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

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

**Eighteenth session**

**Kasane, Republic of Botswana**

**4 to 9 December 2023**

**Item 20 of the provisional agenda:**

**Report by the Committee to the General Assembly on its activities**

**(January 2022 to December 2023)**

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| **Summary**Article 30.1 of the 2003 Convention states that ‘On the basis of its activities [...] the Committee shall submit a report to the General Assembly at each of its sessions.’ This document contains a draft report on the Committee’s activities from January 2022 to December 2023, which the Committee may wish to present to the tenth session of the General Assembly in mid-2024.**Decision required:** paragraph 4 |

1. Article 30.1 of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage states that ‘On the basis of its activities [...] the Committee shall submit a report to the General Assembly at each of its sessions.’ Article 30.2 continues that ‘The report shall be brought to the attention of the General Conference of UNESCO.’ These provisions are also supported by Rule 46 of the Rules of Procedures of the Committee.
2. The period covered by this report is January 2022 to December 2023. This calendar follows Resolution [6.GA 5](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/6.GA/5), whereby the General Assembly requested that the Committee use a biennium calendar year for future reports. If necessary, this report will need to be updated by the Secretariat after the eighteenth session of the Committee to include additional information about the results that session the eighteenth session of the Committee. The Rapporteur of the eighteenth session would then be tasked with validating any such additional information.
3. This report should be read in conjunction with the working documents and the decisions of the governing bodies of the 2003 Convention that met during the reporting period (the seventeenth and eighteenth sessions of the Committee and the ninth session of the General Assembly), in particular:
* The report of the Secretariat on its activities from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021 (document [LHE/22/9.GA/6](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-9.GA-6-EN.docx));
* Use of the resources of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund for the period 2022–2023 and the first semester of 2024 (document [LHE/22/9.GA/10);](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-9.GA-10-EN.docx)
* The report of the Secretariat on its activities from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2023 (document [LHE/23/18.COM/5](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-5_EN.docx));
* The financial report of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund for the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025 and the first semester of 2026 (document [LHE/23/18.COM/14](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-14_EN.docx)).
1. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 18.COM 20

The Committee,

1. Having examined document LHE/23/18.COM/20 and its annex,
2. Recalling Article 30 of the Convention as well as Rule 46 of the Rules of Procedures of the Committee,
3. Welcomes the State that has ratified the Convention since January 2022 ;
4. Adopts the report on its activities undertaken in 2022 and 2023 and requests that the Secretariat present it for examination by the tenth session of the General Assembly.

**ANNEX**

**Report by the Committee to the General Assembly on its activities**

1. **Introduction**
2. The functions of the Committee are set out in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in particular in Article 7.
3. In 2022, the General Assembly renewed half of the Committee by electing twelve States Parties together with the ongoing members: Angola\*, Bangladesh\*, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso\*, Côte d’Ivoire, Czechia, Ethiopia\*, Germany\*, India\*, Malaysia\*, Mauritania\*, Morocco, Panama, Paraguay\*, Peru, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia\*, Sweden, Switzerland, Uzbekistan\* and Viet Nam\* (those indicated with an asterisk have a mandate between 2022 and 2026; the mandate for those without an asterisk is between 2020 and 2024).
4. The ordinary session of the Committee was convened twice: from 28 November to 3 December 2022 (Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco) for its seventeenth session (17.COM), and from 4 to 9 December 2023 (Kasane, Republic of Botswana) for its eighteenth session (18.COM). In addition, it was convened once online on 1 July 2022 for its fifth extraordinary session (5.EXT.COM). The Bureau of the 17.COM was composed of: H.E. Mr Samir Addahre (Morocco) as Chairperson; Switzerland, Czechia, Panama, Republic of Korea and Botswana as Vice-Chairpersons; and Mr Ramiro Maurice Silva Rivera (Peru) as Rapporteur. The Bureau of the 18.COM was composed of: H.E. Mr Mustaq Moorad (Botswana) as Chairperson; Switzerland, Slovakia, Peru, Bangladesh and Morocco as Vice-Chairpersons; and Ms Eva Kuminkova (Czechia) as Rapporteur. The Bureau of the 5.EXT.COM was the same with that of the 17.COM.
5. The Bureau met during the sessions of the Committee from Tuesday to Saturday. During the reporting period, it also met four times at UNESCO Headquarters on 4 October 2022 (17.COM 5.BUR), 22 March 2023 (18.COM 1.BUR), 5 June 2023 (18.COM 2.BUR) and 2 October 2023 (18.COM 3.BUR), and three times online on 7 March 2022 (17.COM 1.BUR), 6 May 2022 (17.COM 3.BUR) and 23 June 2022 (17.COM 4.BUR). In addition, one electronic consultation was held in March 2022 (17.COM 2.BUR).
6. The Committee and its Bureau examined a total of 90 items inscribed on their agendas, which were accompanied by 93 working documents or information documents, 10 nominations for the Urgent Safeguarding List, 91 nominations for the Representative List, 10 proposals for good safeguarding practices, 30 requests for International Assistance, 100 reports submitted by States Parties, and 164 requests for accreditation or renewal from non-governmental organizations (hereafter, ‘NGOs’).
7. **Promoting the objectives of the Convention, encouraging and monitoring its implementation, and providing guidance on safeguarding measures and good practices** (Article 7[a] and 7[b])
8. **Ratification**
9. Following the most recent ratification by San Marino, 181 States are party to the Convention as at 31 December 2023.
10. **Sound governance ensured**
11. The ninth session of the General Assembly (5 to 7 July 2022, UNESCO Headquarters; hereafter, ‘9.GA’) approved a plan for the use of the resources of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund (hereafter, ‘the Fund’) for the period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023, which devoted 20 per cent of the budget (US$1,746,531) to ‘other functions of the Committee’. Furthermore, a total sum of US$436,633 (25 per cent of the line ‘other functions of the Committee’) was allocated to ensuring the sound governance of the Convention (Resolution [9.GA 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/10)).
12. The ongoing global reflection on a broader implementation of Article 18 of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage considers how to share good living heritage safeguarding experiences more broadly and how to bring the voices of communities and their aspirations for safeguarding their living heritage to the fore. With reference to the reflection topics established by the 17.COM (Decision [17.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/10)) and on the basis laid by the Category VI meeting of experts (19 to 21 April 2023, Stockholm, Sweden), an Open-ended intergovernmental working group took place from 4 to 5 July 2023 at UNESCO Headquarters. The group’s recommendations include revisions to the criteria for the Register and a step-by-step approach for the creation of an online platform for sharing good safeguarding experiences. [The eighteenth session of the Committee took note of the recommendations (Decision 18.COM 11)]. The progress of the reflection will be presented to the tenth session of the General Assembly in mid-2024.
13. The knowledge management services of the Convention were ensured to support its sound governance. This includes, among other points, the smooth running of the online periodic reporting interface, which was used by States Parties in Europe in 2022 and in the Arab States in 2023. Various educational and knowledge management tools were also made available online in an open access format.
14. **Strengthening the capacity-building programme and guidelines on safeguarding measures and good practices**
15. Capacity building continues to be central to the mandate of the 2003 Convention as one of the two global funding priorities of the Convention, ‘Strengthening capacities to safeguard intangible cultural heritage using multi-modal approaches and contribute to sustainable development’. Consequently, a total sum of US$576,355 – i.e., 33 per cent of the line ‘other functions of the Committee’ – was allocated for the period January 2022 to December 2023. The high submission rate of periodic reports from States in the first three regions that carried out the exercise, namely Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and the Arab States, confirmed the effectiveness of the capacity-building approach adopted. The 17.COM welcomed the reorientation of the global capacity-building programme, including the move towards a multimodal delivery approach and the expansion of the global network of facilitators (Decision [17.COM 5](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/5)).
16. **Integration of intangible cultural heritage into development plans, policies and programmes**
17. Integrating intangible cultural heritage into development plans, policies and programmes is key to promoting the objectives of the Convention in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A total sum of US$323,108 was allocated for this purpose – i.e., 19 per cent of the line ‘other functions of the Committee’ – for the period 2022–2023. In line with the global funding priority ‘Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in formal and non-formal education’, around fifty countries showcased the integration of living heritage into their educational contexts. A global learning network with resource persons, the global clearing house for knowledge sharing on living heritage and education, and the Massive open online course on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding and sustainable development were also developed.
18. As part of the thematic initiatives under the 2003 Convention and in response to the request made by the 17.COM (Decision [17.COM 13](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/13)), a Guidance Note on Economic Dimensions of Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding is under preparation. To this end, a category VI expert meeting was organized from 27 to 28 September 2023 (UNESCO Headquarters) and on 20 October 2023 (online) with the aim of exploring ways to maximize the positive effects on communities, groups and individuals, while mitigating the negative impacts of economic activities on living heritage safeguarding and sustainable development. Furthermore, two additional themes on living heritage and sustainable development were ongoing, focusing on: (i) safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change, and (ii) safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts. The 17.COM and the 18.COM took note of the progress made (Decisions [17.COM 13](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/13) and 18.COM 12).
19. **Raising awareness and outreach**
20. Raising awareness on the importance of intangible cultural heritage and promoting the objectives of the Convention are considered as safeguarding actions in and of themselves, as defined in Article 2.3 of the Convention. A total sum of US$410,435 – i.e., 23 per cent of the line ‘other functions of the Committee’ – was allocated to supporting the Secretariat’s initiative in these areas of action for the period 2022–2023.
21. The year 2023 marked the twentieth anniversary of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It was an opportunity for all stakeholders involved to take stock of the progress made and to reflect on the future directions that the Convention should take. Organized under the theme ‘We Are #LivingHeritage’, the anniversary was also a chance to reflect on the role of the 2003 Convention in raising awareness about the diversity and richness of intangible cultural heritage and in fostering international cooperation. A highlight was the Global Meeting organized to celebrate the anniversary which resulted in the ‘Seoul Vision for the Future of Safeguarding Living Heritage for Sustainable Development and Peace’ (25 to 26 July 2023, Seoul, the Republic of Korea).
22. Following the practice introduced in 2020, the 17.COM [and the 18.COM] examined a ‘Report of the non-governmental organizations forum’ under a stand-alone item on the agenda. In continuation of the reflection undertaken (2018–2020) on how to explore the untapped potential of accredited NGOs, the ICH-NGO Forum undertook a mapping exercise to identify the domains of competence of sixty-five accredited NGOs [; the infographics produced thanks to this exercise were presented to the 18.COM].
23. **Preparation of a draft plan for the use of the resources of the Fund and increasing the resources of the Fund** (Articles 7[c] and 7[d])
24. At its eighteenth session, the Committee examined a draft plan for the use of the resources of the Fund for the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025 and, on a provisional basis, the first semester of 2026 (Decision 18.COM 14). In line with the approval procedure introduced by the Committee in 2019 for the ‘Other functions of the Committee’ (Decision [14.COM 7](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/14.COM/7)), the draft plan was presented with a percentage breakdown under the budget line ‘Other functions of the Committee’, in terms of the Expected Results as per the approved C/5. This draft plan will be submitted to the tenth session of the General Assembly in 2024 for its approval. The largest percentage continues to be dedicated to International Assistance (see document [LHE/23/18.COM/14](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-14_EN.docx) for the detailed plan).
25. During the reporting period, voluntary supplementary contributions of US$196,046.80 from the Netherlands and the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP, Republic of Korea) were made to the Fund. These contributions financed the first of the two funding priorities, ‘Strengthening capacities to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and contribute to sustainable development’ and ‘Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in formal and non-formal education’, which were approved for the period 2018–2021 (Decision [12.COM 6](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/12.COM/6)) and consequently renewed at the sixteenth session of the Committee (Decision [16.COM 12](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/12)) for the period 2022–2025. The Sub-Fund of the Fund, devoted exclusively to enhancing the human capacities of the Secretariat, also received contributions of US$134,201.81 from France, Lithuania, Monaco, Slovakia and Slovenia (Document [LHE/23/18.COM/INF.14](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-INF.14_EN.docx)).
26. **Examination of periodic reports** (Article 7[f])
27. The Committee examined thirty-nine reports on the status of elements inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List – twenty-four at its seventeenth session in 2022 and fifteen at its eighteenth session in 2023. While examining these reports, the Committee acknowledged the enhanced viability of certain inscribed elements, which have been reported to be no longer in need of urgent safeguarding, and took note of those States Parties that expressed their desire to transfer elements from the Urgent Safeguarding List to the Representative List (Decision [17.COM 6.a](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/6.a) and Decision 18.COM 7.a).
28. Under the ongoing first regional cycle of periodic reporting system, the Committee examined a total of sixty reports: the 17.COM examined reports submitted by all forty-four States Parties in Europe (Decision [17.COM 6.b](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/6.b)) and the 18.COM examined reports submitted by sixteen out of seventeen States Parties in the Arab States. The Committee acknowledged this remarkable progress in comparison to past reporting cycles (the lowest submission rate for the reports was 16 per cent in the 2016 cycle). [Furthermore, the 18.COM examined possible ways forward for aligning the mechanisms in light of UNESCO Culture Sector’s commitment to producing a quadrennial Global Report on Cultural Policies following the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration.]
29. **Inscriptions on the Lists of the Convention, selection of good safeguarding practices and granting of International Assistance** (Article 7[g])
30. The Committee examined 111 files and inscribed a total of 47 elements on the Lists of the Convention: 4 on the Urgent Safeguarding List and 39 on the Representative List. In addition, it selected four good safeguarding practices.
31. The Committee (for requests greater than US$100,000) and the Bureau (for requests up to US$100,000 and emergency requests) approved twenty-eight requests for International Assistance, for a total amount of US$3,041,879. A total of thirty-four countries received financial assistance from the Fund during the reporting period.
32. In the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, the fifth extraordinary session of the Committee decided to inscribe ‘Culture of Ukrainian borscht cooking’ on the Urgent Safeguarding List, as a matter of extreme urgency through the first-time application of Article 17.3 of the Convention (Decision [5.EXT.COM 5](https://ich.unesco.org/en/5extcom)). The expeditious treatment of the request, within ten weeks of its receipt, demonstrates the Committee’s ability to respond in line with the Operational Principles and Modalities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies.
33. The reporting period saw the conclusion of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms. Following a meeting of experts and the three-part meeting of the Open-ended intergovernmental working group (including the Part III meeting, held online on 25 and 26 April 2022), the ninth session of the General Assembly in July 2022 examined the recommendations of the working group and approved the amendments to the Operational Directives (Resolution [9.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/9)) endorsed by the sixteenth session of the Committee (Decision [16.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/14)) and the fifth extraordinary session of the Committee (Decision [5.EXT.COM 4](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/5.EXT.COM/4)). Concretely, the reform established, among other adjustments, the procedures for transferring elements between the Lists and for inscribing elements on an extended or reduced basis at the national and international levels, as well as the procedure for removing an element from one of the Lists and a follow-up mechanism for a currently inscribed element.
34. Applying the newly established removal procedure for the first time, the 17.COM decided to remove the ‘Ducasse of Ath’ of the element ‘Processional giants and dragons in Belgium and France’ (Belgium and France) from the Representative List (Decision [17.COM 8.a](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/8.a); document [LHE/22/17.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-17.COM-8-EN.docx)). The Committee considered the allegations of racism and discrimination raised in relation to the character of the ‘Sauvage’ to be a serious matter, which must be addressed as they touch upon UNESCO’s founding principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect amongst peoples, as reflected in the preamble of the Organization’s Constitution, as well as the requirement of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, as stipulated under Article 2 of the Convention.