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The Intergovernmental Committee meets in Chengdu, China

On 23 May 2007, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held its first extraordinary session in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, China. The well-organized meeting, which was accompanied by a number of events that turned Chengdu temporarily into the world capital of intangible heritage, tackled various complex issues that are crucial for the imminent implementation of the Convention. Among them was the development of criteria for inscription on the Convention's two Lists, the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. There were also preliminary discussions on several related issues, such as: how will the Lists relate to each other? Can an element appear on both Lists at the same time? May an element be moved from one List to the other if conditions permit or demand it? Should inscribed forms of heritage remain on a List in perpetuity or only for a limited period of time?

The Chengdu session also discussed the issue of consultative assistance. The Committee is expected to rely heavily on the advice and expertise of specialized local, national and international NGOs and individual experts both within and outside the communities of tradition-bearers and practitioners. In Chengdu, the Committee adopted a set of criteria that will allow it both to accredit NGOs for future assistance and to review the collaboration between these

NGOs and the Committee. These criteria stress not only an NGO's competence in the field of ICH, but also its acceptance of the objectives and spirit of the Convention, particularly in relation to cooperation with communities and groups. However, the functions of NGOs, as well as the different ways in which communities and their representatives may be involved in implementing the Convention, will need further discussion at the Tokyo session.

(cont'd to page 2)



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The opening of the session by H.E. Mr Sun Jiazheng, Minister of Culture, People's Republic of China (4th from the right), H.E. Mr Jiang Jufeng, Governor of the Sichuan Province (3rd from the right) and H.E. Mr Zhang Xinsheng, Chairman of the Executive Board of UNESCO and Vice Minister of Education (3rd from the left).

Editorial

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Section continues to concentrate on serving the organs of the 2003 Convention: after the ordinary (June) and extraordinary (early November) sessions of the General Assembly of the States Parties, the year 2006 ended with the first ordinary session of the Convention's Intergovernmental Committee (mid-November).

Following the extraordinary session of the Committee in Chengdu at the end of May 2007, hosted with exemplary efficiency by the Chinese authorities, the Committee will meet again, for its second ordinary session (3-7 September) in Tokyo, at the invitation of the Japanese Government. This issue of the *Messenger* contains detailed reports of the Chengdu meeting.

The main objective of both this year's meetings is to draw up as many Operational Directives as

possible for the implementation of the Convention. The Directives now under preparation focus on the inscription of intangible heritage elements on the Lists of the Convention, and related procedures; the selection of programmes, projects and activities for international assistance; and the use of the Intangible Heritage Fund. Once these issues have been discussed and decided by the General Assembly, the Convention will be fully operational. This means that the Committee can start drawing on the Fund, for instance to grant international assistance, inscribe elements on the Lists and select the programmes and activities that best reflect the aims of the Convention. The next session of the General Assembly is scheduled for June 2008. See you in Tokyo!

Rieks Smeets, Intangible Heritage Section



The Intergovernmental Committee during the opening of its first extraordinary session in Chengdu, China.

(cont'd from page 1) The Committee also decided that an emblem was needed to support and promote the Convention. A logo will increase the Convention's visibility – as is the case with many other UNESCO Conventions and programmes. At the Committee's next session, in Tokyo, a working group will probably be set up to organize an open competition for the design of this emblem. We will report on this in the next issue of the *Messenger*.

The incorporation in the Representative List of expressions, traditions and cultural spaces that were declared Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity was another item on the Chengdu agenda. A number of issues were clarified, in particular

with regard to rights and obligations that may follow from incorporation for Masterpieces located in countries that have not yet ratified the Convention.

Other points on the agenda concerned the admission of observers to the Committee's sessions and the financial regulations of the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Committee attached particular importance to Article 18 of the Convention, which provides for the selection and promotion of national, sub-regional and regional safeguarding programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the aims of the Convention.

All these questions led to stimulating debates that reflected the States' differing

views, expectations and approaches towards intangible cultural heritage and the Convention. Thanks to the energetic and knowledgeable Chinese presidency, consensus was reached on many issues and valuable guidance was provided on other points. This will enable the Secretariat to prepare working documents for the next meeting that will present other sets of draft Operational Directives for discussion by the Committee.

The criteria for inscription of intangible heritage on the Convention's Lists

In Chengdu, the Intergovernmental Committee achieved one of its top priorities: to elaborate the criteria for inscribing intangible heritage on the Convention's Representative List and Urgent Safeguarding List. This followed a period of consultation and deliberation that had begun with several expert meetings convened by the Secretariat before the Convention entered into force on 20 April 2006. The first, "Criteria for inscription on the lists established by the 2003 Convention", was organized by UNESCO on 5 and 6 December 2005 in Paris. A second meeting, "Community Involvement in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage", co-organized with the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), was held in Tokyo from 13 to 15 March 2006.

At its first ordinary session (27 to 29 June 2006), the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention called upon the Committee to draw up the selection criteria for inscription on the two Lists. The Committee accordingly deliberated this issue at its first session in Algiers (18 to 19 November 2006). A lively initial debate was followed by a period for States Parties to submit written

comments; 32 States took up the invitation to comment on the character of the two Lists, their respective criteria for inscription, and the nomination and inscription procedures. In response to a generous invitation of the Government of India, UNESCO organized an "Expert Meeting on the Lists Established in the 2003 Convention" in New Delhi (2 to 4 April 2007). Experts considered a revised draft set of criteria for the Representative List and a newly drafted set of criteria for the Urgent Safeguarding List, making a number of suggestions that the Secretariat found useful when preparing the draft criteria examined by the Committee in Chengdu.

In Chengdu, the Committee considered the criteria for the Urgent Safeguarding List before turning to the Representative List. The two sets of criteria are very similar. However, the second and sixth criteria on the Urgent Safeguarding List relate to the need for urgent safeguarding (or extremely urgent safeguarding, as specified in Article 17.3 of the Convention) and the procedures for consultation with States Parties in cases of extreme urgency. By contrast, the Representative List's second criterion stipulates that elements proposed

for inscription must satisfy the objectives of the Representative List as laid out in Article 16.

According to the first criterion – common to both Lists – the element nominated must satisfy the Convention's definition of intangible cultural heritage. An annotated application form will explain to nominating States Parties how they can best demonstrate that an element meets the definition. Committee Members called for ongoing attention to the definitions of various terms used in the Convention, with several Members suggesting a revision of the *Glossary of Intangible Cultural Heritage* published in June 2002. Other Members, however, felt that the Committee should concentrate on implementing the Convention, and that the task of updating definitions should be seen as ongoing.

The third criterion, concerned with safeguarding measures, is also similar for both Lists. Committee Members agreed with the view previously expressed by the experts who met in New Delhi that even healthy elements inscribed on the Representative List need an operational management plan, particularly to try to mitigate some of the dangers inherent in the inscription process itself. A more



H.E. Mr Wang Xuexian (China), Chairperson of the Committee session in Chengdu.



Some of the local press coverage of the first Intangible Cultural Heritage Festival (see page 4).



elaborate safeguarding plan would of course be required for elements on the Urgent Safeguarding List (whose viability is threatened) than for those on the Representative List.

The fourth criterion (identical for both Lists) addresses the participation and consent of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned. Committee members agreed that the active participation of those concerned with an element was essential to the preparation of a nomination and to the future implementation of safeguarding measures. While accepting the principle of requiring free, prior and informed consent, Members stressed that there could be no standard format for demonstrating consent, since different legal systems and cultural practices will demand that consent be demonstrated in different ways. As States Parties and the Committee gain experience over time, practices and standards may evolve and the Committee may be able to offer more specific guidance to nominating States about how best to demonstrate informed consent.

Members recalled that each State Party is obliged to draw up its own inventory, and the requirement that an element be included on an inventory – the gist of the fifth (identical) criterion for both Lists – can encourage States to meet that obligation. Committee Members also recalled that inventories are always works-in-progress, to be “drawn up ... [and] regularly updated”, in the words of the Convention, and this criterion does not assume that an inventory can ever be complete.

The Committee’s focus on the nomination and inscription process does not end with the adoption of these criteria. At its second session in Tokyo in September 2007, the Committee will discuss draft Operational Directives specifying the procedures to be followed, the schedule for the preparation and examination of requests, and the formats to be used by nominators. Incorporating the criteria adopted in Chengdu, the Operational Directives will be presented to the General Assembly’s second session in June 2008.

The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

In nomination files, which are to follow a format to be indicated by the Committee, the submitting State(s) Party(ies) will be requested to demonstrate that an element proposed for inscription on the Representative List satisfies all of the following criteria:

- R.1. The element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- R.2. Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility, awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity.
- R.3. Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element.
- R.4. 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.
- R.5. The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies).

The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding

In nomination files, which are to follow a format to be indicated by the Committee, the submitting State(s) Party(ies) or, in the case of extreme urgency, the nominator(s) will be requested to demonstrate that an element proposed for inscription on the Urgent Safeguarding List satisfies all of the following criteria:

- U.1. The element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- U.2. a) The element is in urgent need of safeguarding because its viability is at risk despite the efforts of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals and State(s) Party(ies) concerned.
(or)
b) The element is in extremely urgent need of safeguarding because it is facing grave threats as a result of which it cannot be expected to survive without immediate safeguarding.
- U.3. Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may enable the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned to continue the practice and transmission of the element.
- U.4. 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.
- U.5. The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies).
- U.6. In cases of extreme urgency, the State(s) Party(ies) concerned has (have) been consulted regarding inscription of the element in conformity with Article 17.3 of the Convention.

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Living heritage

Introducing young people to Intangible Heritage

What is intangible cultural heritage and why do we call it “living”? Why is it important for communities and people all around the world? In what forms is it found, how is it enacted, and how transmitted? What threats is it facing? How does UNESCO attempt to safeguard it and why do we need a Convention? These are some of the questions of today’s young people that need to be addressed.

UNESCO is making great efforts to promote the Intangible Heritage Convention in order to raise awareness of the existence and importance of intangible cultural heritage. This heritage can only be safeguarded if younger generations are sufficiently interested and motivated to carry on the traditions. So far, the Organization has not developed any materials specifically designed to introduce children to ICH and explain why it should be safeguarded. This situation will change with UNESCO’s publication of *Tell Me About ... Living Heritage*, a book addressed to children aged 8–12, inviting them to discover the rich diversity of intangible cultural heritage. Young readers will discover a number of illustrated examples of ICH from around the world, and will learn about the history of the 2003 Convention and about

UNESCO’s programmes and safeguarding plans. English, French and Spanish editions will be published in autumn 2007.

Another illustrated book popularizing intangible heritage has recently been published by the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU). *Animals in Asian Tradition – Intangible Cultural Heritage Around Us* presents living heritage traditions and expressions from all over Asia in which serpents, monkeys, elephants and lions play a major role. It covers some 30 different types of expressions from puppetry and dance dramas to festivals involving real elephants. Masks, costumes, body painting, ornaments, puppets and musical instruments are all recurrent elements in these traditions. The book, suitable for children from junior high school onwards, is the first in a series of three. ACCU promotes translation of this book into different languages in and beyond the Asian region.



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For more information, please go to:
<http://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/materials/materials1.html>



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Visitors to the photo exhibition “Living Heritage: Exploring the Intangible”.

“Living Heritage: Exploring the Intangible” photo exhibition is travelling

After Paris (France) and Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), the photo exhibition “Living Heritage: Exploring the Intangible” travelled to Chengdu (China) for the first extraordinary session of the Intergovernmental Committee. As part of the first Intangible Cultural Heritage Festival, generously supported and organized by the Municipality of Chengdu, the exhibition featured over 100 photographs of ICH expressions worldwide – most of them Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity – alongside a remarkable exhibition of photographs illustrating the more than 500 examples of ICH listed on China’s national inventory. The festival, which hosted various

events and presentations, was held from 23 May to 10 June 2007 and attracted large numbers of visitors and widespread media attention.

The exhibition now travels to Africa, where it will be shown in Addis Ababa during the Ethiopian Millennium celebrations, beginning in September 2007. With a special focus on African ICH, the exhibition will be on display both outside and inside the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).