**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 5.a of the Provisional Agenda:**

**Report by the Committee to the General Assembly  
on its activities (January 2020 to December 2021)**

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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 2020 to December 2021, which the Committee may wish to present to the ninth session of the General Assembly in mid-2022.  **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 2020 to December 2021. 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. This report will need to be updated by the Secretariat, after the session, if need be, with additional information about the results of the sixteenth session of the Committee.
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 fifteenth and the sixteenth sessions of the Committee and the eighth session of the General Assembly) and in particular:

* The report of the Secretariat on its activities (document [LHE/20/8.GA/6 Add.](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-20-8.GA-6+Add.-EN.docx));
* Use of the resources of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund (document [LHE/20/8.GA/7 Rev.);](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-20-8.GA-7_Rev.-EN.docx)
* The report of the Secretariat on its activities (document [LHE/21/16.COM/5.b](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-5.b-EN.docx));
* The financial report of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund (as an annex to document [LHE/21/16.COM/13](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-13-EN.docx)).

1. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 16.COM 5.a

The Committee,

1. Having examined document LHE/21/16.COM/5.a Rev.,
2. Recalling Article 30 of the Convention as well as Rule 46 of the Rules of Procedures of the Committee,
3. Welcomes the two States that have ratified the Convention since January 2020;
4. Adopts the report on its activities undertaken in 2020 and 2021 and requests that the Secretariat present it for examination by the ninth 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. This report follows the order of functions set out in that article.
3. In 2020, the General Assembly renewed half of the Committee by electing twelve States Parties to serve a term of four years together with the ongoing members: Azerbaijan, Botswana\*, Brazil\*, Cameroon, China, Côte d’Ivoire\*, Czechia\*, Djibouti, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Morocco\*, the Netherlands, Panama\*, Peru\*, Poland, Republic of Korea\*, Rwanda\*, Saudi Arabia\*, Sri Lanka, Sweden\*, Switzerland\* and Togo (those committee members indicated with an asterisk have a mandate between 2020 and 2024; the mandate for those without an asterisk is between 2018 and 2022).
4. The Committee was convened twice: from 14 to 19 December 2020 (online) for its fifteenth session (15.COM) and from 13 to 18 December 2021 (online) for its sixteenth session (16.COM). The Bureau of the 15.COM was composed of: H.E. Ms Olivia Grange (Jamaica) as Chairperson; the Netherlands, Azerbaijan, China, Djibouti and Kuwait as Vice-Chairpersons; and Mr Askar Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan) as Rapporteur (replaced in October 2021 by the Netherlands). The Bureau of the 16.COM was composed of: Mr Punchinilame Meegaswatte (Sri Lanka) as Chairperson; Sweden, Czechia, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Djibouti and Saudi Arabia as Vice-Chairpersons; and Ms Jun Takai (Japan) as Rapporteur.
5. The Bureau met during the sessions of the Committee from Tuesday to Saturday. During the reporting period, it also met once at UNESCO Headquarters on 11 September 2020 (15.COM 2.BUR) and six times online on 30 October 2020 (15.COM 3.BUR), 8 March 2021 (16.COM 1.BUR), 21 May 2021 (16.COM 2.BUR), 4 October 2021 (16.COM 3.BUR), 14 October 2021 (16.COM 4.BUR) and 3 December 2021 (16.COM BUR Informal Exchange). In addition, two electronic consultations were held in July 2020 (15.COM 1.BUR) and November 2020 (15.COM 4.BUR).
6. During the reporting period, the Committee and its Bureau examined a total of seventy-seven items inscribed on their agendas, which were accompanied by eighty-six working documents or information documents, nine nominations for the Urgent Safeguarding List, seventy-six nominations for the Representative List, eight proposals for good safeguarding practices, twenty-two requests for International Assistance, fifty-six reports submitted by States Parties and 105 requests for accreditation or renewal from non-governmental organizations.
7. **Adjustments made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**: With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the functions of the Committee during the reporting period were heavily impacted. The challenging circumstances of this global health crisis required major adjustments to the work of the Committee and its consultative bodies such as the Evaluation Body, involving rescheduling meetings, postponing or rescheduling statutory deadlines and increasing technological support or adapting meeting content to online formats (see document [LHE/20/8.GA/6 Add](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-20-8.GA-6+Add.-EN.docx). and the Report of the Secretariat [LHE/21/16.COM/5.b](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-5.b-EN.docx)).
8. A particular case in point, in response to the global pandemic, was the need to modify the meeting venue for the 15.COM and 16.COM. For both cases the Bureau requested an electronic exchange with the Committee members before deciding to change the modality to online with the Chair connecting from Kingston, Jamaica in 2020 for the 15.COM, and with the Chair at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris for the 16.COM.
9. **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])
10. **Ratification**
11. Two States (Angola and Somalia) ratified the Convention between January 2020 and December 2021. At the end of 2021, 180 States were parties to the Convention.
12. **Sound governance ensured**
13. The eighth session of the General Assembly (8-10 September 2021, UNESCO Headquarters; hereafter ‘8.GA’) approved a plan for the use of the resources of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund (hereafter ‘the Fund’) for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021, which devoted 20 per cent of the budget (US$1,568,076) to ‘other functions of the Committee’, and a total sum of US$423,380 (27 per cent of the line ‘other functions of the Committee’) was allocated to ensure the sound governance (Resolution [8. GA 7](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/8.GA/7)).
14. The global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the 2003 Convention, which was initiated at the twelfth session of the Committee (Decision [12.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/12.COM/14)), aimed to establish concrete recommendations and present them to the Committee at its sixteenth session in the form of proposed amendments to the Operational Directives (Document [LHE/21/16.COM/14](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-14-EN.docx)). These recommendations were developed through a multi-stakeholder consultation process, starting with an online survey with experts between March and April 2021 and an online category VI meeting of experts in May 2021 to identify the main challenges around the listing mechanisms and possible solutions. Based on the experts’ preliminary recommendations, the Open-ended intergovernmental working group was convened twice, from 8 to 9 July and from 9 to 10 September 2021 to discuss issues related to the inscription criteria, the follow-up of inscribed elements and the methodology for evaluating nominations. [The Committee also decided to extend the mandate of the Open-ended intergovernmental working group so that it may address the remaining issues through an additional online meeting to be convened in early 2022. The results of this meeting may be examined by an extraordinary Committee session in the form of revised Operational Directives which will be presented for final approval to the ninth session of the General Assembly in mid-2022 (Decision 16.COM 14).]
15. The Committee at its sixteenth session examined the evaluation of the 2003 Convention and a set of twelve recommendations, conducted by the UNESCO Internal Oversight Service. Furthermore, it requested the Secretariat to develop a roadmap, reflecting these recommendations, and to report on their implementation status to the seventeenth session of the Committee (Decision 16.COM 10).
16. The knowledge management services of the Convention were ensured to support the sound governance of the Convention and responded adequately to the need for new modalities to facilitate the governing bodies’ work of the Convention. This includes, among others, the smooth running of the online periodic reporting interface, which was used by the States Parties in the Latin America and the Caribbean region in 2020 and the Europe region in 2021. Various educational and knowledge management tools were also made available online in open access format in order to enhance the dissemination and use of these tools.
17. **Strengthening the capacity-building programme and guidelines on safeguarding measures and good practices**
18. 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 and contribute to sustainable development’ (2018-2021). Consequently, a total of sum of US$517,465 – i.e., 33 per cent of the line ‘other functions of the Committee’ – was allocated for the period January 2020 to December 2021. An important outcome was the high submission rate of periodic reports from States in Latin America and the Caribbean, as the first regional cycle of reporting. Key activities for safeguarding living heritage in the context of disaster risk reduction in the Philippines and Honduras were also piloted online. The sixteenth session of the Committee therefore welcomed the strategic repositioning of the global capacity-building programme to a multi-modal approach (in-person, fully online, hybrid, and blended delivery formats) (Decision 16.COM 5.b).
19. **Integration of intangible cultural heritage into development plans, policies and programmes**
20. 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$203,850 was allocated for this purpose – i.e., 13 per cent of the line ‘other functions of the Committee’ – for the period 2020-2021. 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 relevant 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. These are concrete examples promoting the transmission of living heritage through formal and non-formal education as an important safeguarding measure in line with Article 2 of the Convention and contributing to SDG 4 for quality education.
21. **Raising awareness and outreach**
22. Raising awareness on the importance of intangible cultural heritage and promoting the objectives of the Convention are considered safeguarding actions in and of themselves, as defined in Article 2.3 of the Convention. A total sum of US$423,381 – i.e., 27 per cent of the line ‘other functions of the Committee’ – was allocated to support the Secretariat’s initiative in these areas of action for the period 2020–2021.
23. The interactive online tool ‘[Dive into intangible cultural heritage](https://ich.unesco.org/en/dive/)’ developed in 2019 was followed by another tool ‘[Dive into Living Heritage and Sustainable Development](https://ich.unesco.org/dive/sdg/)’, as presented to the Committee at its fifteenth session in December 2020. It demonstrates the wide-ranging ways in which expressions and practices of living heritage and their safeguarding contribute to the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals in the framework of the 2030 Agenda. Each of the inscribed elements are analysed – through concepts (e.g. dance, trees, pottery) or countries – to provide a panoramic visualization indicating to which goals they are linked.
24. The reflection process on the advisory functions to be performed by accredited NGOs, which has been collectively undertaken in collaboration with the accredited NGOs, the ICH NGO Forum, the informal ad hoc open-ended working group, States Parties and the Secretariat, continued in this reporting period. Following the decision of the fourteenth session of the Committee (Decision [14.COM 15](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/14.COM/15)), the fifteenth session of the Committee examined on an experimental basis the ‘Report of the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum’ under a stand-alone item (Decision [15.COM 6](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/15.COM/6)). The same practice took place during the sixteenth session of the Committee (Decision 16.COM 9).
25. **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])
26. The Committee examined at its sixteenth session a draft plan for the use of the resources of the Fund for the period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023 and, on a provisional basis, the first semester of 2024 (Decision 16.COM 13). In line with the new 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 budget line ‘Other functions of the Committee’, in terms of Expected Results as per the approved C/5, as the Bureau no longer has the delegated authority to approve the spending plan under this line from the 2020–2021 biennium and onwards. This draft plan will be submitted to the ninth session of the General Assembly in 2022 for its approval. The largest percentage continues to be dedicated to International Assistance. See document [LHE/21/16.COM/13](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-13-EN.docx) for the detailed plan.
27. During the reporting period, voluntary supplementary contributions of US$716,445 from Azerbaijan, France, Kuwait, Switzerland and the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (Republic of Korea) were made to the Fund to finance 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). The Sub-Fund of the Fund, devoted exclusively to enhancing the human capacities of the Secretariat, also received contributions of US$40,822.76 from Lithuania, Monaco, Palestine, Slovakia and the Fondazione Museo del Violino Antonio Stradivari (Italy). Document [LHE/21/16.COM/INF.13.1](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-INF.13.1-EN.docx) includes, in Annex II, a list of such contributions for the period 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2021, as well as a statement of income and expenditures in Annex I.
28. **Preparation of the Operational Directives for the implementation of the Convention** (Article 7[e])
29. [During the reporting period, the Committee examined the recommendations of the Open-ended intergovernmental working group within the framework of the above-mentioned global reflection and recommended that the General Assembly approve amendments to the Operational Directives on the listing mechanisms of the Convention (Decision 16.COM 14)].
30. **Examination of periodic reports** (Article 7[f])
31. The Committee examined twenty-seven reports on the status of elements inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List – nine at its fifteenth session in 2020 and eighteen at its sixteenth session in 2021. 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 [15.COM 7](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/15.COM/7) and Decision 16.COM 7.a).
32. With the launch in 2020 of the new periodic reporting system on the implementation of the Convention and on elements inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which has changed into a reporting system with regional rotation every six years, the Committee examined twenty-eight reports submitted by States Parties in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, as the first regional reporting cycle, at its sixteenth session (Decision 16.COM 7.b). This represents the highest submission rate ever, at 88 per cent of reports due (twenty-eight reports submitted out of a total of thirty-two expected), for which the Committee acknowledged remarkable progress in comparison to the past reporting cycles (the lowest submission rate of reports was 16 per cent in the 2016 cycle). This significant progress in the first cycle of the regional system of reporting testifies to the success of the reform, which also aligned the reporting with the Overall Results Framework so as to encourage results-based reporting, as well as the development and implementation of a capacity-building approach to accompany states in their reporting.
33. **Inscriptions on the Lists of the Convention, selection of good safeguarding practices and granting of International Assistance** (Article 7[g])
34. The Committee examined 93 files and inscribed a total of seventy-four elements on the Lists of the Convention: seven on the Urgent Safeguarding List and sixty-seven on the Representative List. In addition, it selected seven good safeguarding practices. The [Committee](https://ich.unesco.org/en/16com) at its sixteenth session also decided to inscribe ‘Joumou soup’, nominated by Haiti, on the Representative List. Further to the amendment to the Operational Directives approved by the 8.GA to include an intermediary dialogue process in the nomination cycle, the Committee examined eleven files (2020 cycle) and fifteen files (2021 cycle), for which the dialogue process was initiated.
35. The Committee (for requests greater than US$100,000) at its fifteenth and sixteenth sessions and the Bureau (for requests up to US$100,000 and emergency requests) approved a total of fifteen of twenty-two requests for International Assistance, for a total amount of US$1,659,443 during the reporting period (see also document [LHE/21/16.COM/7.d](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-7.d-EN.docx) for the report on the use of International Assistance by States Parties). A total of thirty-one countries received financial assistance from the Fund during the reporting period.