**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

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

**Sixteenth session**

**Online**

**13 to 18 December 2021**

**Item 19 of the Provisional Agenda:**

**Request by Haiti to examine the nomination ‘Joumou soup’**

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| **Summary**  The State Party of Haiti made a request for the Committee to examine the nomination ‘Joumou soup’ for inscription on the Representative List on an exceptional basis and on compassionate grounds following back-to-back natural disasters that struck the country. This document presents the background to this request, the recommendation of the Evaluation Body as well as procedural considerations for the attention of the Committee.  **Decision required:** paragraph 11 |

**Background**

1. The present document provides background on the nomination submitted by Haiti for the inscription of ‘Joumou soup’, which is brought to the sixteenth session of the Committee as a special case. On 25 March 2021, this nomination was submitted by Haiti for possible inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity following due process. In other words, the nomination was intended for examination by the seventeenth session of the Committee in 2022. In accordance with the procedure outlined in the Operational Directives (paragraph 54), the Secretariat processed the file and sent a request for additional information to the national authorities of Haiti on 10 August 2021. Following the submission of the additional information on 9 September 2021, the file was considered technically complete, and Haiti was informed accordingly.

Exceptional circumstances

1. The national authorities of Haiti made a request to the Secretariat, by letter on 23 August 2021, to have the nomination of ‘Joumou soup’ examined on a fast-track basis by the sixteenth Committee session in 2021 instead of by its seventeenth session in 2022 as originally foreseen. The request was motivated by the desire to bring a sense of hope and unity to the people of Haiti, following a series of natural disasters that hit the country in August 2021. Notably, an earthquake of a magnitude of 7.2 that occurred on 14 August was followed by Tropical Storm Grace on 16 August. At least 2,207 people are reported to have lost their lives, with 12,268 reported to be injured and 320 missing. A further 650,000 people were deemed to be in need of emergency humanitarian assistance following major infrastructure damage. These back-to-back disasters took place in the context of broader social and political turmoil in the country, following the brutal assassination of the President a few weeks earlier in July 2021. The compounding effect of these events triggered a serious and perduring economic and social crises for a population that was already under severe pressure by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The nomination file indicates that the practices related to Joumou soup, which are widely considered as a symbol of Haiti’s freedom gained after independence, form an inclusive element with which all segments of Haitian society identify. Furthermore, the element would be Haiti’s first inscription on the Lists of the 2003 Convention and, as such, it is expected that the inscription would be received by the people of Haiti as a sign of hope and encouragement as they strive to recover from exceptionally difficult circumstances.

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Emergencies

1. In September 2020, the eighth session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the 2003 Convention adopted (Resolution [8.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/8.GA/9)) the [Operational principles and modalities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in emergencies](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/Operational_Principles_and_Modalities_for_Safeguarding_ICH_in_Emergencies_EN.pdf). The document was developed following three years of reflection by the governing bodies of the Convention and an expert meeting on the role of intangible cultural heritage in emergencies, before it was adopted. The document stresses that the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage has a dual role to play in the context of emergencies: on the one hand, intangible cultural heritage can be directly threatened by emergencies, and yet on the other hand, it can effectively help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. The operational principles and modalities furthermore noted that ‘[t]he listing mechanisms under the Convention may provide an opportunity for promoting and enhancing the visibility of elements that contribute to preparing for, responding to and recovering from the effects of natural disasters […]’.
2. Given the above, and notwithstanding the procedural directives related to the treatment of files per cycle, the Secretariat deemed that the nomination could be a case whereby the recently adopted operational principles and modalities could be meaningfully applied to a circumstance which corresponds to the reasons for which they were adopted. Furthermore, such an action would align with the spirit of UNESCO and the 2003 Convention by soliciting the mutual understanding and cooperation of the international community. Accordingly, during the September meeting of the Evaluation Body, the Secretariat asked the members of the Body if they would agree to evaluate the file on compassionate grounds and an exceptional basis. It was also understood that the request was to evaluate the file under the same conditions and with the same requirements as for any other file.

Evaluation by the Evaluation Body

1. After internal consultations, the members of the Evaluation Body agreed to respond positively to this request. To clarify their position, the Chairperson of the Body submitted a letter on 2  November 2021, on behalf of its members, to the Secretariat stating that the willingness of the Body to evaluate an additional nomination is based on the understanding that UNESCO would clear potential legal and procedural issues that may be raised for this exceptional case which does not follow the established calendar for evaluating and examining nomination files. The Evaluation Body considered that its evaluation was without prejudice to the decision to be made by the Committee whether to consider the nomination during its sixteenth session in 2021.
2. The nomination file was made available to the Evaluation Body on 14 September 2021 on the password-protected, dedicated interface used by the 2021 Evaluation Body. Following the same working method as that used for evaluating the files of the 2021 cycle, the Evaluation Body members were asked to individually assess the file from 14 September to 13 October 2021, with the interface providing them with a platform to have written exchanges. On 14 October 2021, the Evaluation Body members met in an extraordinary session online to assess the nomination against each of the required criteria for inscription, in order to arrive at a collective recommendation. The draft decision was proposed by the Rapporteur after that meeting and the Body subsequently finalized its draft decision by electronic exchange on 28 October 2021. The recommendation of the Evaluation Body is provided in sections A and B below.

**Proposed procedure**

1. The following considerations, developed by the Secretariat in consultation with UNESCO’s Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs, are brought to the attention of the Committee:
   1. Article 7(g) of the Convention includes, amongst the functions of the Committee, to ‘examine requests submitted by States Parties, and to decide thereon, in accordance with objective selection criteria to be established by the Committee and approved by the General Assembly for […] inscription on the lists and proposals mentioned under Articles 16, 17 and 18 […]’. The prerogative to decide on the inscription of an element on the Representative List thus lies with the Committee, which draws its authority directly from the Convention.
   2. The procedure for evaluating and examining nominations, and in particular its timetable, is laid out in the Operational Directives (paragraphs 54 to 56), which have been approved by the General Assembly. In this regard, it bears recalling Article 7(e) of the Convention pursuant to which the Committee ‘prepare[s] and submit[s] to the General Assembly for approval operational directives for the implementation of this Convention.’
2. In other words, under the provisions of the Convention, the Committee is vested with the authority to examine a request for inscription and decide thereon, on the basis of procedures foreseen in the Operational Directives, which are prepared by the Committee and approved by the General Assembly.
3. It follows that, should the Committee consider that the exceptional circumstances highlighted by Haiti warrant the examination of the nomination of ‘Joumou soup’ on a fast-track basis by the sixteenth session in 2021, it may decide to examine and, if the conditions are considered fulfilled, to inscribe the element in the Representative List. Insofar as the inscription would have taken place in circumstances that are not foreseen in the Operational Directives, the procedure followed by the Committee and its decision to inscribe would nevertheless require the endorsement of the General Assembly, which may take place at the ninth session in June 2022. While the Committee’s decision to inscribe the nomination would take place at the present session, the inscription would remain subject to such General Assembly’s endorsement.
4. **Recommendation**
5. The Evaluation Body recommends that the Committee inscribe the following element on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

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| **Draft Decision** | **Submitting State** | **Nomination** | **File No.** |
| 16.COM 19 | Haiti | Joumou soup | 01853 |

1. **Draft Decision**
2. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

## DRAFT DECISION 16.COM 19

The Committee

Takes note that Haiti has nominated **Joumou soup** (No. 01853) for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

Joumou or giraumon soup is a traditional Haitian pumpkin soup made with vegetables, plantains, meat, pasta and spices. It is a celebratory dish, deeply rooted in Haitian identity, and its preparation promotes social cohesion and belonging among communities. Originally reserved for slave owners, Haitians took ownership of the soup when they gained independence from France, turning it into a symbol of their newly acquired freedom and an expression of their dignity and resilience. It is made from giraumon, a variety of pumpkin once cultivated by the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, and is prepared and consumed specifically on the first of January – Haiti’s Independence Day – when it constitutes the first meal of the year. It also serves as traditional Sunday breakfast. The preparation of Joumou soup is a family and community affair: women manage the overall activities, children help to prepare the ingredients, artisans make the aluminium pots and other utensils used to prepare the soup, and farmers work the land to harvest the vegetables. Today, several variations of the soup can be found in Caribbean and Latin American cuisines.

Further takes note of the request made by the national authorities of Haiti that the Committee examine this nomination on an accelerated basis at its present session;

Recognizes the pertinence of the Operational principles and modalities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in emergencies for this case, and considers that the request for this nomination to be examined on an accelerated basis can be responded to positively on compassionate grounds and on an exceptional basis;

Considers that, from the information included in the file, the nomination satisfies the following criteria for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

R.1: The element is a historical and inclusive culinary tradition of Haiti that teaches tolerance, respect for human dignity and equality. It is widely prepared, shared and enjoyed in rural and urban areas alike throughout the country. While women play a central role in its transmission, men, women and youth all participate in the preparation of the soup. Transmission of the recipes takes place mainly at home but also through books, shows, social networks, the curricula of cooking schools, and agricultural fairs and festivals. The element is a symbol of the struggle against colonization and is a strong cultural expression of Haitian identity.

R.2: At the local level, the inscription of the element would encourage awareness on the role of intangible cultural heritage in strengthening social bonds. At the national level, it would support partnerships and dialogue between different groups and communities, and encourage authorities to better identify and promote traditional knowledge and skills related to living heritage. At the international level, an inscription would highlight the values of equality, and social justice that are integral to intangible cultural heritage, and motivate bearers from other countries to identify and safeguard elements that represent solidarity and inclusiveness. It would also encourage exchanges between people and practitioners from different countries, as well as with practitioners of other elements of intangible cultural heritage.

R.3: The viability of the element has been ensured by Haitian families with women playing a key role in the informal transmission of the preparatory techniques in rural and urban settings. Several actions have been organized by the State including the set-up of a master's program in History, Memory and Heritage, UNESCO sponsored capacity-building workshops, and teacher training workshops to teach about the symbolism of the soup. A series of safeguarding measures are proposed including research, conferences, a school-based program and monitoring and evaluation. The State will provide financial resources, and strengthen the collaboration among communities, groups and individuals and public institutions.

R.4: The nomination process followed a participatory approach, where bearers played a fundamental role in the preparation of the file. The State initiated the nomination process through a series of meetings where the perspectives of researchers in Haitian intangible cultural heritage were also sought. Four discussion sessions took place in 2020 at the Haitian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO and at the Ministry of Culture and Communication. Free, prior and informed consent was provided by a variety of communities, groups and individuals. No custom or other practice limits access to the element and the element is open to inclusive participation.

R.5: The element was first identified and included in the Inventory of Intangible Heritage of Haiti project (IPIMH) in 2011, through an inventorying project led by the State University of Haiti and Laval University with the involvement of NGOs and bearers, including women’s associations. The element was subsequently incorporated in the National Register of Cultural Heritage in 2020. The inventory is updated yearly through the coordination efforts of the Directorate of Cultural Heritage in conjunction with bearers, experts, associations and community members.

Commends the State Party on an exemplary demonstration of how the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity.

Decides to inscribe **Joumou soup** on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, subject to the General Assembly’s endorsement of the procedure followed for the inscription of this nomination;

Requests that the Secretariat bring this decision to the attention of the ninth session of the General Assembly for its endorsement of the procedure followed for the inscription of this nomination.