



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

# 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage



Sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for  
the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage  
22-29 November 2011, Bali, Indonesia

**MEDIA KIT**

## **You will find in this kit ...**

1. Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, basic information
2. Elements inscribed in 2011
3. Questions and answers
4. Intangible heritage in different countries
5. Inscription process
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# MEDIA KIT

# 1. Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (6.COM)

22 to 29 November 2011, Bali, Indonesia

Bali International Convention Centre (BICC)  
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<http://www.baliconvention.com>

The Committee's main functions are to promote the objectives of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage objectives, provide guidance on best practices and make recommendations on measures for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The Committee examines States' reports on the implementation of the Convention, nominations submitted by countries for inscription on the ICH Lists and proposals for programmes and projects that best reflect the objectives of the Convention; it is also in charge of granting international assistance. The Committee's 24 members are elected by the General Assembly of the States Parties according to rules of equitable geographical representation and rotation.

**Chairperson:** Aman Wirakartakusumah (Indonesia)  
**Vice-Chairs:** Albania, Nicaragua, Niger, Morocco and Spain  
**Rapporteur:** Ion de la Riva (Spain)

**Committee 24 members:**  
Albania, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, China, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Grenada, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Oman, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Spain and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

**For online media kit, live webcast of the Committee meeting and more please go to:**  
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/6COM/>

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## 2. Elements inscribed during the 6th session of the Committee

### URGENT SAFEGUARDING LIST

Of the 23 candidates for the Urgent Safeguarding List, **11** were inscribed.

	File	Title	State
1.	00521	Yaokwa, the Enawene Nawe people's ritual for the maintenance of social and cosmic order	Brazil
2.	00530	Hezhen Yimakan storytelling	China
3.	00509	Saman dance	Indonesia
4.	00535	Naqqāli, Iranian dramatic story-telling	Iran
5.	00534	Traditional skills of building and sailing Iranian Lenj boats in the Persian Gulf	Iran
6.	00520	Secret society of the Kôrêdugaw, the rite of wisdom in Mali	Mali
7.	00524	The Moorish epic T'heydinn	Mauritania
8.	00543	Folk long song performance technique of Limbe performances - circular breathing	Mongolia
9.	00531	Eshuva, Harákmbut sung prayers of Peru's Huachipaire people	Peru
10.	00517	Al Sadu, traditional weaving skills in the United Arab Emirates	United Arab Emirates
11.	00538	Xoan singing of Phú Thọ Province, Viet Nam	Viet Nam

### REGISTER OF BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

Out of 12 proposals for Best Safeguarding Practices, **5** were selected.

	File	Title	State
1.	00513	A programme of cultivating ludodiversity: safeguarding traditional games in Flanders	Belgium
2.	00504	Call for projects of the National Program of Intangible Heritage	Brazil
3.	00502	Fandango's Living Museum	Brazil
4.	00515	The Táncház method: a Hungarian model for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage	Hungary
5.	00511	Revitalization of the traditional craftsmanship of lime-making in Morón de la Frontera, Seville, Andalusia	Spain

## REPRESENTATIVE LIST

Out of 49 nominations for the Representative List, **19** were inscribed.

	File	Title	State
1.	00404	Leuven age set ritual repertoire	Belgium
2.	00421	Chinese shadow puppetry	China
3.	00574	Traditional knowledge of the jaguar shamans of Yuruparí	Colombia
4.	00358	Bećarac singing and playing from Eastern Croatia	Croatia
5.	00359	Nijemo Kolo, silent circle dance of the Dalmatian hinterland	Croatia
6.	00536	Tsiattista poetic duelling	Cyprus
7.	00564	Ride of the Kings in the south-east of the Czech Republic	Czech Rep
8.	00440	Equitation in the French tradition	France
9.	00411	Mibu no Hana Taue, ritual of transplanting rice in Mibu, Hiroshima	Japan
10.	00412	Sada Shin Noh, sacred dancing at Sada shrine, Shimane	Japan
11.	00568	Cultural practices and expressions linked to the balafon of the Senufo communities of Mali and Burkina Faso	Mali, Burkina Faso
12.	00575	Mariachi, string music, song and trumpet	Mexico
13.	00567	Pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the Lord of Qoyllurit'i	Peru
14.	00563	Fado, urban popular song of Portugal	Portugal
15.	00448	Jultagi, tightrope walking	Rep Korea
16.	00452	Taekkyeon, a traditional Korean martial art	Rep Korea
17.	00453	Weaving of Mosi (fine ramie) in the Hansan region	Rep Korea
18.	00576	Festivity of 'la Mare de Déu de la Salut' of Algemesí	Spain
19.	00388	Ceremonial Keşkek tradition	Turkey

# MEDIA KIT

### 3. Questions and answers

#### What is intangible cultural heritage?

Intangible cultural heritage (“ICH”) refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and know-how, transmitted from generation to generation within communities, created and transformed continuously by them, depending on the environment and their interaction with nature and history.

Heritage, as it is transmitted from generation to generation.

Cultural, as it provides to communities a sense of identity and continuity, as culture does.

Intangible, as it lies essentially in the human spirit, is transmitted by imitation and immersion in a practice, and doesn’t necessarily require a specific place or material objects.

Intangible cultural heritage exists only in the present. The expressions of the past that are no longer practised are part of cultural history, but are not intangible cultural heritage as defined in the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage is what communities today recognize as part of their cultural heritage. Therefore, it is often called “living heritage”.

#### Why is it important?

Intangible cultural heritage adapts permanently to the present and constitutes cultural capital that can be a powerful driver for development. Food security, health, education, sustainable use of natural resources – intangible cultural heritage is a wealth of knowledge to be used in many aspects of life. Women hold a special place in the transmission of intangible heritage and have knowledge that contributes to their empowerment and to revenue generation.

ICH is also vital for maintaining cultural diversity in the face of globalization. Understanding ICH contributes to intercultural dialogue, encourages mutual respect and ensures social cohesion. The importance of ICH is not the cultural manifestation itself; it lies in its significance to communities. Its value is both intangible and tangible, linked to the social and economic effects of the knowledge and skills transmitted through it.

Find out more and see examples in the brochure included in this kit and at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/kit/>

#### Why is this UNESCO’s concern?

As the only United Nations agency with a specific mandate in culture, UNESCO works to safeguard cultural heritage and promote cultural diversity as a force for dialogue and development. It encourages international cooperation and knowledge-sharing and supports Member States in building their human and institutional capacities.

#### What is UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage?

Adopted in 2003 after 60 years of work in this domain, the Convention is the international community’s first binding multilateral instrument intended to safeguard and raise the profile of this heritage. Its goal is to incite countries to care about and look after the ICH present on their territories.

#### What are the responsibilities of States that ratify the Convention?

At the national level, States Parties are asked to take the necessary measures to safeguard the ICH present on their territory: define and inventory the ICH, with the participation of the communities concerned; adopt policies and establish institutions to monitor and promote it; encourage research; and take other appropriate safeguarding measures, always with the full consent and participation of the communities concerned. Each State Party submits regular progress reports to the Committee, starting six years after ratifying the Convention. The first ever submitted reports are coming this year (see the Agenda of the Committee).

States are also invited to nominate elements to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage In Need of Urgent Safeguarding, the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices, which are all mechanisms to focus international attention on ICH. States also have the possibility of asking for international assistance from the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The resources of this Fund consist of contributions made by States Parties.

Only the States Parties to the Convention may submit nominations. They have an obligation to ensure the widest possible participation of the communities in elaborating the safeguarding measures. They must also obtain their free, prior and informed consent. Nominations or requests for international assistance made by several States are strongly encouraged, as many elements of intangible cultural heritage are present in several territories and practised by a community established in several countries, contiguous or not.

Read the text of the Convention: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/convention/>

### **What are the criteria for the Lists?**

To be inscribed on either of the Lists, an element must satisfy five inscription criteria. Three of these are common to both the Urgent Safeguarding List and the Representative List. First, the element proposed must fit the definition of ICH in Article 2 of the Convention. The element must also be included in an inventory, and nominated with the consent and widest possible participation of the communities concerned.

Safeguarding measures must be elaborated, and the State must demonstrate, for the Urgent Safeguarding List, that despite the efforts of the State and community concerned, the viability of the element is at risk.

For the Representative List, the State has to demonstrate that inscription of the submitted element will promote visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance, encourage dialogue and reflect the cultural diversity of the world.

See nomination forms and explanations of the criteria at:

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011>

### **Who decides what elements are inscribed and how the Fund is used?**

The 24-member Intergovernmental Committee, which meets every year in November. All the States that have ratified the Convention – 139 to date – meet in the General Assembly every two years to decide on strategy and elect the Committee. The Committee evaluates nominations submitted by States Parties for inscription on the Lists and considers requests for international assistance (see agenda of sixth session). For the Urgent Safeguarding List, the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices and requests for sums greater than US\$25,000, the Committee bases its decisions on recommendations from its Consultative Body of experts and NGOs. A Subsidiary Body composed of six States Members of the Committee gives recommendations to the Committee for the inscriptions on the Representative List.

### **What is the impact of inscription on the Lists for communities and States?**

The UNESCO delegate from Peru recently reported what happened in his country last year after two elements were inscribed on the Representative List: "These two elements belong to small communities. Yet when the news of the inscriptions came out (and was covered in all the media) in Peru, this became a national celebration that lasted about two weeks, to the surprise of all those working in culture. As if Peru had won the football World Cup! After that there was a process of reflection nationwide. All of a sudden universities, research centres, cultural associations and the communities, with very little involvement from the government, organized symposia, meetings, round tables, workshops. In Peru, the Division for Intangible



Heritage was established in 2003, so we have been working for almost 10 years now, but in terms of the momentum, we can really say that everything started with the inscription. Communities on their own initiative started preparing files to present for the Representative List. In Peru, even at the grassroots, even in villages, there is now a growing knowledge of the Convention and of intangible heritage and this is a very, very interesting process”.

### **What is the difference between the 1972 World Heritage Convention and the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention?**

The World Heritage Convention deals with monuments, cultural sites and natural sites of outstanding universal value; experts and site managers are key actors for identification and protection; communities are involved.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention deals with practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills that communities recognize as their cultural heritage; communities and bearers are key actors for safeguarding and transmission; experts are associated.

## **Questions and answers part 2: ICH Issues. Pertinent questions**

### **How can you safeguard something intangible?**

Not in the same way that you safeguard other cultural heritage. Because ICH is living heritage, safeguarding requires strengthening and reinforcing the diverse and varied circumstances, tangible and intangible, that are necessary for the continuous evolution and interpretation of intangible cultural heritage, as well as for its transmission to future generations. It is necessary to find a balance between safeguarding it and allowing it to grow and adapt to the community’s present reality – which may even mean allowing it to die out.

More: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00012>

### **Is the idea for countries to nominate as many elements to the Lists as possible?**

No, the Lists are not intended to be a global inventory. The first priority of the 2003 Convention is to encourage States Parties to safeguard intangible cultural heritage present on their territories, whether or not it is listed internationally. There is no competition in the number of elements inscribed! And the number of elements inscribed by a country doesn’t mean it is richer in terms of ICH than another that has no elements inscribed.

### **Isn’t the Representative List just a beauty contest?**

No. The elements are not inscribed because they are beautiful, original, authentic or unique, but because they are intangible cultural heritage and meaningful to their communities. The objectives of the List are to ensure better visibility of the ICH and awareness of its significance, and to encourage dialogue which respects cultural diversity.

### **If an element, for example a carnival, is on the Representative List, does it mean it is superior to other carnivals?**

No. Inscription does not imply an element is “better” or universally valuable, only that it is valuable to the community or individuals who are the bearers of the element.

### **What about cultural practices that are controversial – like bullfighting – or even contrary to internationally recognized human rights?**

For the purpose of the Convention, only ICH that is compatible with international human rights instruments, mutual respect among communities and sustainable development can be considered. Elements considered controversial can spark fruitful debate.



**Are endangered languages and religion included in UNESCO’s definition of ICH?**

No, not as such. Specific languages cannot in themselves be nominated as elements to the Lists, but only as vehicles of the intangible heritage of a given group or community.

Many intangible heritage elements do depend on highly specialized languages traditionally used by the community concerned, and thus certain aspects of a language may need to be safeguarded as vehicles of ICH. A majority of Member States, however, did not think that the ICH Convention was the ideal instrument for safeguarding the world’s linguistic diversity. In a similar way, organized religions cannot be nominated specifically as elements for inscriptions, although much intangible heritage has spiritual aspects. ICH elements relating to religious traditions are normally presented as belonging under the domain of “knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe” or “social practices, ritual and festive events”. States have very different linguistic, religious, ethnic and other diversities that have an impact on groups’ sense of identity within the State. Trying to reach consensus over the place to give language or religion within ICH policies would have seriously delayed the elaboration of the Convention.

**How are we sure it is the communities and not the State wanting to safeguard certain elements?**

States Parties must provide evidence of the communities’ consent as part of their nomination files and must also demonstrate that the communities are fully involved in the safeguarding process.

**Isn’t there a risk that inscription of elements will be misappropriated for commercial gain?**

When profit from tourism or craft production, for instance, becomes a goal in itself, to the possible detriment of the element in its community context, we can talk about “over-commercialization”. Communities should not lose control over the processes. But economic income can be important in the practice and transmission of an ICH element, as when it provides a group’s livelihood. Economic value can contribute to safeguarding in ways welcomed by the community.

**Is there a limit to the number of elements a State can nominate?**

Not at present, but the subject is being debated. The examination process is painstaking and should not be compromised by excessive quantity.

**Why haven’t all countries ratified the Convention?**

They will. In some countries, constitutional frameworks or domestic considerations mean that ratification is slower. But the Convention has been met with enthusiasm around the world and has been ratified more quickly than any other UNESCO treaty.

## 4. Intangible heritage in different countries

The following examples illustrate how countries around the world are implementing the Convention. More: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/kit/>

### Traditional banking in Vanuatu

Pig tusks, woven mats and stringed shells have not only cultural but also economic value in Vanuatu: they are used instead of money. In 2004, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VKS) launched a project to promote a banking system based on traditional wealth items. The project, stressing the functions and values of traditional approaches, spread throughout the country. It reached the level of government policy when 2007 was declared “Year of the Traditional Economy”.

### Oral poetry leads to literacy in Yemen

Government-sponsored literacy classes for rural Yemeni women were making little progress because their content, geared to modern economies, was not relevant to the women’s daily lives, based on traditional herding and fishing. A new program focused on oral, or spoken, poetry, which plays a prominent role in Yemeni society, did the trick. The women began to write down the songs and proverbs they composed. The effect was doubly positive: as women learners became more socially active, their poems began to reflect modern issues, thereby invigorating the endangered oral tradition.

### Documentation revives Tham Roc puppetry in Viet Nam

The rod puppetry of the Tay people of Tham Roc village in Thai Nguyen province, north of Hanoi, had not been performed for decades when a few villagers began looking for ways to revive it. In 1999, a researcher at the national Museum of Ethnology, himself a Tay, suggested the museum make a video. The project motivated village elders to take the puppets out of storage and bring them back to life. The video’s success led to more shows, the skills of making and manipulating puppets were reestablished, and the tradition is going strong again.

### Photographing living heritage in Kenya

In 2010, 12 professional photographers were trained to hone their skills to document living heritage. Their photos of traditions and craftsmanship in Nairobi were then presented as an exhibition and published as a book.

### Reviving traditional transmission of Georgian polyphony

Polyphonic singing, music with two or more separate melodic voices, is a popular tradition that used to be a central part of all areas of everyday life in Georgia, from ploughing fields to curing illnesses and celebrating festivities. With the support of UNESCO a project was launched to support the viability of the traditional polyphony. As a result seven youth folk centers were set up in different regions to transmit the musical tradition. At each centre, 10 to 15 young students received training for a three-year period.

### Cocolo dancing tradition in the Dominican Republic

The Cocolo dancing tradition first emerged in the mid-nineteenth century among Caribbean-English speaking immigrant workers who had come to the Dominican Republic. The community remained culturally and linguistically distinct and established their own churches, schools, benevolent societies and mutual assistance lodges. Cocolo drama performances take place at Christmas, on St Peter’s Day and at carnivals. UNESCO, in close cooperation with community members, developed a 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. It was also an opportunity for the Cocolo community to discuss strategies to safeguard their cultural expressions, and helped raise awareness at a national level. Another vital step was the legal registration of the Cocolo community, which in the long term may secure the tradition bearers’ official status and recognition within Dominican society.

## 5. Inscription process

### Eligibility

Only States Parties to the Convention can submit nominations. States are encouraged to cooperate to propose multi-national nomination

### Nomination

Four mechanisms

1. Urgent Safeguarding List (List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding)
2. Representative List (Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity)
3. Register of Best Safeguarding Practices
4. International Assistance

### Examination

**Phase 1:** States submit to the Secretariat by 31 March for evaluation by the Committee 18 months later

**Phase 2:** The Secretariat checks the files and requests missing information; revised files must be completed and returned by 30 September.

**Phase 3:** The appropriate body (Consultative Body or, for the Representative List, Subsidiary Body of Committee) undertakes examination of the files; it issues final recommendations in May or June. Its reports are sent to Committee four weeks before the annual November session.

**Phase 4:** At its annual November session, the Intergovernmental Committee evaluates nominations and reports and makes decisions.

### Reporting

Every six years after ratifying the Convention, each State Party submits a periodic report to the Committee on the measures taken to implement the Convention, as well as on the status of elements inscribed on the Representative List

An individual report of each element inscribed on the List of ICH in need of Urgent Safeguarding is submitted every four years after its inscription to monitor its state of viability.

## 6. Facts and figures

### • States that ratified the Convention, by region

Regions	UNESCO Member States	Number having ratified Convention	% of States Parties in relation to total number of UNESCO Member States per region
Africa	45	32	71 %
Arab States	21	15	71 %
Asia and the Pacific	44	25	57 %
Europe and North America	52	40	77 %
Latin America and the Caribbean	33	27	82 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>71 %</b>

List of States Parties of the Convention: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00024>

### • Representative List – 232 elements

Multinational elements – 14

National elements – 218

Regions	Number of national elements	% of total	Number of submitting States	% of total
Africa	14	6 %	11	16 %
Arab States	9	4 %	8	12 %
Asia and the Pacific	95	44 %	16	23 %
Europe and North America	70	32 %	22	32 %
Latin America and the Caribbean	30	14 %	12	17 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100 %</b>

### • List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in need of Urgent Safeguarding – 27 elements

Multinational elements – 0

National elements – 27

Regions	Number of national elements	% of total	Number of submitting States	% of total
Africa	3	11 %	2	13 %
Arab States	2	8 %	2	13 %
Asia and the Pacific	16	59 %	5	34 %
Europe and North America	4	15 %	4	27 %
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	7 %	2	13 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100 %</b>

• Programmes, projects and activities for the safeguarding of ICH already considered to best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention – 8 elements<sup>1</sup>

Regions	Number of elements	% of total by region
Africa	0	0 %
Arab States	0	0 %
Asia and the Pacific	1	12 %
Europe and North America	4	50 %
Latin America and the Caribbean	3	38 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100 %</b>

<sup>1</sup> For the 2010 cycle there were no inscriptions due to the change in cycle sequence

Detailed information about elements inscribed on the Lists: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/lists/>

• Nominations evaluated during the 6th session of the Committee (from 22 to 29 November 2011, Bali, Indonesia)

Type of files	Total presented to the Committee	Positive recommendations	Negative recommendations (+refers in case of Representative List)	% Positive/ Negative	Number of inscribed elements
Urgent Safeguarding List	23	5	18	22% / 78%	<b>11</b>
Representative List	49	17	32	35% / 65%	<b>19</b>
Register of Best Practices	12	5	7	42 % / 58 %	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>31% / 69%</b>	<b>35</b>

• Capacity building activities undertaken by UNESCO in 2011

Regions	Number of trainers trained to deliver UNESCO's capacity building curriculum	Number of training workshops supported by the UNESCO Regular Programme in 2010-2011	Funds mobilized for capacity building
Africa	21	8	37% - (2,590,000)
Arab States	12	4	14% - (980,000)
Asia and the Pacific	18	8	24% - (1,680,000)
Europe and North America	11	2	1% - (70,000)
Latin America and the Caribbean	11	6	24% - (1,680,000)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100% - (7,000,000)</b>

More: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00326>

• **Accredited NGOs, statistics per region**

Regions	Number of NGOs approved by the General Assembly (last decision in June 2010)	Number of NGOs recommended for accreditation in 2010	Number of NGOs recommended for accreditation in 2011
Africa	5	7	6
Arab States	1	1	1
Asia and the Pacific	26	5	3
Europe and North America	56	19	14
Latin America and the Caribbean	9	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>27</b>

More: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00331>

• **A few dates**

<b>17 October 2003</b>	General Conference adopts Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
<b>June 2008</b>	General Assembly adopts the first Operational Directives for implementation of the Convention: the inscription cycle can start
<b>November 2008</b>	Committee incorporates 90 elements previously proclaimed Masterpieces of intangible heritage in the Representative List.
<b>September 2009</b>	Committee inscribes first 12 elements on the Urgent Safeguarding List and 3 elements on the Register of Best Safeguarding practices, as well as 76 new elements on the Representative List
<b>November 2010</b>	Committee inscribes 47 new elements on the Representative List and 4 elements on the Urgent Safeguarding List.