

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

**THIRTEENTH ANNUAL COORDINATION MEETING OF
CATEGORY 2 CENTRES ACTIVE IN THE FIELD OF
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

16 July 2025
Online

1.00 – 4.00 p.m. (Paris time)

**Report of the thirteenth annual coordination meeting
of category 2 centres active in the field of intangible cultural heritage**

I. Background

Since 2012, the Secretariat of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has organized annual coordination meetings for category 2 centres (C2Cs) active in the field of intangible cultural heritage to facilitate exchange, strategic planning, and collaborative initiatives (see document [LHE/25/C2C/1](#) for agenda and timetable). The thirteenth coordination meeting took place online on 16 July 2025, ahead of key events including MONDIACULT 2025 and the 43rd session of the General Conference, as well as the twentieth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 Convention.

In addition to sharing information on recent developments under the 2003 Convention as well as the status of category 2 centres and the process of renewing agreements between host countries and UNESCO, the C2Cs were invited to present their recent key activities and the workplan, with a focus on the future role of C2Cs in the 2003 Convention's periodic reporting system, particularly with the planned transition to a single global submission system.

II. Participation

The meeting brought together representatives of the eight centres contributing to UNESCO's actions in the field of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (see document [LHE/25/C2C/2](#) for the list of participants):

- ALGERIA – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa (CRESPIAF);
- BULGARIA – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe (RCSICH);
- CHINA – International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (CRIHAP);
- IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF) – Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia (*TICHCT*);
- JAPAN – International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI);
- PERU – Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Latin America (CRESPIAL);
- REPUBLIC OF KOREA – International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IHCAP);
- UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – International Centre for Capacity Building in Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Arab States (ICCBICH).

III. Summary of discussions

Item 1. Opening

The meeting was opened by Ms Fumiko Ohinata, Secretary of the 2003 Convention, who warmly welcomed all participants and expressed sincere appreciation for the continued engagement and contribution of the category 2 centres in the implementation of the Convention. She highlighted the importance of this annual coordination meeting as a platform for reflection, dialogue, and cooperation among Centres that play a critical role in the safeguarding of living heritage across the globe, and also acknowledged the support role of the Secretariat (notably Ms Susanne Schnuttgen; Head, Capacity Building and Heritage Policy and other members of the Secretariat team) who facilitates and coordinates the work of C2Cs under the 2003 Convention.

Her presentation provided an overview of recent developments under the Convention. Significant developments since the last meeting included the ratification of the Convention by South Africa and Sierra Leone, bringing the total to 185 States Parties; the Secretariat expanded and trained the

global facilitators network now comprising 248 members, with sessions on disaster risk reduction, nominations and the integration of living heritage in education; progress was made also on the implementation of Article 18 with the early harvest version of selected safeguarding experiences launched in May 2025, while laying the ground for the establishment of an online platform (supported by the Republic of Korea and the Kingdom of the Netherlands); three thematic initiatives are underway, with current focus on integrating intangible cultural heritage into urban planning; the Naples 2 Conference, held in June 2025, advanced the 'Spirit of Naples' agenda, promoting solidarity, economic benefits for heritage communities, and stronger community connections to UNESCO sites and elements; finally, preparations are ongoing for the twentieth session of the Intergovernmental Committee in New Delhi in December 2025 where strategic issues will be addressed.

Her presentation conveyed the 2003 Convention Secretariat's appreciation to all Centres for their adaptability and commitment and Ms Ohinata invited them to continue contributing actively to the global dialogue on safeguarding living heritage.

Item 2. Status of the evaluation process of category 2 centres and renewal of agreements between host countries and UNESCO

The second agenda item focused on the evaluation and renewal of agreements between UNESCO and the category 2 centres. A presentation by Ms Yue Shen from the Living Heritage Entity provided updated to these processes, outlining the steps involved in the evaluation of C2Cs in accordance with the 2019 global strategy for category 2 centres (see document [BSP-2020/WSPMR-1](#)).

Her presentation noted that the renewal process had recently been completed for three Centres: RCSICH had its agreement renewed in 2023, followed by CRESPIAL which finalized its renewal in 2024, while CRESPIAF also was in the final stage of its renewal process (N.B. which was completed post-meeting in August 2025). The participants learnt that the 222nd session of the Executive Board in October 2025 would examine relevant items concerning CRIHAP, IRCI as well as ICHCAP. As for ICCBICH, UNESCO was still awaiting official communication from the United Arab Emirates regarding its intention to proceed with the renewal (which was received post meeting in October 2025).

Appreciations were expressed to those Centres that had already completed or initiated the process, while all Centres were encouraged to ensure timely preparation of their self-assessment reports.

Item 3. Information Sharing: Recent Activities and Future Plans

The third agenda item focused on sharing recent activities and future plans from each of the eight active category 2 centres. This segment allowed each Centre to present key achievements, ongoing initiatives, and upcoming strategic priorities, with an emphasis on their contribution to the implementation of the 2003 Convention, regional cooperation, and thematic priorities such as education, digital innovation, and sustainable development.

- CRESPIAF provided an update on its institutional transformation into a public institution with scientific and technical characters under the Ministry of Culture and Arts, as a result of the renewal evaluation, which was a key recommendation as part of the evaluation report. This reorganization has allowed the Centre to strengthen its governance and operational structure, resulting in increased staffing, improved strategic planning, and more robust technical capacities. CRESPIAF also shared recent initiatives supporting the periodic reporting process and its efforts to reinforce safeguarding measures across the African continent through partnerships and outreach.
- RCSICH reported on its vibrant programme of activities. In the first half of 2025, the Centre organized a national capacity-building workshop on community-based inventorying and the relationship between living heritage and museums, held in Ankara, Türkiye, in collaboration with several national partners. Additionally, the Centre organized two youth exchanges under the Erasmus+ programme in April and May 2025, bringing together over 60 young people from six countries to reflect on the role of youth in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

RCSICH also outlined plans for regional workshops on international assistance and the economic dimensions of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding, as well as training of trainers on periodic reporting in late 2025 or early 2026. It continues to support research, publishing issues 13–14 of its journal *Living Heritage*, and has produced short educational videos and a photo exhibition on traditional crafts. The Centre also reported on its cultural policy and media engagement initiatives, including a roundtable on heritage and media, a discussion panel on politics and identity in living heritage, and upcoming events such as the annual meeting of the South-East European expert network in Greece, a university network meeting in Sofia, and an international conference on museums and intangible cultural heritage.

- CRIHAP highlighted its major achievements noting the successful implementation of 10 international workshops in 2024 and plans to organize 12 workshops in 2025, across 39 countries, reaching over 380 participants on themes ranging from community-based inventorying to ICH and sustainable development, education, and shared heritage. The Centre emphasized the importance of its newly developed 'ICH Online Classroom' and the release of 27 ICH case studies, which aim to document practical safeguarding experiences and serve as learning tools. CRIHAP also introduced new digital spaces to facilitate knowledge-sharing and noted the challenges related to training material development and evaluation of workshop outcomes. The presentation further identified four main challenges that the centre is encountering: gathering accurate training needs, improving workshop preparation communication, strengthening outcome evaluation, and enhancing training materials.
- TICHCT highlighted its proactive approach in fostering regional networks and collaborations across West and Central Asia. Recent flagship projects included launching a multilingual NGO network platform, partnering with memory institutions to promote intangible cultural heritage among youth, organizing an expert meeting on entrepreneurship for women in settled nomadic communities, holding a regional workshop on intangible cultural heritage and museums in Armenia, and participating in key regional and international events. Additional activities featured publications, the Nowrouz International Conference, the Khosheh Parvin Theatre Festival, intangible cultural heritage Day commemorations, and the creation of the 'Shahnamag' digital platform dedicated to Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. Of particular note was TICHCT's intention to take a lead role in supporting periodic reporting in its region through Overall Results Framework-aligned capacity-building workshops and the development of multilingual resources to enhance accessibility and engagement.
- IRCI reported steady progress in implementing its 2022–2026 Medium-Term Programme. It reported on the Sustainable Research Data Collection project for Central Asia and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which will culminate in subregional meetings in Uzbekistan and the Pacific. The project has compiled nearly 4,000 research entries from 49 countries into its online database. IRCI also organized the Asia-Pacific Research Forum for Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding, including a major international conference in Osaka in February 2025 with sessions on topics such as transmission, legal frameworks, and new technologies, as well as a special programme for early-career researchers. The Centre advanced thematic studies on intangible cultural heritage and sustainable cities and communities, climate change, and ecosystems, producing case studies from various countries in the Asia-Pacific region..
- CRESPIAL outlined its multi-level capacity-building strategies and its work with Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, especially through the documentation and revitalization of endangered languages and expressions. CRESPIAL also reported new partnerships with universities, cultural institutions, and regional organizations aimed at strengthening cultural rights and community-based safeguarding.
- ICHCAP reported its continued development of the ichLinks platform, which had by mid-2025 accumulated more than 1,700 elements from 35 countries. It strengthened cooperative networks involving experts, youth, communities, educational institutions, and international

organizations. Public awareness was boosted through digital outreach and media partnerships, with notable increases in YouTube and Instagram audiences. Strategically, ICHCAP focused on aligning its activities with UNESCO priorities, analysing policy trends, and integrating feedback into programme development in line with its core functions of information sharing and network building. Its work spanned three main areas: (1) strategy development; (2) information-sharing mechanisms – covering infrastructure, content creation, promotion, and dissemination; and (3) network strengthening, including diversifying participation and running extra-budgetary programmes. Highlighting the firm cooperative ground among C2Cs in East Asia, ICHCAP will co-host a meeting with CRIHAP and jointly publish the *Living Heritage Series* with IRCI during 2025-2026 period. These efforts positioned ICHCAP as a key driver of digital innovation, outreach, and international cooperation for safeguarding living heritage.

- ICCBICH highlighted its diverse set of capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives, to strengthen knowledge, skills, and institutional frameworks for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage across the Arab States, while fostering sustainable development, cultural innovation, and regional cooperation. Key 2024–2025 activities included the Sharjah International Narrator Forum, the Workshop on intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development, the Sharjah International Award for Cultural Heritage, and the regional cultural event *In the Shade of a Palm Tree*. The Centre also organized Sharjah Heritage Days, featuring thematic roundtables, live demonstrations, and discussions. Publications included a bilingual review of trends, policies, and challenges in the Gulf States and Yemen, based on their periodic reports. Looking forward, ICCBICH aims to deepen collaboration with other C2Cs, strengthen State Party cooperation, develop expert networks, and expand its digital presence through a new archive, website, and scholarly journal.

The information-sharing session reflected the diverse mandates and approaches of the Centres while also revealing shared challenges, such as ensuring sustainability of training programmes, increasing visibility of results, and deepening regional collaboration. It underscored the Centres' dedication to innovation, inclusion, and alignment with the strategic priorities of the Convention.

Item 4. Reflections on the Role of category 2 centres in the Periodic Reporting Mechanism

This session was dedicated to discussing the future role of category 2 centres in the context of the periodic reporting mechanism. Mr. Giovanni Scepi (Head, Programme Management Unit) from the Living Heritage Entity provided an in-depth presentation on the global transition to a single periodic reporting system for all States Parties, scheduled to begin in 2027. He emphasized that this shift would allow for more meaningful regional and global comparative analyses, while contributing fully to future editions of UNESCO's Global report on cultural policies.

His presentation covered key findings from the five regional consultations organized by the Secretariat in 2025. These consultations highlighted the need for increased support, including the simplification of reporting tools and enhanced capacity-building initiatives. In this context, the strategic opportunity for category 2 centres was underlined to play a vital supporting role in the new periodic reporting system.

TICHC took the floor to present its initiative to support the periodic reporting process in West and Central Asia. The Centre proposed to organize a series of subregional workshops in the lead-up to the 2027 reporting cycle. These workshops would aim to build capacities among national focal points and stakeholders, using Overall Results Framework (ORF)-aligned tools. The Centre also announced its intention to produce training materials in English, French, Arabic, and Russian, and to develop case studies on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding practices in the region.

Other Centres also expressed interest in contributing to this global effort. IRCI suggested that its research capacities could be mobilized to analyse submitted reports and contribute to thematic knowledge building. UNESCO welcomed these initiatives and reiterated the value of a coordinated

approach among Centres to ensure quality support and regional coverage in the upcoming reporting cycle.

Item 5 Closing

In her closing remarks, Ms Fumiko Ohinata, Secretary of the 2003 Convention, expressed her sincere appreciation for the active participation of all Centres and the fruitful exchanges held throughout the meeting. She emphasized the critical importance of the category 2 centres' continued engagement in safeguarding efforts and their growing role in supporting regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing.

She welcomed the various proposals presented during the meeting and encouraged all Centres to remain proactive in contributing to the implementation of the Convention's global priorities, particularly in light of the upcoming global periodic reporting cycle. She underlined that the Secretariat remains committed to facilitating coordination among Centres, promoting visibility of their work, and supporting their integration into UNESCO's broader strategic frameworks.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment among all participants to further strengthen collaboration and to prepare for the fourteenth annual coordination meeting, which is expected to take place in Paris in mid-2026 'back-to back' with the eleventh session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the 2003 Convention.