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Operational Directives for the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

During its second extraordinary session, held in February 2008 in Sofia, Bulgaria, the Intergovernmental Committee completed its first major challenge: the preparation of a set of draft Operational Directives to guide implementation of the Convention. This was also the last session of the Committee in its present composition. During the upcoming second session (16 to 19 June 2008, Paris) the General Assembly is expected to approve the Operational Directives and elect twelve new members to the Committee.

Ms Irina Bokova, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Bulgaria to UNESCO, deftly chaired the Sofia meeting, which was the last of four Committee sessions to be held over 16 months, previous meetings having taken place in Algiers, Chengdu and Tokyo. During the sessions the Committee focused on the development of the Operational Directives, at the request of the General Assembly of the States Parties. Following discussion and approval of the directives by the General Assembly, the Convention will become fully operational.

At the Sofia session the Committee reiterated its vision that the primary purpose of the Convention is safeguarding – both in partnership with and for the practitioners and other tradition bearers. For this reason, great importance has been attached by the Committee to the Urgent Safeguarding List as well as to the selection and promotion of safeguarding activ-



H.E. Ms Irina Bokova (Bulgaria), Chairperson of the second extraordinary session of the Committee in Sofia.

ities that best reflect the objectives of the Convention.

The first major item on the agenda in Sofia was the participation of communities, groups, individuals, research centres and institutes in the implementation of the Convention. A special subsidiary body of the Committee, chaired by Senegal, had prepared a set of draft Operational Directives on this issue which were presented to the Committee, discussed and accepted. These directives, which mainly elaborate upon Articles 13 to 15 of the Convention, deal in particular with implementation of the Convention at the national level.

(cont'd on page 2)

Editorial

This edition of the *Messenger* brings good news. It covers the most recent Intergovernmental Committee session, during which the preparation of a set of draft Operational Directives for the Convention was successfully completed. Moreover, the *Messenger* is also now available in Russian thanks to our colleague Liubava Moreva in UNESCO's Moscow Office. This brings the number of language versions to five. Finally, this issue presents four safeguarding projects, undertaken in very different regions and situations, and along very different lines. What these UNESCO projects have in common, however, is their important contribution to ensuring the viability of practices and expressions that provide the communities and individuals concerned with a sense of identity and continuity.

Let me inform you also that the Intangible Heritage Section is preparing the third, revised edition, of *UNESCO's Atlas of Endangered Languages*. An online version will be launched in 2008 – the UN Year of Languages – with the printed edition to follow in 2009. Furthermore, the exhibition *Living Heritage: Exploring the Intangible*, which was displayed on the fences surrounding UNESCO's Fontenoy building, can still be viewed on UNESCO's ICH website at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/ich/expo/>. An online version of the exhibition specially adapted for blind and visually impaired persons will be launched in the near future.

Rieks Smeets, Intangible Heritage Section



(cont'd from page 1)

A directive was adopted encouraging the Committee to facilitate the participation in its meeting of all actors mentioned above. A further directive calls for States Parties to share documentation concerning elements of the intangible heritage present in the territories of other States Parties, with the aim of making it available specifically to the communities concerned.

Among the most pressing issues was the addition to the Representative List of 90 items proclaimed as Masterpieces between 2001 and 2005 – in particular the question of such items located in countries not yet party to the Convention. The Committee confirmed that all items proclaimed as Masterpieces will be automatically incorporated, and that the rights and obligations that follow cannot be invoked or applied separately. States non-party to the Convention will be invited to accept these rights and assume these obligations. Should a non-party State refuse or otherwise fail to do so, the Committee will have the right to withdraw its Masterpiece from the Representative List.

Other points debated by the Committee concerned the accreditation of non-governmental organizations and a proposal for the use of the Fund of the Convention for the next two years. The Committee also engaged in a preliminary exchange of ideas on the use of the future emblem of the Convention.

The Committee further amended its Rules of Procedure, thus allowing itself to entrust any duty it wishes to its Bureau and confirming that the Bureau may meet, at UNESCO Headquarters, as frequently as it deems necessary in between Committee sessions.

The last two items of the meeting concerned the consolidation of all Operational Directives prepared over the last three Committee sessions into one document and the report of the Committee on its activities. Both documents will be presented to the General Assembly in June.

The meeting, attended by 50 States Parties and 24 States non-party to the Convention, continued the spirit of cooperation and efficiency that has been the trademark of the Committee from the very beginning. The Bulgarian presidency and organizers did everything to ensure the meeting went smoothly, and embedded it within an ambitious cultural programme.

The Cocolo dancing drama tradition, Dominican Republic

The Cocolo dancing drama tradition first developed in the mid-nineteenth century among Caribbean English-speaking migrant workers who had come to the Dominican Republic. The community remained linguistically and culturally distinct, establishing their own churches, schools, benevolent societies and mutual assistance lodges. Their dancing drama performances were their most distinctive form of cultural expression. Blending music and dance, the tradition draws stylistically upon African origins whilst adding elements taken from European, often Biblical, traditions.

Cocolo drama performances would take place at Christmas, on St Peter's day and at carnivals, with troupes weaving together themes and performances from a variety of cultures, including Christmas caroling, masquerades, or the staging of theatrical adaptations of renowned stories or themes, such as 'David and Goliath', 'Moko-Yombi' or 'Cowboys and Indians'.

Today, the descendants of the Cocolos are well-integrated within Dominican society and dispersed across the country. While the elders still speak Caribbean-English at home, the majority has switched to Spanish. The tradition has consequently suffered; there remains only one troop of elder actors committed to transmitting the tradition to younger generations.

UNESCO's Havana Office, working in close cooperation with community members, developed a small project to contribute to the revitalization of the tradition. It aimed to improve practice conditions by enhancing recognition of the tradition and increasing financial support. Central to the plan was the organization of a festival that took place for the first time in December 2007 in San Pedro de Macorís, the 200-year-old birthplace of Cocolo history. The festival, named Good Morning Wavaberry after a traditional Cocolo song, highlighted the remarkable contribution of the Cocolos to Dominican culture. It also provided an opportunity for the Cocolo community to discuss urgent strategies to safeguard their cultural expressions, and helped to raise awareness at the national level. A vital step, though, was the legal registration of the Cocolo Community, which may, in the long-term, secure the tradition bearers' official status and recognition within Dominican society.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2007-2008

BUDGET: 6,000 USD (UNESCO Regular Programme)

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The Convention inspires States parties and non States parties alike.

The French city of Rennes, for instance, earlier this year made Municipal Councillor Ana Sohier its first Delegate for Intangible Cultural Heritage, while in Canada, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, which has included the preservation of ICH as a key element in its Provincial Strategic Culture Plan, hired Dale Jarvis as the province's first Intangible Cultural Heritage Development Officer.

What is more, Memorial University at St John, from which Mr Jarvis graduated, is presently cooperating with the Government to conduct a pilot inventory of the province's ICH. The government's overall goal is 'to ensure that the intangible cultural heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador is safeguarded as a living heritage and source of contemporary creativity'. See http://www.arts.mun.ca/hypertext/websites/ich/resources/ICH_Strategy_Final_Draft-april.pdf

(Left). First Festival of the Cocolo Culture in the streets of San Pedro de Macorís, Dominican Republic



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(Right) Chief Paul Tahi Hubwehubwen Vanua, from North Pentecost island, President of the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs, wearing pig tusks, Bari memea money mats and Homu shell bead necklace, Port Vila, September 2004. (Far right) The procession on 18 November 2006 in Port Vila celebrating the Vanuatu Government's official declaration of 2007 as the "Year of the Traditional Economy".



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Safeguarding board games of the Afar and Somali people of the Horn of Africa

Traditional board games have long been an important pastime among the nomadic societies of the Horn of Africa. Practice and transmission of these games is now at risk, though, as a result of urbanization and the effects of globalization. In response, Djibouti requested UNESCO's assistance for a pilot project to help safeguard these games.

In 2007, UNESCO responded by launching a project to revitalize the practice of these traditional games among all age groups. In particular, it focuses on the transmission of the board games *Bub*, *Riyo ka dhalis* and *Shax* to Afar and Somali children in Djibouti. The project, financed through UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust, will run until 2009.

The Centre for Studies and Research in Djibouti conducted fieldwork for the project in various parts of the country. The team of this national research institute interviewed knowledgeable players and collected information on the practice, function and history of the games. One result of the study was the production of a model kit, containing all the materials necessary to play the games. The kit was developed by the local association Paix & Lait and plans are foreseen to distribute it throughout schools.

Paix & Lait is also preparing school workshops in which experienced board game players will coach children. At the project's end, those involved will evaluate the results and discuss strategies for a national safeguarding plan for these traditional Afar and Somali games.

The project, which is managed from UNESCO's Nairobi Office, is still ongoing, but already the enthusiasm for game play has increased. On 31 December 2007, the ministry responsible for culture organized the first national tournament of traditional board games. Some 120 players fought their way through regional competitions to participate in the tournament, which was covered extensively by the national media.

As a result of this project, Djibouti is acquiring valuable experience in identifying, documenting and safeguarding a part of the rich intangible heritage of the communities that make up its society.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2007-2009

BUDGET: 53,000 USD (UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust)

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Traditional Money Banks in Vanuatu

In Vanuatu, items like pig tusks, some types of woven mats and stringed shells, have a generally recognized cultural value. They also possess economic value due to their use in the local economy, and bestow social prestige.

In 2004, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (or VKS, Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta) launched a project designed to strengthen and promote an unusual kind of banking system based on traditional wealth items instead of regular money. With the support of UNESCO's Apia Office, VKS's voluntary "fieldworkers", who are in fact community members motivated to participate in the project, were provided with materials, such as pig fences and barbed wires that helped them to secure their existence within the local economy and for which they had to pay in traditional wealth items. This had the effect of supporting the continuous production of items of traditional wealth, stimulating income generation, and encouraging the revival of traditional Vanuatu practices and values.

First, a field survey identified communities for which traditional banking could be beneficial. This was followed by the development of strategies to promote the production and banking of various traditional forms of wealth. In addition to the creation of traditional money banks, a national campaign was organized to enhance awareness of the functions and values of traditional economic approaches. The Vanuatu Government declared 2007 the 'Year of the Traditional Economy', celebrating the declaration with a procession on 18 November 2006 in Port Vila. This firmly embedded traditional economies, and the safeguarding of the knowledge and practices involved, within government policy.

The devotion of VKS made the implementation of the project a success. It liaised between chiefs of local communities and government representatives, involving both sides in project development and implementation. The Centre made active and efficient use of its unique network of fieldworkers – the most far-reaching network of any organization in Vanuatu, and the most effective grass-roots cultural network in the Pacific, thus successfully extending the project across the country. VKS's network model has been presented in other Pacific countries that might consider the development of the same kind of system with their own relevant modifications.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2004-2007

BUDGET: 159,305 USD ((UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust)

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Demonstration of the traditional game "Ri'yo Ka Dhalis" at the launch of the project in February 2007.

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AGENDA 2008

10 APRIL – 10 JUNE

Photo exhibition: “Living Heritage: Exploring the Intangible”. Santo Domingo (Parque Independencia) and Ciudad de Santiago, Dominican Republic.

16–19 JUNE

Second Session of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. UNESCO, Paris.

23–24 JUNE

Workshop: “Capacity-Building on the Implementation of the 2003 Convention for the African States Parties to the Convention”. UNESCO, Paris. Observers from other States Parties are welcome.

15 SEPTEMBER – 15 OCTOBER

Photo exhibition: “Living Heritage: Exploring the Intangible” on show on Platia Eleftherias and in the streets of Ledras et Onasagorou. Nicosia, Cyprus.

4–8 NOVEMBER

Third session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Istanbul, Turkey.

For further information, contact: ich@unesco.org

Shashmaqom – safeguarding of a common heritage

Shashmaqom is the classical music tradition *par excellence* of Central Asia. This urban music tradition has evolved over more than ten centuries in the towns of what today are Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and is closely associated with the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand.

The word ‘Shashmaqom’ means ‘six maqoms’, ‘Maqom’ designating a musical suite, combining instrumental music with vocals. The singer or singers are accompanied by an orchestra of lutes, fiddles, frame-drums and flutes. Performances generally open with an instrumental introduction followed by the *nasr* – the main vocal section consisting of two sets of songs.

The practice of *Shashmaqom* requires special training based on oral transmission from master to student, since standard notation can record only the basic framework.

From the 1970s on, many *Shashmaqom* performers emigrated, in particular to Israel and the United States. Following independence in 1991, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have taken measures to safeguard *Shashmaqom*, but only a few performers have maintained local styles. Today, the overwhelming majority of performers are graduates of one institution, the Tashkent Conservatory, which offers training in *Shashmaqom* composition.

The proclamation by UNESCO of *Shashmaqom* as a Masterpiece in 2003 was followed by a two-year project, which included training programmes and master classes, traditional instrument-making, the preparation of an inventory, archive support and the publication of research and audio recordings. One remarkable aspect of this project, which was managed by UNESCO’s Tashkent and Almaty Offices, was the joint organization by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan of an ‘International Festival of *Shashmaqom* Performers’ in November 2006. The festival took place in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. Several *Maqom* artists from different regions of Tajikistan performed, joint performances by Tajik and Uzbek artists making the event a unique celebration of cultural dialogue and mutual understanding. The event received wide media coverage and was followed by a Round Table on the Safeguarding of *Shashmaqom* Traditions, which gathered scholars, performers and composers from the two countries.

The project succeeded in uniting practitioners of the *Shashmaqom* community from both sides of the border. This will hopefully contribute to the viability of this musical tradition.

The project also resulted in the organization of numerous master classes on performing and instrument-making, while inventory work and training has commenced at the Tajik National Conservatory in Dushanbe and the Research Institute of Fine Arts in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). The project has also made a significant contribution to the revitalization and creation of new networks of institutions concerned for the safeguarding of *Shashmaqom* and intangible heritage at large.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: 2005–2008

BUDGET: 218,456 USD (UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust)

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Shashmaqom master Rustam Boltaev teaches a student during a Masterclass organised during the project.



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