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| **President of the General Conference** | | |
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Address

By

**H.E. Mr. Stanley Mutumba Simataa**

President

38th session of the UNESCO General Conference

**On the occasion of the Tenth Session of the Inter-governmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,**

Windhoek Country Club Resort, Windhoek, Namibia

Sunday 29 November 2015

Director of Ceremonies,

Honourable Katrina Hanse-Himarwa, Minister of Education, Arts and Culture,

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers,

Honourable Laura Mcleod-Katjirua, Governor of the Khomas Region,

Representatives of Member States on the Intergovernmental Committee and other State Parties to the 2003 Convention,

Excellencies,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure and honour for me to join the opening of the 10th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Coincidentally, this is my first engagement post the just concluded General Conference to officiate at an event as President of the 38 Session of the UNESCO General Conference. It is thus befitting that my first official bite in this capacity is here at home, in Namibia! As such, I would like to join the Governor of the Khomas Region in welcoming you to this Session, to Windhoek in particular and Namibia in general.

Profound social transformations taking place in all our countries and societies, demand fostering of social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and learning to live together. Intercultural dialogue, appreciation of and respect for cultural diversity, tolerance and mutual understanding, are preconditions for coexistence in the globalised world. Recognition of and respect for cultural diversity can forge more inclusive, stable, equitable and resilient societies urgently needed in the contemporary world.

Natural and cultural heritage, as knowledge capital and resources, have the power to create the world we want – a world characterised by equality, cultural harmony, coexistence and living together in peace and harmony.

The role of both tangible and intangible culture as enablers and drivers of sustained peace and human development, has now been recognised by the international community and cannot be overemphasised. Culture as embodiment of the human spirit, because of its social values of identity and belonging, can significantly contribute to building cohesive, creative and progressive societies. UNESCO Member States should therefore embrace and harness the full potential of culture to promote innovation and increased well-being for all, especially in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the new vision and salvation for humanity.

UNESCO Member States have a sacred responsibility under this Convention, to raise awareness at local and national levels on the importance of intangible cultural heritage and the transmission thereof from generation to generation. This heritage includes the practices, expressions, knowledge, skills, and instruments and objects associated to them by communities.

Against this background, let us acknowledge the pivotal role intangible cultural heritage plays in the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda. Indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices embedded in our cultures, are powerful tools to address pressing challenges facing humanity today.

These challenges amongst others include poverty and hunger in all its dimensions, climate change and natural disasters, loss of biodiversity, social marginalisation and economic inequalities.

The UNESCO convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by the General Conference in 2003, recognises the role of communities, in particular indigenous committees, groups and individuals in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

With these few remarks, I wish the 10th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage all success in your considerations of the periodic reports of State Parties on the implementation of the Convention, your examination of the current status of elements inscribed on the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, and of course your consideration of new inscriptions on the Lists.

I thank you.