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

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

**Meeting of the Bureau**

**Online**

**21 May 2021**

**9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (UTC+2)**

**Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda:**

**Working methods of the Committee for the distribution of amendments and ways to improve informal consultations among Committee members**

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| **Summary**At its meeting on 8 March 2021, the Bureau of the sixteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage discussed, upon the proposal from Czechia, how the work of the Committee could benefit from the timely distribution of amendments and subsequent informal consultations among members of the Committee. To this end, the present document proposes a working method that could be applied on an experimental basis starting with the sixteenth session of the Committee in 2021.**Decision required:** paragraph 9 |

**Background**

1. During its first meeting on 8 March 2021, the Bureau of the sixteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter ‘the Bureau’) discussed the proposal from one of its members (Czechia) on ways to improve the distribution of amendments to Committee members prior to and during the Committee session and to facilitate informal consultations among Committee members ahead of the examination of decisions in plenary sessions. Bureau members agreed to continue this discussion at the Bureau’s next meeting and requested the Secretariat to include this item on the agenda of the present meeting.
2. During its sessions, the Committee favours the adoption of decisions by consensus with decisions and amendments displayed on screen in both working languages during the decision-making process. Committee members may submit amendments at any time until a decision is made. However, to ensure efficient time management and facilitate the organization of debates, members are encouraged to submit amendments as early as possible. According to the current practice, it is up to the Committee member wishing to table an amendment to decide whether and how it wishes to conduct informal consultations on the amendment, before and/or after it has officially been submitted to the Secretariat.
3. In recent sessions, the Committee has been asked to examine a number of substantial and voluminous amendments, whether on decisions related to the inscription of elements on the Lists of the Convention or on decisions under other agenda items. On several occasions, most recently during the fifteenth session of the Committee (online, 14 to 18 December 2020), some Committee members noted that they did not have any prior knowledge of these lengthy amendments until they were displayed on screen during the debates on the corresponding agenda item. As they were seeing these amendments for the first time without a copy at hand, they did not have sufficient time to examine them and to undertake appropriate consultations with their and other delegations. This issue becomes even more salient during online meetings, which create additional challenges for delegations to undertake internal and external consultations on amendments.
4. While the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties state that amendments should be ‘circulated reasonably in advance to all participants’ (Rule 11.2), the Rules of Procedure of the Committee do not contain an equivalent provision. What is foreseen by its Rule 23 is the possibility for a Committee member, if supported by two other members, to request the suspension of the debate until the amendment has been circulated in the working languages. In the absence of any statutory provision for the distribution of amendments prior to their examination by the Committee, the Bureau may wish to recommend a working method to improve the situation as described below, based on its discussion in March 2021.

**Proposed working method for the sixteenth session of the Committee**

1. According to the proposed working method, the Secretariat would distribute amendments electronically to all Committee members, after having verified that they are related to the work of the Committee, in the language and format received. To this end, Committee members would be asked to designate a contact email address to the Secretariat to which amendments would be sent, allowing the creation of a mailing list; this list shall also be made available to the Committee members.
2. The aim would be to ensure that all Committee members are duly informed of amendments that have been tabled, providing them with sufficient time to examine proposed amendments and allowing them to partake in debates on an equal basis. By improving the transparency of the amendment submission process and facilitating the possibility for Committee members to undertake informal consultations within and among the different electoral groups, it is expected that the proposed working method would facilitate consensus-building and improve the Committee’s decision-making process. In this regard, it should be noted that this working method does not aim to replace actual debates during Committee sessions, which are an important component of the good governance of the Convention.
3. The application of the proposed working method would not affect the right of Committee members to submit amendments at any time until the adoption of a decision, including during the debates on a decision. Furthermore, informal consultations that may take place after the circulation of amendments to all Committee members would remain voluntary, although the mailing list will be shared to facilitate broad consultation.
4. In accordance with Rule 12.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee, the Bureau is tasked with coordinating the work of the Committee. Should the proposed working method be considered adequate, the Bureau could recommend its application by the Secretariat on an experimental basis starting with the sixteenth session of the Committee, which will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 13 to 18 December 2021.
5. The Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 16.COM 2.BUR 4

The Bureau,

1. Having examined document LHE/21/16.COM 2.BUR/4,
2. Recalling Rule 12.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee,
3. Recommends that, on an experimental basis starting with the sixteenth session of the Committee in 2021, the Secretariat circulate to all Committee members amendments as soon as possible upon their submissions in the language and format received, with a view to facilitating informal consultations among Committee members and to this end, requests the Secretariat to establish a mailing list and share it with the Committee members ahead of the sixteenth session of the Committee in 2021;
4. Further requests the Secretariat to inform all Committee members of this experimental working method prior to the beginning of the sixteenth session;
5. Encourages Committee members to submit amendments as early as possible and to make use of the mailing list to undertake consultations prior to the session, in order to facilitate the organization of the debates.