**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 7.c of the provisional agenda:**

**Update on the regional cycles of the Convention’s periodic reporting and proposal for related amendments to the Operational Directives**

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| **Summary**  This document presents an overview of the implementation status of the first cycle of periodic reporting in different regions, while proposing ways forward to align the mechanism with other Conventions and Recommendations in the field of culture, in line with the proposal of the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs, and the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration  **Decision required**: paragraph 27 |

**Introduction**

1. The periodic reporting mechanism of the 2003 Convention was reformed to enhance its quality, usefulness and timeliness, as well as to address the low submission rate (Decision [12.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/12.COM/10)). The mechanism has been aligned with the Convention’s Overall Results Framework in order to ensure that the process is consistent with the overarching goals of the Convention and to allow for more effective monitoring to achieve these goals (Resolution [7.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/7.GA/9)). Further adjustments were made to allow the reporting to take place on a regional basis every six years (Decisions [13.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/13.COM/8) and [14.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/14.COM/8)).
2. The purpose of this document is to provide updates on the ongoing cycle of the periodic reporting system on the implementation of the Convention and the current status of elements inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (reporting of elements inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List was not concerned by the reform) (**Section A**). The present document also presents possible ways forward to rationalize the reporting schedule in order to align it with other Conventions and Recommendations in the field of culture, in line with the proposal of the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs to create a “one-stop shop” for normative instruments and contribute to the preparation of a quadrennial Global Report on Cultural Policies, as called for in the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, adopted unanimously at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022 (**Section B**).
3. **Updates on the ongoing cycle of periodic reporting on the implementation of the Convention**
4. The first cycle of periodic reporting is underway with the following schedule:

* **Latin America and the Caribbean**: reports submitted by 15 December 2020 were examined by the Committee at its sixteenth session in 2021.
* **Europe**: reports submitted by 15 December 2021 were examined by the Committee at its seventeenth session in 2022.
* **Arab States**: reports submitted by 15 December 2022 will be examined by the Committee at its eighteenth session in 2023.
* **Africa**: reports submitted by 15 December 2023 will be examined by the Committee at its nineteenth session in 2024.
* **Asia and the Pacific**: reports submitted by 15 December 2024 will be examined by the Committee at its twentieth session in 2025.
* The first cycle is foreseen to end with a reflection year in 2026.

1. For each region, the periodic reporting exercise goes through a four-phase process over a period of four years (see also table 1):

* Phase 1 (first year) is the initiation of the exercise, involving the designation by States Parties of country focal points for the periodic reporting exercise and the training of facilitators to accompany the country focal points.
* Phase 2 (second year) involves the training of country focal points at the regional and sub-regional level as well as the preparation and online submission of reports.
* Phase 3 (third year) involves the preliminary analysis, by a team established by the Secretariat, of the reports submitted, presented as an ‘analytical overview’ for examination by the Committee in the year following the submission.
* Phase 4 (fourth year) involves a comprehensive analysis of data extracted from the reports submitted, to be presented in the form of an ‘analytical report’ two years after the submission of the reports.

**Table 1: phases of the periodic reporting exercise**

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2021 cycle – Latin America and the Caribbean

1. States Parties from Latin America and the Caribbean responded with commitment to the reformed system with a high submission rate, as twenty-eight out of thirty-two (87.5 per cent) expected reporting States submitted their periodic reports. This result set a positive tone for the ongoing cycle, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and demonstrated the effectiveness of the capacity-building approach that the Secretariat implemented in close collaboration with the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Latin America (CRESPIAL), a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO.
2. An ‘analytical overview’ of these reports was examined by the sixteenth session of the Committee (Decision [16.COM 7.b](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/7.b) and Annex I of document [LHE/21/16.COM/7.b](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-7.b-EN.docx)). A comprehensive ‘analytical report on the first cycle of periodic reporting under the 2003 Convention by States Parties in Latin America and the Caribbean’ was then presented to the seventeenth session of the Committee in 2022 (document [LHE/22/17.COM/INF.6.c](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-17.COM-INF.6.c-EN.docx)).

2022 cycle – Europe

1. Forty-four (100 per cent) periodic reports from States Parties in Europe were received.[[1]](#footnote-1) This rate was the result of the resolute commitment of States Parties combined with the comprehensive capacity-building programme and targeted technical support for country focal points provided by the Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO throughout 2022. At the regional level, periodic reporting has also served as a platform for dialogue and peer-to-peer exchange among countries, as demonstrated by the establishment of the ‘European Network of Focal Points for the UNESCO 2003 Convention’.
2. The ‘analytical overview’ of the reports was examined by the Committee at its seventeenth session (Decision [17.COM 6.b](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/6.b) and Annex I of the document [LHE/22/17.COM/6.b Rev.](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-17.COM-6.b-_Rev.-EN.docx)). In 2023, a team of experts set up by the Secretariat produced a comprehensive ‘Analytical report on the first cycle of periodic reporting under the 2003 Convention by States Parties in Europe’, for examination by the present session of the Committee (document [LHE/23/18.COM/INF.7.c](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-INF.7.c_EN.docx)).

2023 cycle – Arab States

1. As the third region to go through the reformed periodic reporting exercise, seventeen States Parties out of eighteen (94.4 per cent) submitted their periodic reports. The Sharjah Institute for Heritage, a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO in the United Arab Emirates, supported the capacity-building activities. An analytical overview of these reports will be examined at the present session of the Committee under Item 7.b of its provisional agenda (document [LHE/23/18.COM/7.b](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-7.b_EN.docx)).

2024 cycle – Africa

1. The forty-four States Parties from Africa are to submit their reports by 15 December 2023. In 2022, the Secretariat started the roll-out of a comprehensive capacity-building programme, consisting of training activities for facilitators and country focal points.
2. These activities were divided into four stages:

* An online Training of Trainers on results-based reporting, the reformed periodic reporting system and the Overall Results Framework for twelve facilitators from the UNESCO global capacity-building network in Africa, held on 26 October 2022 and on 2 and 9 November 2022.
* An online introductory training for country focal points in Africa on the reformed periodic reporting system of the Convention and the Overall Results Framework, held on 10 February, 14 March and 4 April 2023.
* A workshop for country focal points in Africa (held in Algiers, Algeria, from 25 to 29 April 2023), hosted by the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa (CRESPIAF).
* Two online regional follow-up sessions (11 July and 20 September 2023) and monthly subregional sessions with trained facilitators (between July and October 2023).

1. Additionally, the Secretariat is implementing the project ‘Strengthening capacities for periodic reporting under the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa’, with generous support received in June 2023 from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This initiative covers a series of capacity-building activities at the regional, subregional and national levels, enabling States Parties to further reinforce their knowledge and skills for periodic reporting.

2025 cycle – Asia and the Pacific

1. The comprehensive capacity-building programme is being tailored to the regional context in Asia and the Pacific, in cooperation with experienced facilitators from the region. The implementation of the capacity-building programme is possible thanks to close collaboration with the International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (CRIHAP) and the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP), two category 2 centres under the auspices of UNESCO.
2. The capacity-building process follows four stages:

* A five-day online Training of Trainers from 25 to 27 September and 10 to 11 October 2023.
* An online information session (23 November 2023) and introductory training for country focal points in December 2023 (to be confirmed) to familiarize them with the periodic reporting system and online reporting tool.
* An in-person training for country focal points from 26 February to 1 March 2024 (to be confirmed), during which participants will further reinforce their understanding and skills to conduct the periodic reporting exercise.
* Online follow-up sessions, which are expected to take place from February to July 2024, to allow focal points to work together closely and engage in peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

Lessons learnt

1. To date, the reformed periodic reporting mechanism with its comprehensive capacity-building programme for country focal points has proven effective in improving submission rates in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and the Arab States region (Decision 18.COM 7.b and document [LHE/23/18.COM/7.b](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-7.b_EN.docx)). It has allowed States to generate analytical inputs on the state of the implementation of the Convention in their respective countries, helping them to develop roadmaps for the safeguarding of living heritage and serving as a platform for dialogue and peer-to-peer exchange within and among countries, even in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. A few key insights gained from implementing the reformed periodic reporting system in the three regions are worth highlighting:

* Reports that covered actions related not only to inventoried or inscribed elements, but to intangible cultural heritage in general, were able to showcase a greater variety of examples of safeguarding activities.
* It was helpful when reporting countries clearly differentiated between the notions of actions, outcomes and impacts, rather than focusing primarily on the safeguarding activities undertaken.
* Providing evidence supporting any claims made in the reports increases the quality of the reports and its usefulness for national policymaking.
* Promoting and strengthening systematic, up-to-date data collection and management mechanisms could support evidence-based reporting and access to information at all levels.

1. **Proposal to rationalize the submission cycles of periodic reporting mechanisms across UNESCO Culture Conventions and Recommendations**

The Global Report on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration)

1. The unanimous adoption of the MONDIACULT 2022 [Declaration](https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-world-conference-cultural-policies-and-sustainable-development-mondiacult-2022) at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022, called for culture to be firmly anchored as a global public good and integrated as a stand-alone goal in the post-2030 international development agenda. It also called on UNESCO to produce a Global Report on Cultural Policies, on a quadrennial basis, building on information, data and existing indicators provided by its Member States, starting with the first edition in 2025, to be followed by the second edition in 2029, and every four years thereafter. This ambitious undertaking aims to provide a snapshot of all cultural domains and in particular of the state of implementation of the UNESCO Culture Conventions and Recommendations by all States Parties and Member States.
2. While the periodic reporting mechanisms of each Culture Convention and Recommendation would be the main source of information to prepare this report, it would be necessary to make adjustments in terms of how periodic reports are submitted and analysed in order to allow for a transversal understanding of the situation. Having studied several options, and in line with the proposal of the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs to create a “one-stop shop” to ensure the enhanced monitoring of normative instruments, what is proposed is a move towards a single global submission date for all States Parties, covering all aspects of the international cooperation mechanisms of the Convention currently reported on different schedules.[[2]](#footnote-2) This change would require: (a) transitional measures for the first edition of the Global Report on Cultural Policies in 2025; (b) adjustments to support the second edition of the Global Report on Cultural Policies in 2029 and thereafter; and (c) reflection on a timeline for amending the Operational Directives.

a) Transitional measures for the first edition of the Global Report on Cultural Policies in 2025

1. As far as the 2003 Convention is concerned, the first edition of the Global Report on Cultural Policies (2025) will build on the reports already received from States Parties in Latin America and the Caribbean (2021 cycle) and in Europe (2022 cycle), in addition to the reports from Arab States (2023 cycle) and Africa (2024 cycle) to be examined by the present session and the nineteenth session of the Committee, respectively.
2. For the last region, the reports from States Parties from Asia and the Pacific should be received and made available for analysis earlier than the current statutory submission date of 15 December 2024. Therefore, the Secretariat invited States Parties from this region, by a circular message sent on 1 June 2023, to submit their entire or partially completed reports by 15 June 2024. The information received by this early deadline would be taken into account in the first edition of the Global Report, while all the reports to be received by 15 December 2024 would be reflected in the analytical report to be prepared for examination by the twentieth session of the Committee in November/December 2025.

b) Adjustments to support the second edition of the Global Report on Cultural Policies in 2029 and thereafter

1. The preparation of the second edition (2029) of the Global Report, and every four years thereafter, requires a careful rationalization of the periodic reporting systems across the six Culture Conventions and three Recommendations, and related adjustments to the periodic reporting mechanisms of each of these instruments to ensure their effective monitoring. As regards the 2003 Convention, a single global submission means the submission of information simultaneously from 181 States Parties, including the status of 676 elements inscribed on the Lists and Register of the Convention (in addition to any new states that may become party in the future as well as new elements to be inscribed by the Committee). In order to properly digest a high volume of information, the proposal of the Culture Sector is to set the reporting deadline for all Culture Conventions on 30 June two years before the publication year, which means 30 June 2027 for the second edition in 2029.
2. Alignments with other Culture Conventions: in order to foresee a single global submission date, the following key alignments can be expected:
3. A harmonized reporting form may include a section for general information that is common to all Culture Conventions, followed by sections specific to each of the Culture Conventions. Under the 2003 Convention, the questions included in Form ICH-10 and Form ICH-11 would be simplified and presented in the new harmonized form. The goal is to alleviate the burden of reporting States from submitting duplicate or similar information while allowing transversal comparison of information across all cultural domains. Careful attention would have to be paid to reflecting the specificities of each Culture Convention (such as the ‘community-centred’ approach and the link to the Overall Results Framework of the Convention).
4. A common cultural data portal would be necessary to manage the submission of all reports by a single global submission date once every four years. Such a portal would need to be user-friendly and accessible to all reporting States, while including key functionalities that would allow for meaningful analysis of the large amount of information to be submitted.
5. A joint capacity-building approach is also envisaged to provide information on and support to the rationalized reporting system to all regions, which may be combined with Convention-specific content. In addition, coordinated training opportunities may be offered to country focal points for periodic reporting from States in selected regions, as required, in order to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to report on the country’s situation across all culture domains.
6. Alignments within the 2003 Convention: the single global submission date would harmonize the reporting system of the following three types of reports under the 2003 Convention, which currently follow different schedules:
7. Reports by States Parties on the implementation of the Convention and on the current status of elements inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Representative List)

Considerations: instead of a six-year cycle based on a regional system of reporting, each State Party would submit reports on the implementation of the Convention and on the current status of elements inscribed on the Representative List every four years, starting on 30 June 2027, followed by 30 June 2031 and so on.

1. Reports by States not party to the Convention on elements inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Considerations: reports concerning two elements originally proclaimed and incorporated in 2008 in the Representative List would also follow the same submission timing of 30 June 2027 and every four years thereafter, instead of submitting the third reports on these two elements on 15 December 2026.

1. Reports by States Parties on the current status of elements inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (Urgent Safeguarding List)

Considerations: the reform of the periodic reporting system upon which the current regional reporting system is based (Decision [12.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/12.COM/10)) did not change the procedure for reporting on the status of elements inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List, which foresees submission of periodic reports to the Committee by 15 December of the fourth year following the year in which the element was inscribed, and every four years thereafter. The proposal would be to take this opportunity to also align this reporting mechanism to a four-year cycle, with the single global submission timing starting on 30 June 2027 and every four years thereafter.

1. Once the 2003 Convention’s periodic reporting is aligned with that of other Culture Conventions, relevant analyses conducted in the context of the Global Report on Cultural Policies will be presented to the Committee in the publication year combined with additional Convention-specific information, as appropriate. This is in compliance with the provisions under Article 29 of the Convention, by which States Parties are required to submit to the Committee reports on the legislative, regulatory and other measures taken for the implementation of the 2003 Convention, observing the forms and periodicity defined.

c) Timelines and amendments to the Operational Directives

1. The move to a single global submission deadline for all States Parties requires a step-by-step approach, involving actions to be taken both by the Governing Bodies of the 2003 Convention and reporting States, as summarized in the Annex. The years 2023 and 2024 represent a transitional period towards the alignment of the periodic reporting mechanism of the 2003 Convention. The year 2026 would provide an opportunity to take stock of the lessons learnt throughout the regional cycle of periodic reporting (‘reflection year’), while capacity-building activities will be undertaken in 2026 and in the first half of 2027 in preparation of the move to the single global submission system in all regions. The simultaneous submission of reports on 30 June 2027 and their analysis in 2028 will allow for the publication of the second edition of the Global Report in 2029.
2. In parallel, the proposed changes would entail a revision of the relevant paragraphs of the Operational Directives. The Committee may request the Secretariat to present draft amendments to the Operational Directives for examination at its twentieth session in 2025. The Committee may then request that the draft amendments be adopted by the eleventh session of the General Assembly in mid-2026. This timing would allow for the completion of the regional reporting in all regions and to take stock of the results of the evaluation of UNESCO’s periodic reporting mechanisms of the Culture Sector’s Conventions and Recommendations being undertaken by UNESCO’s Internal Oversight Services and to be completed by December 2023, as well as the experience of preparing the first edition of the Global Report in 2025.
3. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 18.COM 7.c

The Committee,

1. Having examined document LHE/23/18.COM/7.c and its annex,
2. Recalling Decisions [17.COM 6.c](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/6.c), [16.COM 7.b](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/7.b), [14.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/14.COM/8), [13.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/13.COM/8), [12.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/12.COM/10) as well as Resolution [7.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Resolutions/7.GA/9),
3. Further recalling the MONDIACULT 2022 [Declaration](https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-world-conference-cultural-policies-and-sustainable-development-mondiacult-2022),

**Ongoing regional cycle of reporting – general**

1. Appreciates the engagement, including financial contributions, of those involved in the periodic reporting process, in particular communities, groups and individuals concerned, country focal points for periodic reporting, facilitators and category 2 centres under the auspices of UNESCO that are active in the field of intangible cultural heritage, and expresses satisfaction that the current periodic reporting system continues to show positive results with a significant increase in submission rates;
2. Commends the work of the Secretariat in providing continuous support to States Parties concerned with their periodic reporting process through capacity-building programmes and continuous follow-up activities;
3. Takes note with interest of the ‘Analytical report of the first cycle of periodic reporting on the implementation of the Convention and on the current status of elements inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by States Parties in Europe’ as contained in document [LHE/23/18.COM/INF.7.c](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-INF.7.c_EN.docx), and welcomes the key findings highlighted in the report, including the detailed information on the extent to which reporting States Parties have met the core indicators and on the targets set for the next round of reports;
4. Requests that the Secretariat report on the update concerning the ongoing regional reporting exercise on the implementation of the Convention and on the current status of elements inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, for examination at the nineteenth session of the Committee;

**Rationalization of the periodic reporting schedule**

1. Encourages States Parties from Asia and the Pacific, as a transition measure, to submit partial or full reports by the early deadline of 15 June 2024 in order to contribute to the first edition (2025) of the Global Report on Cultural Policies;
2. Proposes that the periodic reporting schedule be rationalized by setting a single global submission date of 30 June 2027 and every four years thereafter for all States Parties;
3. Further requests the Secretariat to:
4. Report on the update concerning the move towards the single global submission date system of periodic reporting for examination by the nineteenth session of the Committee; and
5. Present the draft amendments to the Operational Directives to this effect for examination by the twentieth session of the Committee in November/December 2025 so that it may recommend these amendments for examination by the eleventh session of the General Assembly in mid-2026.

**Annex: proposed timeline to rationalize the submission cycles of periodic reporting mechanisms across UNESCO Culture Conventions**

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| **Year** | **Milestones** |
| **2023** | **Eighteenth session of the Committee (4 to 9 December 2023, Kasane, Republic of Botswana)**   * Examination of ‘Arab States reports’ * Examination of ‘Urgent Safeguarding List reports’ * Preliminary discussion on the proposal to rationalize the submission cycles of periodic reports   **By 15 December 2023**   * Submission of ‘Africa reports’ * Submission of ‘Urgent Safeguarding List reports’ |
| **2024** | **By 15 June 2024**  Partial or full ‘early’ submission of ‘Asia and the Pacific reports’  **Tenth session of the General Assembly (mid-2024)**  Preliminary discussion on the proposal to rationalize the submission cycles of periodic reports  **Nineteenth session of the Committee (November/December 2024)**   * Examination of ‘Africa reports’ * Examination of ‘Urgent Safeguarding List reports * Update on the proposal to rationalize the submission cycles of periodic reports   **By 15 December 2024**   * Submission of ‘Asia and the Pacific reports’ * Submission of ‘Urgent Safeguarding List reports’ |
| **2025** | **Second half of the year**  **Publication of the first edition of Global Report on Cultural Policies** |
| **Twentieth session of the Committee (November/December 2025)**   * Examination of ‘Asia and the Pacific reports’ * Examination of ‘Urgent Safeguarding List reports’ * Examination of draft amendments to the Operational Directives on the proposal to rationalize the submission cycles of periodic reports * Presentation of the 2003 Convention-related sections of the first edition of Global Report on Cultural Policies |
| **2026** | **Eleventh session of the General Assembly (mid-2026)**  Examination of draft amendments to the Operational Directives on the proposal to rationalize the submission cycles of periodic reports  **Throughout the year**  Lessons learnt on the regional periodic reporting (‘reflection year’) / Information sharing to all regions and initiation of the capacity-building process  **Twenty-first session of the Committee (November/December 2026)**   * Updates on the periodic reporting exercise |
| **2027** | **First half of the year**  Information sharing to all regions and capacity-building activities |
| **30 June 2027**  Single global submission of periodic reports |
| **Twenty-second session of the Committee (November/December 2027)**   * Updates on the periodic reporting exercise |
| **2028** | **Throughout the year**  Analysis of periodic reports following the single global submission of periodic reports  **Twenty-third session of the Committee (November/December 2028)**   * Updates on the periodic reporting exercise |
| **2029** | **Second half of the year**  **Publication of the second edition of Global Report on Cultural Policies** |

1. Forty-two reports were received by the statutory deadline (extended beyond the date of 15 December 2022 to 7 January 2023); the late submissions from two reporting States received in February 2023 were incorporated in the reporting cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Conference of Parties to the 2005 Convention has decided in 2023 to review the periodic reporting calendar by setting a single global submission date for all Parties, starting on 30 June 2027 and every four years thereafter (Resolution [9.CP 7](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385712_eng) and document [DCE/23/9.CP/7](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385290_eng)). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)