

**Action plan for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage  
as approved by the international experts on the occasion of the International  
Round Table on “Intangible Cultural Heritage - Working Definitions” organized  
by UNESCO in Piedmont, Italy, from 14 to 17 March 2001**

1. *Taking into account* resolution 25 B. 2. (a) (iii) adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 30th session (November 1999) which authorizes the Director-General to “... carry out a preliminary study on the advisability of regulating internationally, through a new standard-setting instrument, the protection of traditional culture and folklore”,
2. *Having examined and expressed favourable views* on the content of the preliminary study on the advisability of developing a standard-setting instrument for the protection of intangible cultural heritage,
3. *Recognizing* the effectiveness of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in promoting awareness of the significance of safeguarding cultural and natural heritage as well as in encouraging Member States to take necessary measures to protect their monuments and natural sites,
4. *Cognizant* of the impacts of globalization on intangible cultural heritage, with particular awareness of the need to counter aspects which threaten the diversity of peoples’ intangible cultural heritage, while taking full advantage of the technology associated with it,
5. *Bearing in mind* the fact that many intangible cultural heritage manifestations are threatened with disappearance mainly because the well-being of the creators of this heritage is endangered by economic, political and social forces such as socio-economic marginalization, a global entertainment industry, religious intolerance and ethnic wars,
6. *Recognizing* the impetus already given by the work achieved in the process of evaluating the implementation of the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, and more particularly the Conference “A Global Assessment of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore: Local Empowerment and International Cooperation” held in Washington in 1999,
7. *Taking into account* that the aforementioned Washington Conference underlined that the term “folklore” is no longer appropriate, but emphasized “the importance of its definition as it stands in the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore”, and recommended a study of a more appropriate terminology [...]”,
8. *Acknowledging* the need to revisit the 1989 Recommendation to take due consideration of the agency of creators, audiences, NGOs and various actors of the private sector,
9. *Underlining* that the definition of “folklore” or “traditional and popular culture” given in the 1989 Recommendation needs to be modified so as to be more inclusive, encompassing not only artistic products such as tales, songs, etc., but also the knowledge and values enabling their production, the creative processes that bring these products into existence, and the modes of interaction by which these products are appropriately received and appreciatively acknowledged,

10. *Recognizing* that grass-root practitioners, creators and their communities sustain and develop this heritage, and should therefore be recognized as primary agents in the formulation of cultural policy,

11. *Acknowledging* the different activities undertaken by UNESCO to raise awareness of Member States of the significance and urgency to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, for example through the Living Human Treasures system and the Programme entitled Proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,

12. *Taking into account* the following conclusions of the round table:

- (a) that international efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage must be founded on universally accepted human rights, equity and sustainability and on respect for all cultures that also have respect for other cultures;
- (b) that intangible cultural heritage is fundamentally safeguarded through creativity and enactment by the agents of the communities that produce and maintain it;
- (c) that any instrument dealing with intangible cultural heritage should facilitate, encourage and protect the right and capacity of communities to continue to enact their intangible cultural heritage through developing their own approaches to manage and sustain it;
- (d) that sharing one's culture and having a cultural dialogue fosters greater overall creativity as long as recognition and equitable exchanges are ensured;
- (e) that the loss of intangible cultural heritage can only be prevented by ensuring that the meanings, enabling conditions and skills involved in their creation, enactment and transmission can be reproduced.

**We, the participants to the International Round Table on “Intangible Cultural Heritage - Working Definitions”, recommend UNESCO to:**

1. *Undertake* early negotiations for the adoption of an international normative instrument in order to legally safeguard intangible cultural heritage and to facilitate UNESCO's mission in the domains specified in its mandate;

2. *Actively pursue* the ongoing process of regulating, through a new standard-setting instrument, the protection of intangible cultural heritage;

3. *Ensure* that the international legal instrument addresses primarily creators and custodian communities in addition to scholars, researchers and cultural workers, and that the dignity and relevant rights of creators and practitioners of intangible cultural heritage are respected and that further actions are taken to support their socio-economic well-being;

4. *Ensure* that the process of elaborating a new standard-setting instrument is carried out with the full participation of all parties concerned, more particularly at the grass-root level, i.e. cultural practitioners and custodian communities or communities at the national, regional and international level;

5. The objectives of such an international legal instrument will be: (i) to conserve human creations that may disappear forever; (ii) to give world recognition; (iii) to strengthen identity; (iv) to enable social cooperation within and between groups; (v) to provide historical continuity; (vi) to enhance the creative diversity of humanity; (vii) to foster enjoyment;

6. *Use* the terminology and working definition proposed by the International Round Table as a basis for the process of studying the advisability of regulating the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage;

7. *Define* intangible cultural heritage (the term retained) as “peoples’ learned processes along with the knowledge, skills and creativity that inform and are developed by them, the products they create, and the resources, spaces and other aspects of social and natural context necessary to their sustainability; these processes provide living communities with a sense of continuity with previous generations and are important to cultural identity, as well as to the safeguarding of cultural diversity and creativity of humanity”;

8. The suggested scope of the domains to be covered by this instrument should be entrusted to a group of experts, in the course of its elaboration, who will specify the elements in domains such as the following: oral cultural heritage; languages; performing arts and festive events; social rituals and practices; cosmologies and knowledge systems; beliefs and practices about Nature.

9. *Convene* other international experts meetings including creators and practitioners as well as other specialists supporting these activities on different specific themes during the process of elaboration of a new standard-setting instrument;

10. *Cooperate* with other relevant intergovernmental organizations in the elaboration of appropriate legal tools for the protection of intellectual rights and a means of fostering the continued practice and creativity of intangible cultural heritage;

11. *Ensure* that the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is not used to further religious, racial and ethnic intolerance or to foster any beliefs in cultural exclusivity which may lead to disrespect or destruction of other cultures’ heritage;

12. *Give importance* to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of indigenous peoples with a holistic perspective ensuring that their way of life is protected in the manner they themselves decide and as stipulated particularly in article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

13. *Ensure* that the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage be conducted by the creators and practitioners so that they will continue to fully enjoy freedom of creation, expression and transmission of their cultures;

14. *Encourage, disseminate and proclaim* best practices for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage that: (i) were generated or involve members of the community; (ii) have shown in concrete achievements that they can successfully reach their goals; (iii) are exemplary for communities within the country or in other countries of the world;

(iv) involve women to the fullest extent of their potential participation; (v) enhance the social and ecological sustainability of the group and region;

15. *Update* the intellectual and operational elements proposed in the 1989 Recommendation and continue to promote the Proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity and the Living Human Treasures system;

16. *Assist* Member States in adopting administrative and legal measures to safeguard intangible cultural heritage;

17. *Encourage* the creation of a clearing house by an international system of universities and concerned parties to provide information in relation to different methods of identification, protection, revitalization and transmission of intangible cultural heritage.