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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 10.c of the Provisional Agenda:
Examination of proposals to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices

Summary

The present document includes the recommendations of the Evaluation Body on proposals to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (Part A) and a set of draft decisions for the Committee's consideration (Part B). An overview of the 2018 files and the working methods of the Evaluation Body is included in document ITH/18/13.COM/10.

Decision required: paragraph 3

A. Recommendations

1. The Evaluation Body recommends that the Committee select the following programme as best reflecting the principles and objectives of the Convention:

Draft Decision	Submitting State	Proposal	File No.
13.COM 10.c.2	Sweden	Land-of-Legends programme, for promoting and revitalizing the art of storytelling in Kronoberg Region (South-Sweden)	01392

2. The Evaluation Body recommends that the Committee not select the following programme at this time:

Draft Decision	Submitting State	Proposal	File No.
13.COM 10.c.1	Saudi Arabia	Al-Janadria, national festival of heritage and culture	01403

B. Draft decisions

3. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decisions:

DRAFT DECISION 13.COM 10.c.1

The Committee

1. Takes note that Saudi Arabia has proposed **Al-Janadria, national festival of heritage and culture** (No. 01403) for selection and promotion by the Committee as a programme, project or activity best reflecting the principles and objectives of the Convention:

   Al-Janadria is a national festival of heritage and culture initiated in 1985 by the President of the Saudi National Guard at the time. Seven objectives were set for the festival, the most important of which was to enlighten young people about rapidly vanishing traditions and enforce a sense of national and social unity. The festival opens with a camel race and also features traditional songs, popular games, dances and poetry competitions, exhibitions of traditional arts and crafts from around the Kingdom and other events. Twelve provinces are granted their own pavilion – usually a recreation of their local architecture – which visitors can stroll around to explore local arts and crafts. Having begun as a small camel-racing event, the festival is considered one of the largest multi-ethnic and multicultural events in the Arab world, drawing huge numbers of people. Al-Janadria facilitates the exchange of ideas among community members. Neighbouring Gulf States are always represented, and each year a country is invited as the ‘guest of honour’. A pavilion called the Global Village also provides a dedicated space for twenty countries. By applying different types of activities (focusing on heritage protection, transmission, documentation, revitalization, promotion and so on), the festival seeks to apply a comprehensive approach to safeguarding as a means of achieving sustainable results.

2. Decides that, from the information included in the file, the programme responds as follows to the criteria for selection as a good safeguarding practice set out in paragraph 7 of the Operational Directives:

P.1: Al-Janadria presents a remarkably comprehensive set of activities related to the national festival. Though the organization of the festival is described in detail, more information is needed concerning specific safeguarding activities extending beyond promotion and awareness raising, particularly leading to the enhanced transmission and viability of intangible cultural heritage. Specific features of Al-Janadria are not sufficiently explained to demonstrate how it constitutes and contributes to the safeguarding of living heritage.

P.2: The file demonstrates that the festival facilitates the exchange of ideas and experience among communities at the sub-regional level, particularly among the Gulf States. At the international level, the festival invites other countries to share the rich diversity of their culture and traditions, thereby promoting cultural cooperation and sharing. However, it is unclear how it promotes the coordination of efforts for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

P.3: Al-Janadria contributes to ensuring respect for and raising awareness about cultural heritage. However, due to the size and state-driven organization of the festival through a top-down approach, it features cultural expressions that are decontextualized and detached from their living environment. Although the communities are invited to participate in the festival, their role in the conceptualization of the festival is not visible. The information contained in the file demonstrates that Al-Janadria does not fully reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention.

P.4: The file shows that Al-Janadria is popular among its audience and successful as a display of cultural heritage. However, the file heavily emphasizes the dimensions of entertainment and commercialization surrounding the festival and does not demonstrate how it contributes to enhancing the viability of living heritage. On the contrary, the festival format as described in the file could encourage the decontextualization and over-commercialization of intangible cultural heritage.

P.5: The communities, groups and individuals concerned are described as participants whom the organizers invite to perform or exhibit their cultural expressions. However, the file does not include enough information to determine whether they have played an active role in planning and realizing the festival beyond their attendance, as the activity is state-driven and spearheaded by the Saudi National Guard. Several heritage bearers expressed their consent to the proposal of Al-Janadria as a ‘Best Safeguarding Practice’, although consent letters are few in comparison with the large scope of the festival.

P.6: From the information provided, it is not possible to determine whether the programme could serve as a sub-regional, regional or international model in terms of safeguarding activities. The file does not clearly describe the particular effectiveness of safeguarding measures that distinguish Al-Janadria from other cultural festivals. Nevertheless, the project already serves as a successful sub-regional model for the organization of similar cultural events.

P.7: The file provides a thorough account of the willingness of all stakeholders concerned as well as domestic and international artists and guests to participate in the festival and disseminate their heritage within its framework. However, it does not explain or confirm their willingness to actively disseminate the methodology behind Al-Janadria among the international community.

P.8: The festival organizers are devoted to collecting feedback from visitors, participants and different partners. The monitoring and evaluation is carried out through partnerships with universities, literary clubs and an annual evaluation by the National Guard. The project presents several examples of result assessments carried out.

P.9: Reducing the duration, extent and costs could render the festival replicable in developing countries. Annual events of this kind help provide an income for tradition bearers. The attendance and participation of young people may help disseminate experience and achieve better communication between generations. Festivals similar to Al-Janadria could strengthen social bonds among communities from different regions in an atmosphere of sharing similarities and differences in their cultural expressions.

3. Decides not to select **Al-Janadria, national festival of heritage and culture** as a programme, project or activity best reflecting the principles and objectives of the Convention;

4. Encourages the State Party to promote festivals at a community-based level with a focus on the living heritage of the communities concerned, as the festival in its current form decontextualizes elements of intangible cultural heritage.

DRAFT DECISION 13.COM 10.c.2

The Committee

1. Takes note that Sweden has proposed **Land-of-Legends programme, for promoting and revitalizing the art of storytelling in Kronoberg Region (South-Sweden)** (No. 01392) for selection and promotion by the Committee as a programme, project or activity best reflecting the principles and objectives of the Convention:

   The Land-of-Legends programme is aimed at promoting and revitalizing the art of storytelling in the Kronoberg region of southern Sweden. In Sweden, as elsewhere, factors such as industrialization, urbanization and television and social media have led to the disappearance of traditional venues for storytelling and modes of transmission, with practices of telling stories to exchange experiences and convey knowledge and values dying out. In the late 1980s, a number of librarians and teachers in the Kronoberg region organized a festival involving practitioners, enthusiasts and experts from various parts of Sweden to discuss this situation and devise possible solutions. Shortly after, in November 1990 the Storytelling Network of Kronoberg was created (known as 'the Association') to raise awareness about the endangered viability of storytelling and develop measures for its revitalization. The Association initiated the Land-of-Legends programme, which organizes a range of activities including a storytelling festival, camps for teenagers, activities in schools and academia, courses for future teachers and remedial activities. Over time, international contacts have been developed and several aspects of the programme have served as a model for activities elsewhere. The programme links storytelling to other forms of living heritage, helping to revitalize and promote it as a living art.

2. Decides that, from the information included in the file, the programme responds as follows to the criteria for selection as a good safeguarding practice set out in paragraph 7 of the Operational Directives:

   P.1: The programme was launched following a thorough analysis of the viability of storytelling in the country and numerous discussions concerning suitable ways of revitalizing it. A comprehensive system of safeguarding measures has been created by local community members that brought storytelling back to life, produced new storytellers, and turned storytelling into an important means of retaining collective memory and coping with social and psychological problems and traumas.

P.2: The programme has spread to other parts of Sweden as well as to other Nordic countries; storytellers from different continents have been invited to Swedish storytelling festivals. Many networks have been formed and joint activities such as summer camps for Nordic youth have been organized. The programme clearly promotes coordination at the national and sub-regional levels, the sharing of experience and international cooperation.

P.3: The Land-of-Legends programme focuses on a fragile domain of oral traditions, as storytelling and verbal arts in general can very easily succumb to rapid loss, folklorization or commercialization caused by the abandonment of traditional ways of life, globalization and the impact of modern media. The safeguarding measures fully reflect the objectives of the Convention: they are community-driven, systematically revitalize the element, ensure its viability and sustainable development, involve continual transmission, promote respect for human creativity, strengthen social bonds and respect among people and foster balance in society.

P.4: The project has proven to be outstandingly effective, as attested by its long existence, continual growth, impact, large numbers of participants of various backgrounds and high levels of involvement. The project has helped renew a general interest in storytelling at the national and sub-regional levels, and continuously contributes to the sustainable development of the practice and to strengthening its viability.

P.5: The programme has been implemented by local communities, particularly storytellers, story-lovers, experts, teachers, volunteers, staff of nursing homes and local organizations, with the support of local authorities. The proposal was prepared and endorsed by the umbrella association in collaboration with experts, individuals and local organizations involved in the programme.

P.6: The project already serves as a very successful national and sub-regional model. Its viability and active search for new venues and social spaces for promoting and practising storytelling suggest that it is applicable to a wide range of national, cultural and social contexts. It also reflects contemporary challenges connected with environmental and social traumas, immigration, acculturation or collective and individual learning problems.

P.7: The submitting State Party and communities concerned are clearly willing to cooperate in the dissemination of the programme if selected, as attested to by their formal agreement and several practical steps undertaken. One full-time position at the Museum of Legends in Ljungby dealing solely with maintaining international contacts will be established, and efforts will be intensified to publish texts in several international and local languages to help disseminate the programme. Other ways of sharing experience at the International Ljungby Storytelling Festival and within the Nordic NGO network are also foreseen.

P.8: The growing numbers of visitors to the museum and the festival, and particularly the ever-increasing numbers of storytellers, people actively involved in the programme as well as the expanding network of storytelling associations may serve as source data for assessing the reach and success of the programme. The file provides several examples of the external monitoring and evaluation of the programme as well as feedback and reviews, which are used to improve the activities and safeguarding measures involved.

P.9: The programme safeguards essential values of the local communities that are embedded in oral traditions, while providing stories with new functions, practitioners and forms of transmission. It could be applicable to the needs of developing countries, mostly because the safeguarding of storytelling, oral traditions and verbal arts does not necessarily require a high level of funding. The focus on the collective, informal sharing of time and space among communities

and individuals creates optimal conditions for transmitting this kind of intangible cultural heritage.

3. Selects **Land-of-Legends programme, for promoting and revitalizing the art of storytelling in Kronoberg Region (South-Sweden)** as a programme, project or activity best reflecting the principles and objectives of the Convention;

4. Commends the State Party for its first submission and for proposing an exemplary file that presents a successful, effective and sustainable programme for safeguarding storytelling, which is deeply grounded at the community level and which can serve as a model for countries where oral traditions still play important social and cultural roles.