



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

**13 COM**

ITH/18/13.COM/13  
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**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE  
SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Thirteenth session  
Port Louis, Republic of Mauritius  
26 November to 1 December 2018**

**Item 13 of the Provisional Agenda:**  
**Reflection on the participation of NGOs in the implementation of the Convention**

**Summary**

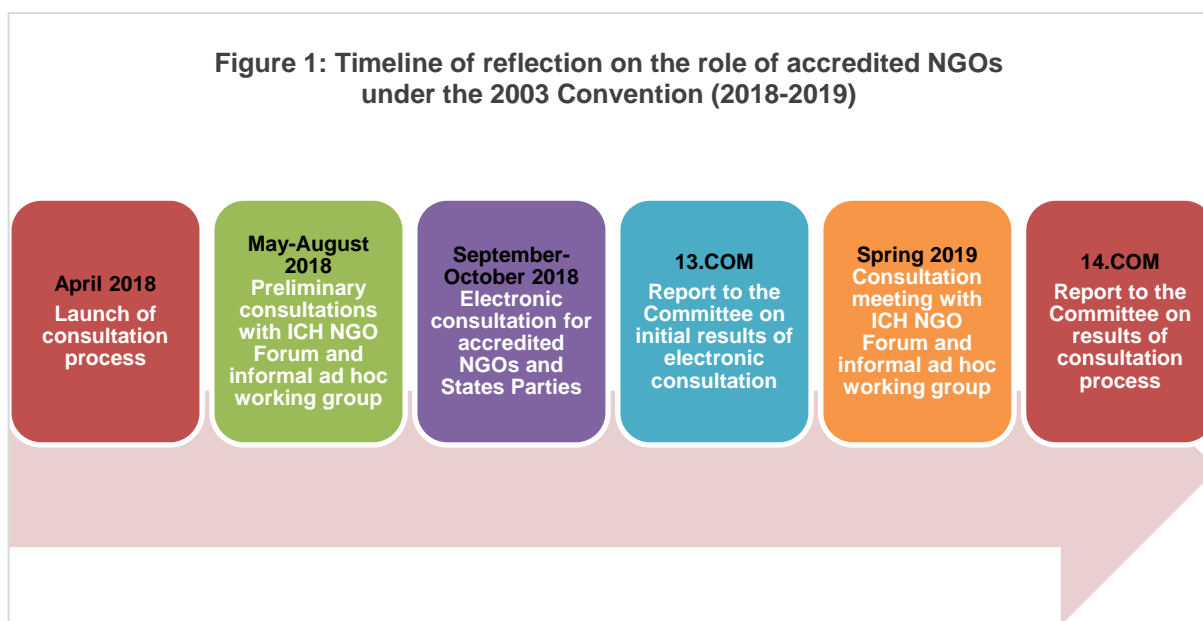
At its twelfth session in 2017, the Committee invited the Secretariat and the informal ad hoc working group to reflect, in consultation with accredited NGOs, on the possible ways in which the participation of NGOs under the 2003 Convention could be further enhanced and how this would be reflected in the accreditation and renewal mechanisms of NGOs. This document presents the different steps of the consultation process aiming to facilitate such reflection and its initial results.

**Decision required:** paragraph 9

1. At its twelfth session, the Committee invited the Secretariat ‘to reflect, in consultation with accredited NGOs, on the possible ways in which the participation of NGOs under the 2003 Convention could be further enhanced and how this would be reflected in the accreditation and renewal mechanisms of NGOs’; the Committee also asked that the results of such reflection be reported to it for examination at its thirteen session ([Decision 12.COM 17](#)). This request was made following debates during the same session on the identification and definition of the advisory functions that the Committee wishes to be fulfilled by accredited NGOs (expressed as *inter alia* functions in paragraph 96 of the Operational Directives) and on the relevance of the accreditation system for the work of the Committee and the implementation of the Convention. It was foreseen that this reflection would provide a direction for the accreditation and renewal criteria, the role and organization of the ICH NGO Forum, and, more generally, the contribution of NGOs to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

#### A. Presentation of the consultation process

2. Pursuant to [Decision 12.COM 17](#) of the Committee, and in conformity with [Decision 12.COM 13](#) that established the mandate of the informal ad hoc working group for 2018, the Secretariat proposed facilitating the reflection on the role of accredited NGOs through the following multi-step consultation process leading up to the fourteenth session of the Committee in 2019. In accordance with [Decision 13.COM 2.BUR.3](#), the process is supported by the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage through the funds allocated to ‘other functions of the Committee’ under the Plan for the use of the resources of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund 2018/2019:



#### ***Launch of the consultation process (April 2018)***

On 27 April 2018, the Secretariat launched the consultation process by informing the Chairperson of the thirteenth session of the Committee, the two co-chairpersons of the informal ad hoc working group and the ICH NGO Forum of the multi-step process described above (figure 1).

#### ***Preliminary consultations (May–August 2018)***

From May to August 2018, preliminary consultations were undertaken with the steering committee of the ICH NGO Forum and representatives from the informal ad hoc working group on the organization of the consultation process and of the electronic consultation (see paragraph below). In particular, a meeting between the steering committee of the ICH NGO Forum, the co-chairs of the informal ad hoc working group and the Secretariat was organized on 5 June 2018, in the margins of the seventh session of the General Assembly of States

Parties, to exchange experiences on achievements and gaps in the participation of accredited NGOs in the implementation of the Convention, as well as initial ideas to shape their future role.

#### ***Electronic consultation (September–October 2018)***

In September 2018, an electronic consultation on the potential advisory functions to be fulfilled by accredited NGOs and possible ways forward for the accreditation system was launched with a communication sent to all 176 accredited NGOs and 178 States Parties to the Convention (see Section B of this document). Accredited NGOs and States Parties were invited to fill out an online questionnaire, initially drafted by the Secretariat in consultation with the ICH NGO Forum and the co-chairs of the informal ad hoc working group. Together with a background document presenting the current situation of accredited NGOs and challenges identified by the Secretariat based on its and the Committee's experience since the establishment of the current accreditation system in 2010 (document [ITH/18/NGO/1](#)), the survey questionnaire in English and French was sent by email. Accredited NGOs and States Parties were invited to fill out the questionnaire by 19 October 2018. Reminders for submission were sent on 12 October 2018 by email to all accredited NGOs and States Parties; the deadline was also highlighted through a news item published on 15 October 2018 on the website of the Convention and that of the ICH NGO Forum. The analysis of submissions is being carried out by the Secretariat at the time of drafting of this document.

#### ***Thirteenth session of the Committee (26 November–1 December 2018)***

At the thirteenth session, the Secretariat will present to the Committee the different steps of the consultation process, as well as data and initial observations on the participation of accredited NGOs and States Parties in the electronic consultation.

#### ***Consultation meeting (Spring 2019)***

Based on the results of the electronic consultation and the debates of the Committee at its thirteenth session, a consultation meeting is planned for the Spring of 2019 at the UNESCO Headquarters, with the aim of discussing the redefinition of the current accreditation system of NGOs. Involving representatives from the ICH NGO Forum and from the informal ad hoc working group, the meeting will mainly be directed at defining the *inter alia* functions of NGOs, which could in turn be reflected in revised criteria for accreditation and possibly specific functions for the ICH NGO Forum.

#### ***Fourteenth session of the Committee (November–December 2019)***

At the fourteenth session of the Committee in November–December 2019, the Secretariat will report to the Committee on the outcomes of the consultation meeting. If the proposed redefined accreditation system of NGOs requires the revision of the Operational Directives, the Committee may wish to discuss this at its fourteenth session, with a view to possibly submitting draft revised Operational Directives to the eighth session of the General Assembly of States Parties in 2020.

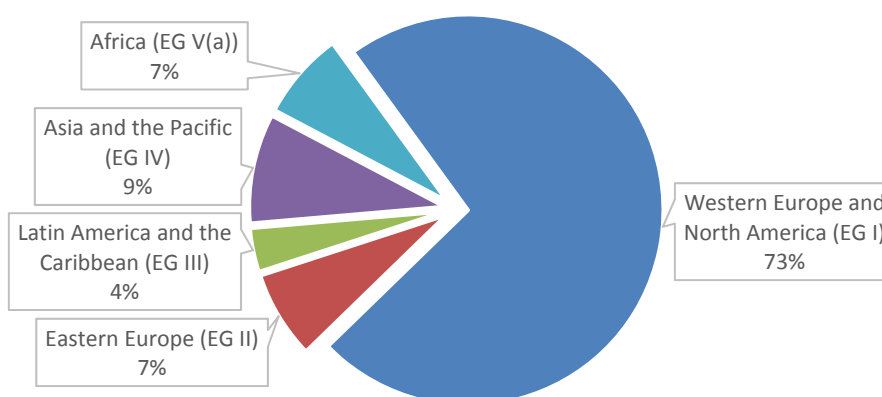
### **B. Initial observations from the electronic consultation on the role of accredited NGOs in the Convention**

3. For the purpose of the electronic consultation on the role of accredited NGOs in the Convention, the survey questionnaire (document [ITH/18/NGO/2](#)) sent to all accredited NGOs and States Parties in September 2018 was developed based on: (i) issues identified by the Secretariat in its report on the profile of NGOs accredited to act in an advisory capacity to the Committee and the nature of their work, presented to the Committee at its eighth session in 2013 (document [ITH/13/8.COM/14.b](#)) and in the working document on the accreditation of new NGOs and the review of accredited NGOs presented to the Committee at its twelfth session in 2017 (document [ITH/17/12.COM/17](#)); (ii) debates of the General Assembly at its seventh session in 2018 and of the Committee at its twelfth session in 2017; (iii) discussions during a meeting of the ICH NGO Forum on this topic on 7 June 2018; and (iv) comments by

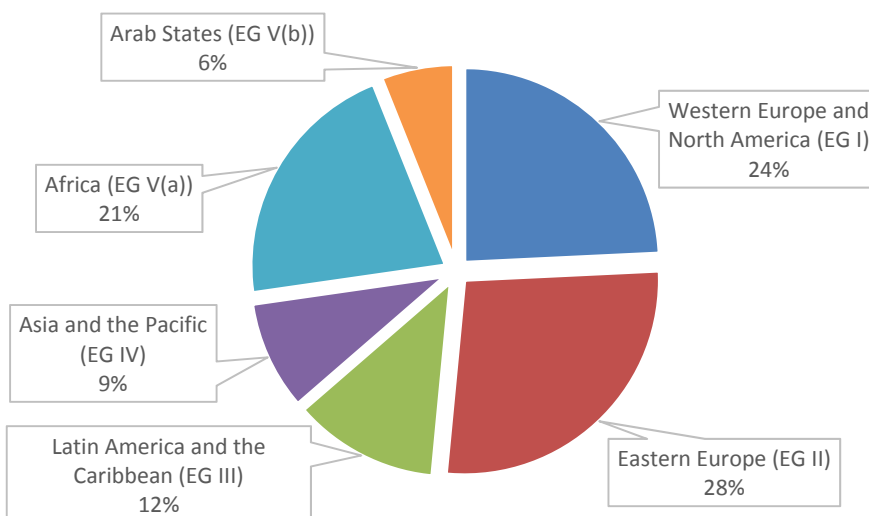
the steering committee of the ICH NGO Forum on the draft questionnaire gathered in August 2018.

4. The survey questionnaire contains twenty-two questions structured around five main themes:
  - Sharing experiences with the current accreditation system of NGOs
  - Identifying potential advisory functions of NGOs at the international level
  - Identifying potential advisory functions of NGOs at the national level
  - Redefining the accreditation system of NGOs
  - Defining the role of the ICH NGO Forum
5. From 7 September to 19 October 2018, 65 accredited NGOs (37 per cent of the accredited NGOs) and 33 States Parties (19 per cent of States Parties) responded to the electronic consultation. While the contributions are still being analyzed at the time of drafting of this document, some initial data can be presented, as below. The remaining substantial data collected through the electronic consultation will feed into the working documents of the consultation meeting to be held in 2019.
6. The geographical distribution of participating accredited NGOs and States Parties is as follows:

**Figure 2. Geographical distribution of accredited NGOs that participated in the electronic consultation (65 in total)**



**Figure 3. Geographical distribution of States Parties that participated in the electronic consultation (33 in total)**



7. Of all the accredited NGOs that participated in the electronic consultation, 82 per cent responded that the current accreditation system has supported their work, 80 per cent affirming that it had done so in the way they expected. 62 per cent of accredited NGOs that participated in the survey have been actively involved in the ICH NGO Forum. Around half of the respondents (including accredited NGOs and States Parties) considered that the accreditation system should take into account the disparity in the size and capacities of NGOs and should include different types of accreditation. However, identifying the rationale behind these opinions would require a more in-depth analysis of the responses submitted.
8. While these observations are only based on initial data gathered and can only depict a partial picture of the opinions expressed by accredited NGOs and States Parties, they seem to confirm the concerns expressed by the General Assembly, the Committee and the Secretariat regarding the necessity to review and redefine the current accreditation system. A thorough analysis of the data collected by the Secretariat may allow for the identification of the main factors to be taken into account in the revision of the accreditation system, which will be further discussed in the course of 2019.
9. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

#### **DRAFT DECISION 13.COM 13**

The Committee,

1. Having examined document ITH/18/13.COM/13,
2. Recalling [Resolution 7.GA 11](#) and [Decision 12.COM 17](#),
3. Further recalling documents [ITH/13/8.COM/14.b](#) and [ITH/17/12.COM/17](#),
4. Takes note of the participatory consultation process presented by the Secretariat and of the initial observations from the electronic consultation on the role of accredited non-governmental organizations in the Convention;
5. Requests that the Secretariat continue the reflection with accredited non-governmental organizations, the ICH NGO Forum and States Parties on the definition of the advisory functions to be fulfilled by accredited non-governmental organizations and that it present the results of such reflection and proposals for the revision of the accreditation system at its fourteenth session.