



United Nations
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Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

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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 11 of the Provisional Agenda:
Intangible cultural heritage in emergencies**

Summary

At its twelfth session, the Committee indicated various ways in which the question of the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in situations of emergency could be further addressed ([Decision 12.COM 15](#)). This document reports on the activities carried out by the Secretariat in this regard and proposes ways forward.

Decision required: paragraph 17

I. Introduction

1. At its eleventh session, the Committee initiated a reflection on the role of communities both in safeguarding their intangible cultural heritage in situations of emergency and in mobilizing it as a tool for preparedness, resilience, reconciliation and recovery. The discussion by the Committee at its twelfth session dealt with the issue in different contexts, including, among others, armed conflicts and disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards. These discussions pointed to a future direction that privileges community-based identifications of needs concerning the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and fosters links between intangible cultural heritage and disaster risk management. The Secretariat was encouraged to undertake a number of actions of a varied nature, most notably to: (a) ensure that community-based interventions for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage be included in emergency initiatives; (b) enhance capacities and awareness raising; and (c) strengthen cooperation with relevant UN entities and humanitarian stakeholders ([Decision 12.COM 15](#)).
2. This document reports on the activities carried out by the Secretariat in response to these indications, which can be presented along three axes: (i) operational project-based initiatives; (ii) inter-institutional forms of cooperation, including with UN agencies; and (iii) general awareness-raising and capacity-building activities. These activities were undertaken in the framework of the *Strategy for reinforcing UNESCO's action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict* ([38 C/Resolution 48](#)) and its Action Plan, as well as the Addendum to the Strategy concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards ([39 C/Resolution 35](#)).

II. Main activities carried out

Operational project-based initiatives

3. At its last session, the Committee welcomed community-based needs identifications as the initial operational modality of the Convention in emergency situations. In particular, the positive contribution of this approach was highlighted in relation to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and its mobilization as a tool for resilience and recovery. The Secretariat continued to pilot this activity as the primary intervention to respond to emergency situations, as summarized below:
 - a. The analysis of the community-based needs identification in **Nord-Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo**, as reported to the last session of the Committee, (see [project page](#)) was released (see [final report](#)). Against the context of the long-standing conflict and large-scale internal displacements of populations, currently estimated at one million people, the analysis showed that the communities were in a situation of great economic and social insecurity. At the same time, they expressed important suffering in relation to the disruption of their intangible cultural heritage. More than 200 people who had been consulted clearly expressed their desire to collectively reflect on how to best safeguard their living heritage. Four main areas of actions identified by the communities themselves include the revitalization of cultural spaces, which would allow for places of practice, dialogue and exchange; capacity building in relation to income-generating activities based on local knowledge and practices; awareness-raising through the community media; and capacity building for teachers in the field of intangible cultural heritage.
 - b. Under the UNESCO Director-General's initiative on '**Revive the spirit of Mosul**', four components are proposed for intangible cultural heritage, namely: (i) needs identifications for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage for the resilience of displaced communities; (ii) inventories of elements of intangible cultural heritage with the participation of the communities of the Old City of Mosul; (iii) the identification and promotion of shared intangible cultural heritage with a view to fostering intercommunity dialogue; and (iv) a pilot activity drawing upon the potential of intangible cultural heritage for the prevention of violent extremism.

- c. In the framework of the EU-funded project, 'Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace' and its component on **Iraq**, UNESCO is involved in the urgent safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage through community-based activities as a tool to contribute to the processes of return, integration and reconstruction in the country, particularly in the Ninewah Province. These include a community-based needs identification of intangible cultural heritage at risk and the development of safeguarding plans, as well as the implementation of those plans with the communities concerned, with a focus on the identification and/or (re)creation of the cultural spaces needed for the practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage at risk.
4. Regarding the **prevention of violent extremism**, the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is now reflected in two major intersectoral initiatives, namely, the Lake Chad project and the Sahel project, which are both part of the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa with a view to fostering peace and security in these sub-regions. Similarly, emergency International Assistance in **Niger** has been steadily advancing, aimed at revitalizing and mobilizing intangible cultural heritage practices as a means of achieving increased resilience and dialogue between displaced populations and host communities in the context of violent extremism. In addition, regular programme activities were launched in **Jordan** and **Lebanon** together with the Education Sector to use intangible cultural heritage in curricular and extra-curricular activities as a tool against violent extremism.
5. Responding to the call by the Committee to make use of the **emergency International Assistance** mechanism, **Colombia** submitted the [project](#) 'Intangible Cultural Heritage as a basis for resilience, reconciliation and the construction of peace environments in Colombia's post-agreements', developed with the support of the Secretariat. This project, which was approved by the Bureau of the Committee in June 2017, provides an innovative community-based approach to promote new forms of coexistence, reconciliation and integration around the community's local intangible cultural heritage.
6. In the field of **natural disasters**, the assessment of damages in relation to intangible cultural heritage in the framework of Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) has been used as a basis for launching a community-based needs identification during a second stage. In this perspective, in most of the PDNAs conducted in 2018, such as in Vanuatu and India (following the Kerala floods), it appears that intangible cultural heritage was affected and that further assessment with the participation of the communities was required. The Heritage Emergency Fund provides a good mechanism for carrying out such community-based needs identifications, on the basis of which emergency International Assistance under the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund can be prepared, with a focus on the safeguarding measures identified.

Inter-institutional cooperation

7. Further to the Committee's request to explore **cooperation with relevant UN and other international bodies**, a brainstorming meeting will be held in Beirut (Lebanon) at the end of October 2018 with the involvement of UN agencies and humanitarian stakeholders based in Lebanon. The objective of this meeting is to jointly reflect on the role of intangible cultural heritage in emergencies, both in terms of how emergencies affects the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of communities, and how intangible cultural heritage policies and activities can support preparedness and humanitarian relief. This exchange is expected to lead to the identification of mutual benefits in collaborating in the field of intangible cultural heritage.
8. The Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit of UNESCO's Culture Sector has launched a number of **partnership initiatives at the Culture Sector level**. These include a partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to jointly work on a human rights-based approach to the safeguarding of cultural heritage, including intangible heritage. The objective is to contribute to the integration of culture into humanitarian action, security strategies as well as peace-keeping and peace-building processes. Moreover, ICCROM and UNESCO are jointly organizing training on First Aid to Cultural Heritage as part of an international course in Bamako (Mali) in November 2018, with the aim to enhance capacities

among national emergency management and humanitarian aid systems. Beyond structural stabilization, the training will also cover intangible cultural heritage and address cooperation and engaging with affected communities. In the same vein, the question of intangible cultural heritage is also being introduced into training for the military and peacekeepers, beyond the traditional focus on cultural heritage property according to the definition of the 1954 Hague Convention.

9. Consideration for intangible cultural heritage is also being progressively integrated within the framework of other Conventions, in the context of emergency preparedness, response and recovery. An example is the '**Warsaw Recommendation** on the Recovery and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage' adopted in May 2018 in the framework of the World Heritage Convention, which provides guidance for the reconstruction of destroyed or severely damaged World Heritage properties; it recognizes that the 'reconstruction of physical assets must give due consideration to their associated intangible practices, beliefs and traditional knowledge which are essential for sustaining cultural values among local communities'.

Raising awareness and reinforcing capacities

10. In the framework of the **Paris Peace Forum** (11 to 13 November, Paris) led by the Government of France, UNESCO will co-present the aforementioned emergency International Assistance project for Colombia, as an innovative approach to peace-building. This project was selected by the Forum out of 850 applications to be one of the 120 projects to be promoted as innovative approaches to global issues. Involving high-level participants, this Forum will provide an important opportunity to promote the role of living heritage for peace and reconciliation.
11. In the field of **disaster risk reduction**, a conference on 'Regional approaches to disaster recovery and heritage preservation' was organized in June/August 2018 by the International Council on Archives and the Caribbean Archives Association in collaboration with the Government of Sint Maarten. The conference provided an opportunity to share experiences in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma, Maria and Jose in 2017 and led to the creation of a Caribbean Heritage Protection Network. With the support of facilitators from the Convention Network, UNESCO participated and provided information for the reflection on intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, in the framework of the multi-year project for Surinam and the Dutch Caribbean islands, generously supported by the Government of the Netherlands, intangible cultural heritage knowledge and practices related to natural disasters have been collected in the beneficiary countries with the participation of communities. The results will be shared and discussed on the occasion of a consultative meeting held in October 2018 with a view to exploring ways forward to foster the linkages between intangible cultural heritage and disaster risk prevention and management.
12. At its last session, the Committee requested that the Secretariat develop materials to reinforce capacities in the field of disaster risk management. The **guidance note on inventorying intangible cultural heritage** has been updated to provide insights on the links between disaster risk management and the inventorying of intangible cultural heritage. A training unit is also being developed to integrate disaster risk management into capacity-building materials.

III. Way Forward

13. The past two years have been dedicated to gaining knowledge and understanding the complexity of the issues at stake when addressing the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in situations of emergency. The focus of the Secretariat's work last year was more analytical in nature while this year, efforts were concentrated on streamlining and applying the agreed approach into operational activities. Furthermore, enhanced dialogue and cooperation with UN entities and other stakeholders in the humanitarian field were sought. All these efforts provide a solid ground for conceptualizing and transforming the knowledge and experience acquired into methodological guidance for States Parties.

14. Responding to the request of the Committee to explore and provide information on further methodological approaches, the Secretariat has initiated a study to **map and analyse different methodological approaches** used worldwide with a view to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and mobilizing it as a tool for resilience and recovery. The report is intended to contribute to achieving a better understanding of various methods, which can be used to support both the safeguarding of living heritage in emergencies and its mobilization as a tool for resilience and recovery. The preliminary findings of the report point to a diverse range of interventions with varying degrees of relevance to intangible cultural heritage: humanitarian action in favour of refugees in the context of psycho-social support or income-generating activities; stabilization, reconciliation, and peace-building initiatives; the revitalization of management mechanisms or community justice or conflict resolution systems; oral history and collective memory; the rehabilitation of built heritage including the intangible dimension of tangible heritage (traditional know-how); actions for recovery after natural disasters, which sometimes integrate local knowledge; and other measures, including specific actions for the safeguarding for intangible cultural heritage such as community inventories, documentation, and the revitalization of various practices.
15. The final report of the above-mentioned study is due to become available in early 2019; the intention is to develop recommendations for methodological guidance for stakeholders of the Convention faced with situations of emergency. The Secretariat proposes convening a **meeting of experts (category VI) in 2019** to explore operational modalities for the implementation of such recommendations in line with the principles of the 2003 Convention. The meeting will be funded using the line 'Other Functions' of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund with a generous supplementary contribution of the Government of People's Republic of China.
16. The meeting would cover both conflicts and natural disasters as well as the two dimensions highlighted by the Committee, namely: to what extent intangible cultural heritage itself is disrupted and threatened under such circumstances and what can be done to safeguard it; and in what ways intangible cultural heritage can be promoted, safeguarded or supported, as a critical means of rebuilding social cohesion, fostering reconciliation and/or facilitating preparedness and recovery for communities confronted with situations of emergencies. The conclusions of the expert meeting will be presented to the fourteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee, with a view, if deemed appropriate, to transmitting its recommendations to the eighth session of the General Assembly regarding operational modalities for the implementation of the 2003 Convention in situations of emergency.
17. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 13.COM 11

The Committee,

1. Having examined document ITH/18/13.COM/11,
2. Recalling Article 11 of the Convention, Chapters VI.3 and VI.4 of the Operational Directives, the fifth point of the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, along with Resolutions 38C/48 and 39C/35 of the General Conference on the reinforcement of UNESCO's action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict and its Addendum concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards,
3. Expresses its full support to individuals, groups and communities in situations of emergency and acknowledges their extraordinary courage and bravery in exploring creative ways of maintaining the practice and transmission of their living heritage despite the challenging contexts;
4. Encourages States Parties to ensure that, to the extent possible, communities, groups and individuals, including displaced persons, have access to the instruments, objects,

artefacts, cultural and natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is necessary for expressing their intangible cultural heritage;

5. Expresses satisfaction with the efforts made to include community-based interventions for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the recovery projects and initiatives led by UNESCO in emergency contexts, including those related to the prevention of violent extremism;
6. Welcomes the first steps taken to initiate dialogue with relevant UN and international bodies with a view to highlighting the role of intangible cultural heritage in emergencies, both in terms of how emergencies affects the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and how intangible cultural heritage policies and activities can support preparedness and humanitarian relief;
7. Reiterates the need to foster the links between disaster risk reduction and inventories of intangible cultural heritage and invites States Parties to refer to the guidance note on inventorying intangible cultural heritage in this regard;
8. Commends the Secretariat for carrying out a survey on methodological approaches to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in emergencies worldwide;
9. Requests that the Secretariat organize an individual expert meeting during the course of 2019 to conceptualize and transform the knowledge and experience acquired into methodological guidance for States Parties and to submit the results of the meeting at its next session, and thanks the People's Republic of China for its generous contribution to this end;
10. Also invites States Parties to request emergency International Assistance, as they deem appropriate, and to make use of the technical assistance mechanism with the support of the Secretariat, with a view to finalizing their requests in line with the principles of the Convention;
11. Further requests that the Secretariat report to it on this issue at its fourteenth session in 2019.