Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be afforded the privilege of providingashort welcome speech on such an honorable occasion.

Please allow me to start with a very personal story.

When I was a small child, my father brought a book on geography for my birthday present. Among the many beautiful pictures contained in the book, aparticular picture that struck me was a photographof rice terrace fields with palm trees. Of course it was a landscape of this island. To me, it looked like paradise. In this way, “Bali” became an unforgettable word for me at the age of 10.

Much later, I was invited to attend a performance of Balinese dance and music in Osaka. They were performers from Ubud village. The power of the rhythms,the strict form of the dance, the polyphonic structure of the music, and all other elements were beyond my imagination. On that evening, Bali became my dream destination.

You may believe it or not, but I feel I was so lucky to beintroduced to a Balinese family that had transmitted traditional dance and music in Ubud. From that time, I started to come to this Island. The family introduced me to the tradition of Balinese dance and rituals on this Island.I was privileged to sharethe rich traditions with the local people. Of course, I never imagined at that time that I could come back for a meeting on intangible cultural heritage!

Being so happy to be back in Bali, where so many intangible cultural heritage are alive and well, I would like to remind you of my words spoken in Nairobiabout a year ago. As you may recall, I stressed the importance of collaborations with researchers in various domains on intangible cultural heritage and pointed tothe fact that the World Heritage Convention institutionalizeda mechanism to integrate researchers’ collaboration.

Today I would like to distinguishthe collaboration into two types. The first one is vertical, the other is horizontal.

Vertical collaborationis meant as the collaboration between the Committee and expert researchers.

We have introduced a carefully crafted mechanism for the Urgent Safeguarding Listand programmes and projects with collaborating NGOs and researchers. Also, we have beencareful enough to do so only on a trial basis in order to avoid too much dependence on particular organizations or individuals.

Later during this session, we will discuss about another possible collaboration for the Representative List.“Vertical collaboration” is still in the process of emerging, but it is happening. I am very happy to see that.

In this context, I should mention what happened at the World Heritage Committee Meeting in June this year. 10 nominations qualified as “deferral” by advisory organizations WERE inscribed by the World Heritage Committee. This means that half of the deferral judgments werereversed by the WH Committee.

I do not go into the details surrounding this fact, but I have to say that we have to learn from this experience, especially on how to strike an appropriate balance between the power of the Committee and the expertise of the experts.

The Committee is institutionally entitled to make its own decisions if an element is to be inscribed or not. But it is not free from criticism, if thosedecisionsare deemed to be arbitrary. If the current mechanism using the subsidiary body should be changed towards the direction ofintegrating more independent experts and NGOs, it would mean that the Committee decides to take greaterresponsibility for the credibility of the Convention.

The second type of collaboration is “horizontal collaboration”. This includes networking and exchange among individual researchers, experts and NGOs. We have the NGO forum for this purpose in the framework of the Committee, but we have need more. Meetings held for this Convention offer a very unique opportunity for experts from all over the world tomeet. However we have so little time to discuss from a scholarly perspective at these meetings. We should start to think how we could expand such horizontal collaboration in order to further strengthen the Convention.

Our Convention is still young. It needs more constructive efforts from all relevant stakeholders in order to mature properly. Let’s unite our wisdom for the future of the Convention.Bali is the perfect place for that.

Thank you.