The safeguarding of Al Aflaj, as a significant part of the UAE's heritage, has faced some constraints, requiring the relevant government institutions to undertake necessary efforts whilst reducing their impact, especially when it concerns the increasing population in the oases. The Law of Protection of Oases and Al Aflaj was issued to prevent any change in the use of Al Aflaj water.

Due to the increasing demand for Al Aflaj water, the Municipality and other government agencies have made efforts to develop some of the Al Aflaj, including Falaj Al Qattara, and to strengthen the irrigation channels and water distribution dams to prevent leakage and waste of Falaj water. The municipality, after consultation with the Al Aflaj committee, has placed security barriers around these channels.

On the other hand, many seminars, conferences and exhibitions are held with the participation of researchers and other community groups. Among them, the conference held in 2011 and 2013 under the title "Water is Life" and the annual Sharjah Heritage Days exhibition on irrigation and agriculture.

In the context of sustainable development and the development of the Al Aflaj as part of the nation's heritage, the Ministry of Environment and Water is monitoring the flow of 40 Falaj distributed throughout several parts of the country.

The Department of Culture and Tourism-Abu Dhabi also adopts a promotional plan for Al Aflaj in cooperation with the Department of Education and Knowledge, through organizing trips and field visits for students to Aflaj locations. In order to safeguard the flow of water in some of the Aflaj.

Tick one or more boxes to identify the safeguarding measures that have been and are currently being taken by the State(s) Party(ies) with regard to the element:

- ☒ transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education
- ☒ identification, documentation, research
- ☒ preservation, protection
- ☒ promotion, enhancement
- ☒ revitalization

3.b. Safeguarding measures proposed

This section should identify and describe safeguarding measures that will be implemented, especially those intended to protect and promote the element. The safeguarding measures should be described in terms of concrete engagements of the States Parties and communities and not only in terms of possibilities and potentialities.

- (i) *What measures are proposed to help ensure that the viability of the element is not jeopardized in the future, especially as an unintended result of inscription and the resulting visibility and public attention?*

Not fewer than 500 or more than 750 words

The future safeguarding measures for Al Aflaj will be launched as part of a comprehensive project to safeguard the oases of palm trees and Al Aflaj as an important part of the UAE's heritage. This project has been discussed since 2013 with vast community participation, including farmers, farm owners, experts and other heritage stakeholders. These discussions concluded that the objectives of the project should go beyond that of the maintenance and sustainability of Al Aflaj, to link the community with them as an important element of its heritage, and to achieve integration between the reality of Al Aflaj and its traditional nature. It is important to take into account that the inscription of Al Aflaj on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage would not have a negative impact on the continuity of the element, but will contribute to establishing its importance in local communities. Indeed, the inscription will substantially contribute to further strengthening the consciousness of communities, groups and individuals to thereby take all necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the element and its transmission to future generations.

In order to ensure this continuity, governmental institutions, in coordination with relevant communities, groups and individuals, have established these measures to safeguard the element:

- Strengthening the efforts of the Supervisory and Follow-up Committee of the Al Aflaj which consists of a group of senior bearers and practitioners who have witnessed part of the history of Al Aflaj and hold the relevant experience and knowledge pertaining to its existence, the methods of their maintenance, distribution of water, and nutrition. The most known in the region of Al Ain are: Ahmed Sultan Al-Kuwaiti, Abdullah Matar Aldarmaki and Saeed Fahd Al-Kutbi.
- Relevant cultural institutions will work with relevant communities to develop programs and schemes to safeguard the traditional skills and knowledge associated with the heritage of the Aflaj, and to ensure their continuity and transfer to future generations.
- The Committee of Experts made up of community members will train and qualify young people, as each expert or consultant will periodically train a number of them.
- Educational institutions will link educational courses at all levels with the strategies for safeguarding the heritage of Al Aflaj, the formal and non-formal curricula, applied field research for a number of departments of Human Sciences and in addition to numerous other relevant fields.
- In coordination with the local community who are the owners of Al Aflaj, municipalities will support the efforts to protect the Al Aflaj routes by identifying them through plans, maps and designs, in addition to the expanding of passageways that are connected to them.
- The UAE University will work through field research teams to enhance clay walls that protect the Falaj from sand, wind, dust and limit water runoff through proposed scientific designs.
- To continue on preserving the basin of each Falaj since it's the main source from which the waters of all Aflaj flow, while emerging from the highlands. It is also considered as a traditional location for the practice of some social activities, such as family gatherings and meetings of community members to discuss their issues, as well as about the village, etc
- The media channels will devote special programs to introduce the Al Aflaj cultural heritage and to strengthen the significance of Al Aflaj among young people.
- The relevant UAE's intangible cultural heritage institutes will continue to catalog and document the heritage elements associated with Al Aflaj, promote them and ensure the continuity of relevant knowledge and skills.
- Municipalities in the Al Aflaj areas will continue their financial and technical support to programs and projects dedicated to maintaining and strengthening Al Aflaj routes.

- Municipal departments, in collaboration with cultural departments and local communities, will provide databases on historical, statistical and scientific data related to Al Aflaj, and make them available for researchers and any concerned parties.
- Environmental authorities and institutions will integrate Al Aflaj into their plans designed to promote environmental conservation and sustainable development requirements, particularly for irrigation water management.

(ii) *How will the States Parties concerned support the implementation of the proposed safeguarding measures?*

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

in order to implement the safeguarding measures mentioned above, governmental agencies (cultural, media, educational, environmental, agricultural and municipality) will support and check in with them through each party or agency implementing its administrative and operational responsibilities, especially when it concerns budgeting and financial requirements. With regards to municipalities directly involved in Al Aflaj, the proposed safeguarding measures will be supported through the formation of follow-up committees from members of relevant communities, groupes and individuals. Municipalities will also provide the allocation of a budget to maintain the Al Aflaj. On the part of cultural and heritage institutions that focus on the intangible aspects of the element, particular attention will be given to the involvement of communities, groups and individuals in the safeguarding process, and providing means of necessary support.

In this context, municipalities overseeing the Al Aflaj will issue laws and regulations to prevent any change in the use of land or their purpose, that would damage the Al Aflaj or their traditional role. With regards to the educational aspect for the youth, heritage satellite channels will broadcast constant cultural and historical programs about the Al Aflaj through the screening of documentary films, drawings, interviews and field research that tell the story of the Al Aflaj in the UAE's heritage.

(iii) *How have communities, groups or individuals been involved in planning the proposed safeguarding measures, including in terms of gender roles, and how will they be involved in their implementation?*

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

The meetings held in preparation of this file with communities, groups and individuals of the oases, practitioners and farmers, bearers of skills and knowledge associated with Al Aflaj, as well as local authorities and associations, provided an opportunity to involve all these groups in the development of safeguarding measures, as referred to above. In this context, an extensive workshop was held in Al Ain in March 2016 on the measures and actions to be taken to safeguard the Al Aflaj and its associated skills, traditional knowledge and inherited practices passed down from generation to generation. During this meeting, the practitioners and the bearers of Al Aflaj heritage presented suggestions and ideas adopted in the development of future measures and plans that will ensure the continuity of this element in the Al Aflaj area of the United Arab Emirates.

The representatives of communities and groups, as well as the bearers of Al Aflaj heritage, expressed their full readiness to engage and participate in the implementation of these measures and contribute, along with the relevant government institutions, to turn them into a reality, particularly with regards to measures related to the transfer of traditional skills and relevant knowledge to future generations and making the information available for relevant government agencies in order to periodically update the data, undertake scientific research on the subject and contribute to educating the youth.

3.c. Competent body(ies) involved in safeguarding

Provide the name, address and other contact information of the competent body(ies) and, if applicable, the name and title of the contact person(s), with responsibility for the local management and safeguarding of the element.

Name of the body: Al Ain Municipality/ Al Aflaj Committee/Town Center Municipal Center

Name and title of the contact person: Eng. Mohamed Saeed Al Shamsi

Address: P O Box1003, Al Ain, UAE

Telephone number: +97137128000 -

Email address: Am.ccs@am.ae

Other relevant information: Fax: +97137085340

Name of the body: Environment Agency Abu Dhabi
Address: P.O Box 45553, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number: +971 (2) 4454777 - Fax: +971 (2) 4463339
E-mail address: customerservice@ead.ae

Name of the body: Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development
Name and title of the contact person: Waleed Al Zaabi / Director of Heritage & Arts Dept.
Address: P O Box 17, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Telephone number: +9712 4455475 - Fax: +9712 4452504
E-mail address: info@mcycd.gov.ae

Name of the body: Department of Culture and Tourism- Abu Dhabi (DCT)
Name and title of the contact person: Saeed Al Kaabi / Director of Intangible Heritage Dept.
Address: P O Box 94000, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Telephone number: +9712 599 5677 - Fax: +9712 4440400
E-mail address: saeed.alkaabi@dctabudhabi.ae

4. Community participation and consent in the nomination process

For Criterion R.4, States shall demonstrate that 'the element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent'.

4.a. Participation of communities, groups and individuals concerned in the nomination process

Describe how the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned have actively participated in all stages of the preparation of the nomination, including in terms of the role of gender.

States Parties are encouraged to prepare nominations with the participation of a wide variety of other parties concerned, including, where appropriate, local and regional governments, communities, NGOs, research institutes, centres of expertise and others. States Parties are reminded that the communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals whose intangible cultural heritage is concerned are essential participants throughout the conception and preparation of nominations, proposals and requests, as well as the planning and implementation of safeguarding measures, and are invited to devise creative measures to ensure that their widest possible participation is built in at every stage, as required by Article 15 of the Convention.

The idea of nominating Al Aflaj for inscription on the Representative List first emerged as a recommendation from community participants at the Palm Tree Conference organized by the Environment Agency on the 18th March 2014. Participants agreed that inscription would contribute to raising the awareness of the significance of the Aflaj. In response to these requests, the Department of Intangible Heritage has contacted the relevant parties, organizations, communities, groups and individuals concerned with the Aflaj heritage. To activate community participation in the preparation of this file, the following steps were implemented:

1 - Inventory of Al Aflaj element: field work for researchers included the areas of the Aflaj, especially the main area of the Aflaj in Al Ain, which enabled the collection of raw materials related to the element and included them in the Heritage Register at the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi.

2 - The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi initiated consultative meetings with members of communities, and with a number of institutions related to the element such as the Departments of Environment, Agriculture, Education, Al Ain Municipality, and UAE University in order to highlight the importance of the cultural, social, and economic heritage of Al Aflaj.

3. At the level of community participation, consultative meetings were held with representatives of the inhabitants of the Al Aflaj areas, for the inscription of the Aflaj element in the Representative List.

4. Representatives of Al Aflaj areas contributed to providing the file preparation team with all the information that helped in editing this file. They also contributed by providing most of the necessary future measures in order to safeguard the element. The meetings held with the bearers of Al Aflaj heritage were an opportunity to demonstrate their support, and their free prior and informed consent to the nomination.

5. The extensive consultative meeting held at Al Ain Oasis in March 2016 was an opportunity to develop the main ideas that helped to develop measures to safeguard traditional knowledge, skills and practices associated with Al Aflaj. The meeting was another opportunity to determine the contribution of each of the government actors, entities, municipalities and individuals to the follow-up of the implementation of these schemes and measures.

6. Women participated in the previous consultative meetings through the participation of craftswomen practicing basketry with the use of date palm based products, the most commonly found tree in the Aflaj areas. They supported the notion of inscribing the Al Aflaj element on UNESCO Representative List.

7. In order to follow up developments in the safeguarding of Al Aflaj, additional workshops and meetings were held in February 2019, in the presence of the representatives of the Department of Historical Environment in Al Ain, researchers from the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi and a number of Al Aflaj enthusiasts, practitioners, narrators, and informers. The meeting reviewed the most important developments whilst updating the relevant data for inclusion in the updated version of the Al Aflaj nomination file "Al Aflaj: knowledge, skills and associated practices".

4.b. Free, prior and informed consent to the nomination

The free, prior and informed consent to the nomination of the element of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned may be demonstrated through written or recorded concurrence, or through other means, according to the legal regimens of the State Party and the infinite variety of communities and groups concerned. The Committee will welcome a broad range of demonstrations or attestations of community consent in preference to standard or uniform declarations. Evidence of free, prior and informed consent shall be provided in one of the working languages of the Committee (English or French), as well as in the language of the community concerned if its members use languages other than English or French.

Attach to the nomination form information showing such consent and indicate below what documents you are providing, how they were obtained and what form they take. Indicate also the gender of the people providing their consent.

Not fewer than 150 or more than 250 words

Free, prior and informed consent based on the knowledge of communities, groups and individuals, women and men, concerned with the element "Al Aflaj: knowledge, skills and associated practices" emerged through the participation of these entities in various meetings and workshops held for preparing this file. The participants expressed their full support for this nomination and their prior willingness to continue to safeguard the element. Representatives of communities, groups and individuals have declared their support signed letters. The signatures were from:

1. Mohammed Al Ameri, a young specialist in Al Aflaj. He is the son of an expert in groundwater sources identification.
2. Sultan Al-Kuwaiti, a member of the Al Aflaj Committee, a leading expert in Al Aflaj irrigation systems and Advisor to Al Ain Municipality.
3. Abdullah Al Darmaki, responsible for the palm trees in Falaj Al Qattara (Al Ain).
4. Saeed Jumaa al-Kaabi, 70 years old, is responsible for the Al-Hili Oasis (Al Ain).
5. Dr. Ahmed Murad, is teaching Al Aflaj irrigation system at the UAE University (Al Ain).
6. Hamid Dalmuk and Mattar Mohammed Al Balushi, citizens and users of Al Aflaj.
7. Al Ain Municipality supported the nomination through an official letter and a support letter signed by (4) members of the Aflaj Committee
8. 7 representatives of the Aflaj community expressed their support for the nomination through signed supporting letters.

The Environment Authority supported the nomination of Al Aflaj in a signed official document.

52 participants in Al Aflaj workshop expressed their full support for the nomination

4.c. Respect for customary practices governing access to the element

Access to certain specific aspects of intangible cultural heritage or to information about it is sometimes restricted by customary practices enacted and conducted by the communities in order, for example, to maintain the secrecy of specific knowledge. If such practices exist, demonstrate that the inscription of the element and implementation of the safeguarding measures would fully respect such customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage (cf. Article 13 of the Convention). Describe any specific measures that might need to be taken to ensure such respect.

If no such practices exist, please provide a clear statement that there are no customary practices governing access to the element in at least 50 words.

Not fewer than 50 or more than 250 words

The Al Aflaj water distribution system is widely known by all members of UAE society, both men and women. The relevant authorities are concerned to safeguard and promote this element as it is a source of pride for UAE people. It indicates their ingenuity and interaction with their environment. Since all community members take part in the Aflaj system, there are no confidential practices involved. There has already been widespread coverage of the Aflaj with thanks to modern communication messages and social networking.

4.d. Community organization(s) or representative(s) concerned

Provide detailed contact information for each community organization or representative, or other non-governmental organization, concerned with the element such as associations, organizations, clubs, guilds, steering committees, etc.:

- a. Name of the entity;
- b. Name and title of the contact person;
- c. Address;
- d. Telephone number;
- e. Email address;
- f. Other relevant information.

Name of the body: Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development
Address: P O Box 17, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Telephone number: +9712 4455475 - Fax: +9712 4452504
E-mail address: info@mcygd.gov.ae

Name of the body: Emirates Heritage Club
Address: P O Box 42959, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number: +971 2 4456456
E-mail address: cerehc@emirates.net.ae

Name of the body: Heritage Village, Dubai
Contact person: Mr. Anwar Al Hanai, Director
Address: P.O. Box 115222, Shindaga, Dubai, UAE
Telephone number: +97143937151
E-mail address: alhanai@dubaitourism.ae
Website: www.dubaitourism.ae

Name of the body: Abu Dhabi Business Women Council
Address: P O Box 662, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Telephone number: +971 26177526
Fax: +97126177236
E-mail address: mubdiah@adcci.gov.ae

Name of the body: National Museum of Al Ain
Address: P O 15715, UAE
Telephone number: +97137641595 - Fax: +97137658311
Name of the body: Khalifa International Date Palm Award
Address: 82872, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates
Contact person: Abdul Wahab Zayed/ General Secretary
Telephone number: +971 3 783 24 34 - Fax: +971 3 783 25 50
E-mail address: kidpa@uaeu.ac.ae

Name of the body: Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development
Address: Po Box 131313, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number: +971 26960000 - Fax: +971 26776688
E-mail address: info@khalifafund.gov.ae

Name of the body: UAE University
Contact person: Dr. Ali Murad/ Acting dean of the faculty of science

Address: Po Box 15551 , Al Ain, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number: +971 3 7673333 - Fax: +971-3-71 34343
E-mail address: servicedesk@uaeu.ac.ae

Name of the body: UAE University / Dates & Palm Development Section
Contact person: Dr. Hilal Hamad Saeed Al Kaabi/ Section Director
Address: Po Box 15551 , Al Ain, United Arab Emirates
Telephone number: +971 3 7673333 - Fax: +971-3-71 34343
E-mail address 1: helal.alkaabi@yahoo.com
E-mail address2: servicedesk@uaeu.ac.ae

5. Inclusion of the element in an inventory

For Criterion R.5, States shall demonstrate that the element is identified and included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies) in conformity with Articles 11.b and 12 of the Convention.

The inclusion of the nominated element in an inventory should not in any way imply or require that the inventory(ies) should have been completed prior to the nomination. Rather, the submitting State(s) Party(ies) may be in the process of completing or updating one or more inventories, but have already duly included the nominated element in an inventory-in-progress.

Provide the following information:

(i) Name of the inventory(ies) in which the element is included:

Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

(ii) Name of the office(s), agency(ies), organization(s) or body(ies) responsible for maintaining and updating that (those) inventory(ies), both in the original language and in translation when the original language is not English or French:

Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi.

(iii) Reference number(s) and name(s) of the element in the relevant inventory(ies):

(No. 4) Irrigation Traditional System in UAE

(iv) Date of inclusion of the element in the inventory(ies) (this date should precede the submission of this nomination):

December 2015.

(v) Explain how the element was identified and defined, including how information was collected and processed 'with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations' (Article 11.b) for the purpose of inventorying, including reference to the role of the gender of the participants. Additional information may be provided to demonstrate the participation of research institutes and centres of expertise (max. 200 words).

The process of identifying and defining the Aflaj element has begun with the preparations for the establishment of the Heritage Register, which was joined by communities, groups and individuals through field research carried out by research teams from the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi. The research teams started operations in 2009 in Falaj sites, especially those located in the oases of Al Ain, and held many interviews with bearers, which contributed to enriching the inventory data for inclusion in the Heritage Register of the Intangible

Cultural Heritage of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. These field efforts have been supported by documentary research studies based on sources and references on the Aflaj. Knowledge passed down through generations, universities, colleges, cultural and community institutions, municipalities and non-government associations have played a prominent role in monitoring the knowledge, skills, and historical, cultural and social dimensions of Aflaj. Local women have played a vital role in terms of their professional activities related to the field of Falaj in all activities and events.

In all of this, the procedures for preparing this file constituted an opportunity to update the Aflaj's inventory data and to accrue any additional information.

(vi) Explain how the inventory(ies) is(are) regularly updated, including information on the periodicity and modality of updating. The updating process is understood not only as adding new elements but also as revising existing information on the evolving nature of the elements already included therein (Article 12.1 of the Convention) (max. 100 words).

Work on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of Abu Dhabi started in 2003. A more structured and systematic inventory was developed in 2006, especially after organizing the Regional Meeting of the Arab States on the Safeguarding of ICH and Preparation of ICH Inventory held in (Abu Dhabi, 2007) with the participation of the UNESCO ICH Section.

(vii) Documentary evidence shall be provided in an annex demonstrating that the nominated element is included in one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies), as defined in Articles 11.b and 12 of the Convention. Such evidence shall at least include the name of the element, its description, the name(s) of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned, their geographic location and the range of the element.

- a. If the inventory is available online, provide hyperlinks (URLs) to pages dedicated to the nominated element (max. four hyperlinks in total, to be indicated in the box below). Attach to the nomination print-outs (no more than ten standard A4 sheets) of relevant sections of the content of these links. The information should be translated if the language used is not English or French.*
- b. If the inventory is not available online, attach exact copies of texts (no more than ten standard A4 sheets) concerning the element included in the inventory. These texts should be translated if the language used is not English or French.*

Indicate the materials provided and – if applicable – the relevant hyperlinks:

Attached: A copy of the Al Aflaj inventory form included in the Abu Dhabi Intangible Cultural Heritage Register.

6. Documentation

6.a. Appended documentation (mandatory)

The documentation listed below is mandatory and will be used in the process of evaluating and examining the nomination. The photographs and the video will also be helpful for activities geared at ensuring the visibility of the element if it is inscribed. Tick the following boxes to confirm that the related items are included with the nomination and that they follow the instructions. Additional materials other than those specified below cannot be accepted and will not be returned.

- ☒ documentary evidence of the consent of communities, along with a translation into English or French if the language of the community concerned is other than English or French;
- ☒ documentary evidence demonstrating that the nominated element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies), as defined in Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention; such evidence shall include a relevant extract of the inventory(ies) in English or in French, as well as in the original language, if different;
- ☒ ten recent photographs in high definition;
- ☒ grant(s) of rights corresponding to the photos (Form ICH-07-photo);
- ☒ edited video (from five to ten minutes), subtitled in one of the languages of the Committee (English or French) if the language utilized is other than English or French;
- ☒ grant(s) of rights corresponding to the video recording (Form ICH-07-video).

6.b. Principal published references (optional)

Submitting States may wish to list, using a standard bibliographic format, the principal published references providing supplementary information on the element, such as books, articles, audiovisual materials or websites. Such published works should not be sent along with the nomination.

Not to exceed one standard page.

Abdul Rahman, Abdullah, 2005. "The UAE in the Memory of its Citizens", Economic Life, UAE. "Aflaj, Arteries of Life in the UAE Dating to Pre-Islamic Era". Science and Environment Supplement, Khaleej Newspaper, UAE (12th November 2014).

Al Aidaros, Mohamed Hassan. "Aflaj of Al Ain City". Al Ain, UAE: Dar Al Motanabbi Publishing House.

"Al Ain, City of Falaj and Oasis" Al Ain- UAE (2010).

Albatanoni, Kamal EIDin Hassan, 2006. "Heritage Knowledge in the Arab World Desert". Zayed International Environment Award, UAE.

Al Kuwaity, Sultan "Guardian of Al Ain Falaj Memories" (Article), Al Ain- UAE, 2010.

Al Sanjari, Ammar, "Aflaj and Oases of Al Ain City" (undated research paper), Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Al Tikriti, Walid, 2011. Archeology of Falaj: a field study of the ancient irrigation systems of the UAE. Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, UAE: TCA Abu Dhabi

Heritage Committee, Zayed I Secondary School, «Popular Heritage in the UAE" (Magazine), Al Ain 7 September 1978, UAE.

Media Affairs Center, 2008. "Underground Water in the UAE" March, UAE.

Mohamed, Dawood, 2013. "Aflaj Al Ain: Dividing Water Shares by Shadow Measurement". Across the UAE Newspaper, 13th April.

Research Department, 2006. "Protection Current Status of Aflaj in the Al Ain Area". Abu Dhabi, UAE: Environment Agency

Tamam, Hamdy, 1992. "Man and Home Country", (December) Zayed Collection, UAE. <http://www.zayed.ae/sait/show.php?id=242>

7. Signature(s) on behalf of the State(s) Party(ies)

The nomination should be signed by the official empowered to do so on behalf of the State Party, together with his or her name, title and the date of submission.

In the case of multinational nominations, the document should contain the name, title and signature of an official of each State Party submitting the nomination.

Name: Saif Saeed Ghobash

Title: Undersecretary / Department of Culture and Tourism- Abu Dhabi

Date: 6 March 2019

Signature:



Name(s), title(s) and signature(s) of other official(s) (For multinational nominations only)