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| ITEM 8 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA |
| **Report of the Evaluation Body on its work in 2023** |
| Eighteenth session, Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Kasane, Republic of Botswana – 4 to 9 December 2023) |

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| **Summary**  At its seventeenth session, the Committee established a consultative body responsible for the evaluation in 2023 of nominations to the Urgent Safeguarding List and to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, proposals to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices and requests for International Assistance greater than US$100,000 ([Decision 17.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/14)). This document constitutes the general report of the Evaluation Body, which includes an overview of the 2023 cycle (Part A), observations and recommendations on working methods and cross-cutting issues and good examples (Part B), a summary of recurring issues (Part C) and a draft decision for the Committee's consideration.  **Decision required:** paragraph 38 |

1. In conformity with paragraph 27 of the Operational Directives, the evaluation of nominations for inscription on the Urgent Safeguarding List and Representative List (including the requests for transfer from one List to another, the extension or reduction of an already inscribed element), proposals for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, requests for International Assistance greater than US$100,000[[1]](#footnote-2) and requests for International Assistance submitted simultaneously with nominations to the Urgent Safeguarding List or in the context of a request to transfer an element from the Representative List to the Urgent Safeguarding List is accomplished by a consultative body of the Committee established in accordance with Article 8.3 of the Convention, as well as Rule 20 of its Rules of Procedure, and known as the ‘Evaluation Body’.
2. By its Decision [17.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/14), the seventeenth session of the Committee established the present body for the 2023 cycle with its terms of reference. The Evaluation Body is composed of six experts qualified in various fields of intangible cultural heritage representative of States Parties non-Members of the Committee and six accredited non-governmental organizations. Following the system of rotation among the seats (Decision [16.COM 16](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/16)), the Committee reappointed eight continuing members and elected four new members – Ms Evrim Ölçer Özünel (Türkiye), Mr Rimvydas Laužikas (Lithuania), Ms Tiana Lalaina Razafimanantsoa (Madagascar) and the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU). When doing so, the Committee took into consideration equitable geographical representation and their qualifications in various domains of intangible cultural heritage. The twelve members, together with the country they represent in the case of experts, are:

**Expert representatives of States Parties non-Members of the Committee**

EG I: Ms Evrim Ölçer Özünel (Türkiye)

EG II: Mr Rimvydas Laužikas (Lithuania)

EG III: Mr Nigel Encalada (Belize)

EG IV: Mr Kirk Siang Yeo (Singapore)

EG V(a): Ms Tiana Lalaina Razafimanantsoa (Madagascar)

EG V(b): Ms Nahla Abdallah Emam (Egypt)

**Accredited non-governmental organizations**

EG I: Workshop intangible heritage Flanders

EG II: European Association of Folklore Festivals

EG III: Daniel Rubin de la Borbolla Center

EG IV: Aigine Cultural Research Center – Aigine CRC

EG V(a): The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU)

EG V(b): Syria Trust for Development

1. Following the submission and presentation of the report on its work to the eighteenth session of the Committee, the present Evaluation Body as a whole shall cease to exist with the establishment of the next Body (Decision [17.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/14)). A new Evaluation Body will be established at the present session of the Committee (see document [LHE/23/18.COM/17](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/18.COM/17)).
2. The report of the Evaluation Body consists of five working documents, including the present document, and four documents concerning the nominations for inscription on the Lists and Register of the Convention as well as the requests for International Assistance. These documents contain an assessment of the conformity of the nominations, proposals and requests with the relevant criteria as provided in Chapters I.1 to I.4 of the Operational Directives, as well as recommendations to the Committee to decide on inscription, selection or granting. The documents are as follows:
3. The present document LHE/23/18.COM/8 constitutes the general report of the Evaluation Body with an overview of all the 2023 files (Part A), observations and recommendations on working methods, cross-cutting issues and good examples (Part B), a summary of recurring issues in the 2023 cycle (Part C) and a draft decision for the Committee’s consideration;
4. Document [LHE/23/18.COM/8.a](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-8.a-EN.docx) concerns nominations for inscription on the Urgent Safeguarding List as well as combined nominations for inscription on that List together with requests for International Assistance to support the implementation of the proposed safeguarding plan;
5. Document [LHE/23/18.COM/8.b](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-8.b-EN.docx) concerns nominations for inscription on the Representative List;
6. Document [LHE/23/18.COM/8.c](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-8.c-EN.docx) concerns proposals to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices;
7. Document [LHE/23/18.COM/8.d](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-8.d-EN.docx) concerns requests for International Assistance greater than US$100,000.
8. The files evaluated by the Evaluation Body for the 2023 cycle are available on the website of the Convention at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/files-2023-under-process-01248>. The nominations, proposals and requests are presented in their respective reports in the English alphabetical order, with the files of States whose names begin with the letter N, following a draw conducted during the seventeenth session of the Committee (Decision [17.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/14)).
9. **Overview of the 2023 cycle**
10. In accordance with paragraph 54 of the Operational Directives, the deadline for the submission of files for the 2023 cycle was 31 March 2022. The Operational Directives provide that ‘the Committee determines two years beforehand, in accordance with the available resources and its capacity, the number of files that can be treated in the course of the two following cycles’ (paragraph 33). At its fifteenth session, the Committee determined that in the course of the 2023 cycle at least 55 files could be treated for the Urgent Safeguarding List, Representative List, Register of Good Safeguarding Practices and International Assistance greater than US$100,000 (Decision [15.COM 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/15.COM/9)).
11. Following the above-mentioned decision to have at least one file per submitting State processed over the two-year period 2023–2024 and applying the priorities set out in paragraph 34 of the Operational Directives, the Evaluation Body was informed that the Secretariat had treated a total of sixty files (as noted in Decision [17.COM 15](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/15)), by level of priority, as follows:

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| **Reference** | **Type of file** | **Number** |
| Decision 15.COM 9 – priority (0) | Files from States that did not have a file treated for the 2022 cycle | 44 |
| Paragraph 34 of the Operational Directives – priority (i) | Files from States having no elements inscribed, good safeguarding practices selected or requests for International Assistance greater than US$100,000 approved | 3 |
| Files to the Urgent Safeguarding List | 2 |
| Paragraph 34 of the Operational Directives – priority (ii) | Multinational files | 11 |
| Paragraph 34 of the Operational Directives – priority (iii) | Files from States with the fewest elements inscribed, good safeguarding practices selected or requests for International Assistance greater than US$100,000 approved | 0 |
| **Total** |  | **60** |

1. The Secretariat processed each of the sixty files and contacted the submitting States between June – August 2022 about any further information required for the files to be considered as technically complete. Following this completeness check by the Secretariat, fifty-nine files were considered as technically complete, and one multinational file in the priority (ii) category was considered technically incomplete and was subsequently withdrawn by the submitting States Parties. Three additional files were withdrawn by the submitting States after the completeness check by the Secretariat and prior to the publication of the present report.
2. A total of fifty-six files were completed by the submitting States in time for their evaluation by the Evaluation Body and presented to the Committee. The breakdown of these files by mechanism is as follows:

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| Urgent Safeguarding List | 6 |
| Representative List | 45 |
| Register of Good Safeguarding Practices | 4 |
| International Assistance | 1 |
| **Total** | **56** |

Meetings of the Evaluation Body

1. As with previous years, the Evaluation Body met three times in the 2023 cycle, as indicated in the table below. The first meeting provided the opportunity for the Body to elect its Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur and familiarize itself with its tasks, and the second and third meetings allowed the Body to conduct its evaluation work and reach consensus on all files.

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| **Meeting, date and venue** | **Tasks** | **Notes** |
| **First meeting** 15 to 16 February 2023 Online | * Review the tasks and working methods of the Evaluation Body; * Conduct a mock nomination exercise to familiarize members with the evaluation process; * Elect the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur of the Evaluation Body. | The Evaluation Body elected:   * Mr Nigel Encalada (Belize) as Chairperson; * Ms Gulnara Aitpaeva (Aigine CRC) as Vice-Chairperson; * Ms Evdokia Tsakiridis (Workshop intangible heritage Flanders) as Rapporteur. |
| **Second meeting** 12 to 16 June 2023 UNESCO Headquarters | * Utilise a dedicated online interface established by the Secretariat to undertake individual evaluations on each file before the meeting; * Discuss and reach consensus on recommendations for all files *in praesentia*; * Discuss and prepare questions for submitting States concerned by the dialogue process. | * Consensus was reached on 47 files (the dialogue process was initiated on 12 files); * Following the meeting, the Secretariat sent questions raised by the Evaluation Body to all States concerned by the dialogue process; * After the meeting, the Rapporteur (and Vice-Chairperson on a few cases) prepared a draft decision on each file; the Chairperson wrote up observations and recommendations by the Body. |
| **Third meeting** 19 to 22 September 2023 Online (with Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur *in praesentia*) | * Discuss, adjust and validate the draft decisions for each file; * Finalise recommendations for all files concerned by the dialogue process; * Discuss and finalise cross-cutting issues. | * The Evaluation Body finalised its recommendations for all files concerned by the dialogue process; * The Evaluation Body adopted its reports for the Committee. |

1. **Dialogue process**: The 2023 cycle is the fourth cycle in which the dialogue process has been fully implemented. In this cycle, the dialogue process involved twelve files, including one nomination to the Urgent Safeguarding List and the rest to the Representative List. In two cases, the Body asked questions on more than one criterion, for a total of twenty-two questions. In some multinational files, questions were posed to specific States within the group of submitting States, to seek clarifications from these specific States only, as the remaining submitting States had provided sufficient information in the file for the evaluation process. The questions from the Evaluation Body were sent to the submitting States concerned on 26 June 2023 with the deadline of 4 August 2023 to provide the information requested in the two working languages of the Convention. The questions from the Evaluation Body and the answers from the submitting States are attached to their respective nomination files on the [18.COM webpage](https://ich.unesco.org/en/18com). Of the twelve files that underwent the dialogue process, all files were recommended for inscription.

Recommendations of the Evaluation Body

1. Following the work of the Evaluation Body, all of the 56 files presented to the Committee in this cycle are recommended for inscription, selection or approval. Compared to the previous cycle in 2022, the number of files recommended for referral has decreased from 27 to 0 per cent. The number of files recommended for inscription has correspondingly increased from 71 to 100 per cent. This is the first time in the implementation of the listing mechanisms of the Convention that the totality of nominations in a cycle can be considered to have satisfied the inscription criteria. Notwithstanding this overwhelmingly positive outcome, the Evaluation Body calls upon submitting States to pay careful attention to the safeguarding advice given for each nomination as well as the cross-cutting issues raised in this report.
2. **Observations and recommendations**
3. This part of the report explains the working methods of the Evaluation Body and outlines the main issues, observations and conclusions that arose during its work in this cycle.

***Working methods***

1. **General methodology**. As with previous years, the twelve members of the Evaluation Body evaluated each file within a collective decision-making process, and ensured that their evaluations were consistent within and across the files in the cycle and with previous Evaluation Bodies. Nonetheless, the Evaluation Body took into consideration the particularities of each file and the specific contexts concerning each element of intangible cultural heritage. The Evaluation Body based its evaluations on the information included in the nomination files and did not make assumptions about any missing details. Furthermore, the Evaluation Body strove to provide advice on various safeguarding matters to each nomination.
2. **Neutrality of the members of the Evaluation Body**. To ensure neutrality and equity, and as has been the custom in the past, members of the Evaluation Body did not evaluate any files submitted by their country of nationality or the country in which the non-governmental organization they represent is located. Such members also did not take part in the discussions about the file or in the drafting of the recommendation. This was the case for fifteen files evaluated in this cycle.

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| **File no.**  **(Draft Decision no.)** | **Submitting States** | **Nomination/Proposal title** | **Evaluation Body members who did not participate in the evaluation** |
| **Urgent Safeguarding List** | | | |
| 01956  (18.COM 8.a.1) | Syrian Arab Republic | Traditional Syrian glassblowing | Syria Trust for Development (Syrian Arab Republic) |
| 01983  (18.COM 8.a.2) | Türkiye | Traditional knowledge, methods and practices concerning olive cultivation | Ms Evrim Ölçer Özünel (Türkiye) |
| **Representative List** | | | |
| 01981  (18.COM 8.b.18) | Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Tajikistan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan | Art of illumination: Təzhib/Tazhib/Zarhalkori/Tezhip/Naqqoshlik | Ms Evrim Ölçer Özünel (Türkiye) |
| 01984  (18.COM 8.b.19) | Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Türkiye, Uzbekistan | Iftar/Eftari/Iftar/Iftor and its socio-cultural traditions | Ms Evrim Ölçer Özünel (Türkiye) |
| 01704  (18.COM 8.b.20) | Azerbaijan, Türkiye | Craftsmanship and performing art of balaban/mey | Ms Evrim Ölçer Özünel (Türkiye) |
| 01874  (18.COM 8.b.21) | Azerbaijan, Türkiye | Craftsmanship of mother of pearl inlay | Ms Evrim Ölçer Özünel (Türkiye) |
| 01979  (18.COM 8.b.17) | Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland | Traditional irrigation: knowledge, technique and organization | Workshop intangible heritage Flanders (Belgium) |
| 01979  (18.COM 8.b.14) | Albania, Andorra, Austria, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain | Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock | Workshop intangible heritage Flanders (Greece) |
| 01987  (18.COM 8.b.41) | Lithuania | Sodai straw garden making in Lithuania | Mr Rimvydas Laužikas (Lithuania) |
| 01990  (18.COM 8.b.28) | Cuba, Mexico | Bolero: identity, emotion and poetry turned into song | Daniel Rubin de la Borbolla Center (Mexico) |
| 01968  (18.COM 8.b.26) | Colombia, Cyprus, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Slovenia, Togo | Midwifery: knowledge, skills and practices | Aigine Cultural Research Center – Aigine CRC (Kyrgyzstan) |
| 01985  (18.COM 8.b.38) | Kyrgyzstan | Elechek, Kyrgyz female headwear: traditional knowledge and rituals | Aigine Cultural Research Center – Aigine CRC (Kyrgyzstan) |
| 01740  (18.COM 8.b.42) | Madagascar | Hiragasy, a performing art of the Central Highlands of Madagascar | Ms Tiana Lalaina Razafimanantsoa (Madagascar) |
| 01951  (18.COM 8.b.36) | Iraq, Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen | Arts, skills and practices associated with engraving on metals (gold, silver and copper) | Ms Nahla Abdallah Emam (Egypt) |
| **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices** | | | |
| 00622  (18.COM 8.c.4) | Belgium | Safeguarding foster care heritage in the merciful city of Geel: a community-based care model | Workshop intangible heritage Flanders (Belgium) |

1. In addition, one of its members abstained from evaluating four nominations for other reasons. These files were evaluated by the remaining members.
2. **‘Transition’ year**. The present cycle of evaluation took place after the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention, with the adoption of amendments to the Operational Directives by the ninth session of the General Assembly (UNESCO Headquarters, 5 to 7 July 2022, see Resolution [9.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/9)). As the files in this cycle were submitted before the adoption of Resolution [9.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/9), the amendments to the Operational Directives did not directly impact the work of the Evaluation Body this year. Nevertheless, the Body was cognizant of the main principles that underpinned the reflection and conducted its work in this spirit. In particular, the Body took into consideration the removal of Criterion P.9 of the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, and the adjustments to all criteria for the Representative List (with particular attention to criterion R.2) and the Urgent Safeguarding List. In addition, the Body deployed the use of the dialogue process in cases where clarification could aid the evaluation of the nomination files. First-time files were also evaluated in consideration of the ongoing capacity-building initiatives being undertaken by States Parties.
3. As indicated in its terms of reference (see Annex to Decision [17.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/14)), this is the last cycle in which the Evaluation Body is asked to evaluate International Assistance requests greater than US$100,000. This is another outcome of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention and the revised Operational Directives. All ‘standalone’ International Assistance requests are to be examined by the Bureau, with a cap of US$100,000 as the maximum amount per request.
4. **Previously referred files**. Some files that had been referred in previous evaluation cycles were resubmitted in this cycle. Of the files examined in this cycle, 7 were previously referred and 3 were previously withdrawn. In this regard, the Evaluation Body observed that most States Parties took into account the comments from the Body and were notably improved in their re-submission.
5. **Use of videos and photos**. The Evaluation Body found that videos and photos proved to be useful in clarifying points of doubt in the nomination files, and helped members to understand the cultural context and social functions of an element or to ascertain community consent.
6. **Workload of the Evaluation Body.** The Evaluation Body successfully evaluated 59 files in this cycle (of which 56 are presented to the Committee), due to the dedication of all members with the support of the Secretariat. However, the Body highlights that its workload will increase in future cycles, as requests for transfers between the Lists and inscriptions on an extended or reduced basis will be treated outside the annual ceiling of files (Decision [17.COM 15](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/15)). For this reason, the Body requests that careful consideration be given to the workload it will be asked to undertake, as well as the working methods in future cycles, in the interest of ensuring thorough and consistent evaluation of the files.

***Cross-cutting issues***

1. **‘Family’ cycle**. To better understand the thematic connections between the elements nominated in this cycle, the Secretariat undertook an indexing exercise on the nominations submitted in this year’s cycle (except for ‘standalone’ requests for International Assistance). The exercise, which connects elements to concepts that are featured on the [Dive Into Living Heritage](https://ich.unesco.org/dive/constellation/) interface, revealed that the dominant theme across all the nominated elements could lead to this year’s nominations being characterised as a ‘family’ cycle, with particular emphasis on the role of women in safeguarding and transmitting living heritage practices in non-formal settings and everyday life. This reinforces the idea that living heritage can act as a conduit that brings diverse communities together, strengthening the bonds within and among them, and in essence, representing the common humanity that is shared across cultures. In addition, many of them are related to the creation and transmission of practices related to handicraft production, once again within a family setting. A brief summary of the indexing exercise can be found below.

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|  | **Number of files indexed** | **Percentage of total files** |
| **Files indexed with ‘family’** | 31 | 56% |
| **Files indexed with ‘handicrafts and creativity’** | 30 | 54% |
| **Files indexed with ‘women’** | 14 | 25% |

1. **Intangible cultural heritage and livelihoods**. As noted in the reports of the Evaluation Body from past evaluation cycles, elements of intangible cultural heritage could be directly linked to economic activities, either as part of a productive chain in the case of crafts, or foodways, or a tourist attraction, spectacle or other source of income for the communities concerned. In this context, the Body noted that some States proactively developed measures promoting aspects of livelihoods. The Evaluation Body acknowledges this reality and considers that this link is not strictly interpreted as being detrimental to the viability of nominated elements. However, States Parties are reminded that the primary purpose for the nomination of an element is for the safeguarding of its social and cultural functions and contexts. This aspect should be the central description within the submitted file. Similarly, where elements are connected to tourism, States Parties should identify measures or plans that mitigate the unintended consequences that may arise from inscription. The Evaluation Body is pleased to note that the Secretariat organised an expert meeting on the economic dimensions of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in September and October 2023. As presented to the eighteenth session of the Committee (document [LHE/23/18.COM/12](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-12-EN.docx)), the recommendations of the experts laid the ground for the preparation of guidance notes on this subject.
2. **Non-formal transmission.** The Body took note of particular scenarios where existing non formal modes of transmission are becoming less viable. As a result, States Parties have proposed to adopt more formal measures to ensure the continued transmission of the element. For example, where families were previously viable non-formal mediums of transmission, and where this is no longer possible, States Parties are proposing formal transmission modes outside of the family unit, such as through schools, or other organized programs. While this may be necessary for the element’s safeguarding, States Parties should be aware of possible risks such as decontextualization.
3. **Legal frameworks, policies, licenses and certifications**. The Body noted that in a few instances, legal frameworks, policies, licenses, and certifications were identified within the file as being ongoing or proposed as safeguarding measures. States Parties are asked to consider the dynamics of how the element is practiced and transmitted and to mitigate possible unintended effects, such as ‘freezing’ or decontextualization and others, that may result from such measures.
4. **Biocultural diversity, the environment and intangible cultural heritage**. As per recent cycles, there are an increasing number of nominations that emphasize the link between intangible cultural heritage and the environment and which also reflects biocultural diversity. While some files were silent on the ecological impact associated with the practice of particular elements, the Evaluation Body was pleased to note that several files proposed measures for environmental safeguarding, sustainable building techniques and agricultural practices as well as overall sustainable development.
5. **Rural-to-urban migration and nomadic communities**. It is understood that migration occurs for a variety of reasons and that communities, groups and individuals may carry with them aspects of their intangible cultural heritage. In the preparation of nomination files that feature elements from migrant communities, the Evaluation Body considers it useful to provide a description of the migrant community, its relation to the element as well as the current context in which the element is found. This will provide a more holistic narrative about the nature and viability of these types of elements. Similarly, in these types of files, rural to urban migration, particularly concerning youth, was often cited as a threat to the viability of an element. States Parties are encouraged to examine this situation closely and to consider what safeguarding plans can be utilized to address this phenomenon.
6. **Gender issues**. The Convention upholds mutual respect for gender roles in the practice, transmission and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. As with past cycles, the Evaluation Body encourages States Parties to elaborate on the gender roles relating to elements submitted for inscription. Some files remained silent on this point and therefore, attempts should be made to include such descriptions within nomination files. On the other hand, some files should be commended for their deliberate descriptions of gender roles. Additionally, States should provide sufficient information that clearly explains that the practice of the element, vis-à-vis gender, is not a source of conflict, marginalization, or discrimination in the context in which it is practiced.
7. **Files with references to ‘supernatural’ aspects**. When submitting States make reference to the supernatural, it is important for explanations to be provided to establish the link to the element being described. The Evaluation Body is aware that such references might not be easily explained or some information may need to be withheld, but effort should be made to show its connection to the element in a clear way.
8. **Involvement of communities.** As per previous cycles and the nomination criteria, the Evaluation Body was keen to observe narratives regarding the role of communities in the practice and transmission of the element; planning and implementation of safeguarding measures and plans; preparation of the nomination file and in the defining of elements and updating of inventories. In this cycle, the Evaluation Body exercised leniency in its evaluation where if in one criterion the role of communities was sufficiently developed and explained, this was given consideration in the evaluation of other criteria where the role of communities may not have been fully explained.
   1. **Transparency about challenges**. This cycle included files where States Parties demonstrated varying degrees of transparency regarding challenges to ensure the viability of the element. The Evaluation Body was pleased where States Parties were transparent in their explanation of these challenges; and therefore, encourages States Parties to maintain this practice with a view that issues raised might become points of discussion and learning for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage as a whole.
   2. **Decontextualization**. In an effort to ensure the safeguarding of elements, a few nomination files included measures that may be perceived as decontextualizing the element. States Parties are encouraged to carefully consider the context in which the social and cultural functions and meanings associated with the element are evident and to ensure that safeguarding measures do not put these at risk.
   3. **Past, ongoing, and future safeguarding measures**. In several instances, nomination files made reference to safeguarding measures which the Evaluation Body perceived as being generic statements. This made it challenging to understand what the specific measures were, and whether they were past, ongoing or future measures. States Parties should be as specific as possible about the stated measures and clearly distinguish what measures are past, ongoing and future measures.
   4. **Future risks**. In consideration of the local contexts of the element and its possible inscription on the Lists of the Convention, States Parties should endeavour to assess future risks to the viability of the element and how they foresee addressing them.
   5. **‘Listing’ of organizations involved in safeguarding**. In the responses pertaining to the planning and implementation of safeguarding measures, several States merely listed the organizations or entities that were concerned with the measures. The Evaluation Body considered this approach deficient and encourages States Parties to explain precisely how the stated organizations and entities were involved in developing the plans and to describe how they will be involved in its implementation. While the Evaluation Body was lenient in its treatment of files where this occurred, this may not be the case in the future.
9. **Capacity building**. The Evaluation Body has observed a general improvement in the overall quality of the nomination files submitted by States Parties. However, there is still evidence of weaknesses in terms of sufficiency of information in response to the criteria, as well as the written quality. The Evaluation Body strongly advises States Parties to utilize the mechanisms and resources provided for in the Convention, including the possibility to apply for preparatory assistance under the International Assistance mechanism to develop nominations for the Urgent Safeguarding List and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, in line with paragraphs 21 and 22 of the Operational Directives. The Evaluation Body further notes that the present session of the Committee will examine a proposed amendment to the Operational Directives, making it possible for States Parties with no inscribed elements on the Representative List (Decision [17.COM 7](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/7), paragraph 14; see document [LHE/23/18.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-10-EN.docx)) to request preparatory assistance to prepare files for the Representative List.
10. **Multinational nominations**. The Evaluation Body was pleased to examine thirteen multinational nominations in this cycle. This was a similar number of files to the 2022 cycle (fourteen files), which continues to indicate the increased capacity and interest of States Parties in shared intangible cultural heritage. The Body noted, in some instances, an imbalance in how State Parties explained their roles in the nomination process as a whole. For this reason, in a few instances, the Body deployed the use of the dialogue process for clarification by individual States, particularly in criteria R.3 and R.4. In the future, States Parties are reminded to prepare the file in such a way that explains the role of all submitting States in the nomination process where the criteria require an explanation. The Evaluation Body recognizes the complexity of preparing such files and commends the efforts made by the States Parties to achieve this. The Evaluation Body is pleased to note that the Secretariat is in the process of preparing a guidance note to assist States Parties, in line with Decision [15.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/15.COM/8), and will provide further updates to States Parties in due course.
11. **Issues in the textual quality of nominations**. As has been the case in previous cycles, many nomination files presented linguistic problems, including unclear and imprecise language, phrases that were difficult to understand (likely due to poor translations from the original language), typographical errors and misplacement of information in the wrong sections. The Evaluation Body noted that this continues to be an issue from previous cycles, and would like to point out the following issues in this year’s cycle:
12. **Use of inappropriate language**. The use of inappropriate language is a recurring issue with the preparation of nomination files. Offenses include the use of words such as *originality*, *authenticity*, *unique, alien, or purity* that may imply the freezing of an element*;* or use of statements that suggest exclusivity or ownership of an element. These types of language and statements are not consistent with the spirit of the Convention and should not be included in the drafting of nomination files.
13. **Titles of elements**. The Evaluation Body recommended title changes only in a few instances. However, the Evaluation Body took note of the general positive trend where States Parties provided titles that are aligned with the nature and characteristics of the nominated element.
14. **Duplication or misplacing of information.** In several instances, the Evaluation Body observed that information meant as a response to one criterion, was duplicated in response to another criterion. Similarly, information that would have been more appropriate in response to one criterion was instead used in responding to unrelated criteria in a ‘copy and paste’ manner. Though the Evaluation Body exercised leniency on this point, submitting States are encouraged to ensure that responses are not duplicated and that responses are well developed in response to the specific criterion.

***Good examples***

1. The Evaluation Body congratulates the many communities, groups and individuals whose intangible cultural heritage was nominated. During this cycle, there was an increased number of well-prepared files from a wider range of regions. This reflects the increased capacity of submitting States. The Body also noted that many files in this cycle highlight the role of living heritage in bringing diverse communities together as well as demonstrating inclusivity. The Evaluation Body is pleased to recommend some nominations from this cycle as good examples:
   * 1. **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices – Overall Files**

*‘Nyckelharpa network, an innovative dissemination of a music and instrument-building tradition with roots in Sweden’*,nominated by Sweden, is a good example of a safeguarding model that features innovative and multi-pronged methods of safeguarding, including clear financial and technical plans, and demonstrates the power of a community to revitalize an element.

* + 1. **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity – Overall Files**

‘*Alpine pasture season’*, nominated by Switzerland, is a well-prepared file that demonstrates the link between the element and environmental and agricultural sustainability.

*‘Craftsmanship of mother of pearl inlay’,* nominated by Azerbaijan and Türkiye, is a well-prepared file that demonstrates a strong technical cooperation between the two states in the nomination process and in proposing joint safeguarding measures.

‘*Midwifery: knowledge, skills and practices’*, nominated by Colombia, Cyprus, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Slovenia and Togo, is a well-prepared file featuring an element connected to all domains of living heritage, and which promotes gender equality, healthcare for women, and traditional knowledge. Having been nominated by a diverse range of countries from multiple Electoral Groups, it sets an example for multinational files, and shows how living heritage and the 2003 Convention promote cooperation across the globe.

*‘Bolero: identity, emotion and poetry turned into song’*, nominated by Cuba and Mexico, is a well-prepared file with an excellent supporting film and a well-structured safeguarding plan.

* + 1. **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity – Specific Aspects**

*‘Rotterdam Summer Carnival’*, nominated by the Netherlands, is a file that promotes social cohesion and demonstrates how different communities can create an element of living heritage together, serving as an example of how culture can bring people together in respect of diversity.

*‘Sango Festival, Oyo’*, nominated by Nigeria, is a file where state institutions play a positive role in connecting the element to the social, political and cultural institutions of the country.

*‘Practices and meanings associated with the preparation and consumption of ceviche, an expression of Peruvian traditional cuisine’*, nominated by Peru, is a file that demonstrates a broad understanding of the practices surrounding the culinary element, including within cultural spaces and the social, cultural and natural context. The element also highlights the importance of food security.

*‘Aklan piña handloom weaving’*, nominated by the Philippines, is a well-written file which demonstrates widespread and inclusive community and family involvement.

*‘Traditional knowledge and skills of production of the atlas and adras fabrics’*, nominated by Tajikistan, is a file that addresses several issues in poverty reduction, female employment, gender equality and environmentally friendly practices.

*‘Songkran in Thailand, traditional Thai New Year festival’*, nominated by Thailand, is a file that is clear and transparent about the threats facing the element, and demonstrates how the State Party plans to address them. The file also features a good inventorying process with clear updating guidelines.

*‘Traditional irrigation: knowledge, technique and organization’*, nominated by Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Switzerland, is a good example of a multinational element that contributes to the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promotes the sustainable use of environmental resources.

*‘Craftsmanship and performing art of balaban/mey’*, nominated by Azerbaijan and Türkiye, is a multinational file that can serve as a good example of joint safeguarding measures.

*‘Nguon, rituals of governance and associated expressions in the Bamoun community’*, nominated by Cameroon, is a file that addresses social and development issues such as HIV/AIDS and poverty reduction.

*‘Knowledge, craft and skills of handmade glass production’*, nominated by Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary and Spain, is a file that highlights the positive role played by museums in safeguarding efforts, and features a webpage that promotes the element globally as well as the diversity of communities.

*‘Sadeh/Sada celebration’*, nominated by Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Tajikistan, is a multinational file that can serve as a good example of joint safeguarding measures, and which pays attention to the possible negative impacts of inscription.

*‘Elechek, Kyrgyz female headwear: traditional knowledge and rituals’*, nominated by Kyrgyzstan, is a file that features good safeguarding measures.

*‘Maltese Village Festa, an annual community celebration’*, nominated by Malta, is a file that is transparent about the threats facing the element, and features safeguarding measures that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

1. **Summary of criteria-related and recurring issues in the 2023 cycle**
2. The Evaluation Body noted that there are a number of challenges faced by States Parties that are closely connected to specific criteria for the Lists and Register of the Convention. While some of these issues have been identified in previous cycles, the Body wishes to draw attention to issues that were prominent in this year’s nomination cycle, which may assist States Parties in future cycles.

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| **Criterion** | **Issues identified** |
| **Representative List / Urgent Safeguarding List** | |
| R.1 / U.1 | **Religion**: For files that involve a religious rite or practice, the Body wishes to emphasise that States Parties should elaborate on the social and cultural aspects of the nominated element. |
| **Gender:** Where the nomination file asks for information on gender-related roles, States Parties are encouraged to elaborate on the cross-section of such roles associated with the practice and transmission of the element. |
| R.2 / U.2 | **Visibility**: Given the changes to the Operational Directives, the Body was lenient with its treatment of R.2. Files were not considered for referral on the basis of this criterion. |
| R.3 / U.3 | **Community participation**: Community participation is central to the evaluation of R.3/U.3. The Body observed that community participation in the planning and implementation of the safeguarding measures was not always well-explained. In these instances, it may be interpreted that measures were developed using top-down approaches. To avoid this, States Parties are encouraged to deploy approaches that ensure the widest possible participation of communities in the planning of the safeguarding measures and to ensure that the file clearly explains their role in implementing the proposed measures. |
| **Safeguarding plans in relation to U.2:** The Body observed that in a few instances, the safeguarding plans that are outlined in U.3. did not always address the threats highlighted in U.2. States Parties are encouraged to ensure that safeguarding plans address the threats outlined in U.2. to the degree that it is possible to do so. |
| **Treatment of R.3 with R.1:** As with all the criteria, the Body evaluated R.3 independently, including R.1. The Body acknowledges the value of an element for practitioners at the local and national level even if it is not inscribed at the international level. |
| R.4 / U.4 | **Letters of consent**: Letters of consent serve to verify the role of communities with the nominated element, their awareness about the Lists of the Convention, and their participation in the nomination. On this account, the nomination files should include a range of letters that establish free, prior and informed consent; establish community awareness about the particular List of the Convention to which the element is being nominated; as well as be sufficiently representative of the communities, groups and individuals concerned with the element and described within the file.  As a recurring matter, in several instances, consent letters were presented in standardized formats. The Evaluation Body reiterates that this should be avoided. Instead, States Parties are encouraged to ensure the communities’ widest possible participation and to have participants convey their consent in personalized ways, whether in writing or other formats such as video recordings. Additionally, in the case of multinational nominations, letters of consent should reflect the communities’ consent to a multinational file, rather than a national file. |
| R.5 / U.5 | **Communities and the inventorying process**: Community participation in the inventorying process includes identifying and defining the element as well as participating in the updating of inventories. Community participation in the inventorying process was not always well-explained in some files, or in some instances, the explanations were duplicated in other sub-sections and was therefore incoherent. States Parties are encouraged to clearly explain the various ways in which communities were involved in the inventorying process in the context of criterion R.5/U.5. |
| **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices** | |
| P.1 – P.8 | **Language quality and descriptions**: These files are considered first via the responses to the individual criteria and then as a whole. However, in some instances the language quality associated with the descriptions made it challenging to gather a holistic understanding of the programs. States Parties are encouraged to pay attention to linguistic quality in drafting nomination files and provide clear descriptions about the programs. |

1. **Positive aspects**. Based on its evaluation of the files in the present cycle, the Evaluation Body wishes to highlight several positive aspects that have already been mentioned in previous decisions and working documents of the Committee. These are as follows:

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| **Issues** | **Most recent reference decisions or documents of the Committee** |
| Links between intangible cultural heritage and environmental sustainability | [Decision 15.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/15.COM/8) (paragraph 9) |
| Contribution of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage to sustainable development | [Decision 11.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/11.COM/10) (paragraph 21)  [Decision 14.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/14.COM/10) (paragraph 12) |
| Benefits of the dialogue process | Decision [15.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/15.COM/8) (paragraph 5)  [Decision 16.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/8) (paragraph 6) |
| Benefits of the video | Decision [16.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/8) (paragraph 42. i & ii) |
| Links between intangible cultural heritage and world heritage | Decision [16.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/8) (paragraph 44) |
| International cooperation regarding multinational nominations | Document [17.COM/7](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-17.COM-7-EN.docx) (paragraph 41. i) |

1. **Recurring challenges.** The Evaluation Body would also like to point out that it identified several challenges faced by submitting States, to which previous decisions and working documents of the Committee have already referred to on several occasions:

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| **Issues** | **Most recent reference decisions or documents of the Committee** |
| Insufficient attention to gender considerations in the practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage | Decision [8.COM 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/8.COM/8) (paragraph 8) |
| Top-down approaches in the development of safeguarding plans and preparation of nominations | Decision [14.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/14.COM/10) (paragraph 15) |
| Letters which fail to mention awareness of the multinational nature of the nomination and use of standardized letters | Document [17.COM/7](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-17.COM-7-EN.docx) (paragraph 57. i and v) |
| Community participation in inventory-making and the development and updating of inventories | Decision [14.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/14.COM/10) (paragraph 10)  Decision [13.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/13.COM/10) (paragraph 12) |
| Use of inappropriate language and titles of elements that seek to establish ownership, not in line with the spirit of the Convention | Decision [12.COM 11](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/12.COM/11) (paragraph 6) |
| Lack of information about current, past and proposed safeguarding measures | Document [17.COM/7](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-17.COM-7-EN.docx) (paragraph 54. ii) |
| Public officials and institutions | Document [17.COM/7](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-17.COM-7-EN.docx) (paragraph 56. iii) |
| Uncertainty regarding the representativeness of the communities | Decision [13.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/13.COM/10) (paragraph 12) |

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

## **DRAFT DECISION 18.COM 8**

The Committee,

1. Recalling Chapter I of the Operational Directives,
2. Having examined documents LHE/23/18.COM/8, [LHE/23/18.COM/8.a](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-8.a-EN.docx), [LHE/23/18.COM/8.b](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-8.b-EN.docx), [LHE/23/18.COM/8.c](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-8.c-EN.docx) and [LHE/23/18.COM/8.d](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-8.d-EN.docx), as well as the files submitted by the respective States Parties,
3. Expresses its satisfaction with the work of the Evaluation Body, thanks its members for the quality of the present report and appreciates the assistance of the Secretariat to facilitate the work of the Evaluation Body, which has ensured a transition following the completion in July 2022 of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention;
4. Recognizes the need to monitor the implementation of the outcomes of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention, including the additional tasks entrusted to the Evaluation Body;
5. Acknowledges with appreciation that all files presented to the Committee in this cycle are recommended by the Evaluation Body for inscription, selection or approval, considers that such an overwhelmingly positive outcome indicates a promising direction for the present and future implementation of the listing mechanisms of the Convention and, at the same time, invites all submitting States to take careful note of the advice given by the Evaluation Body on each nomination as well as cross-cutting issues including those raised in its previous decisions as summarized in paragraphs 35 and 37 of the present report;
6. Congratulates those submitting States that have presented nominations that could serve as good examples for future nominations and notes with satisfaction the wider geographical balance and regional representation among these files;
7. Recalls that the designations employed in the texts and documents presented by the submitting States Parties do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Committee nor UNESCO concerning a) the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, b) the legal status of its authorities or c) the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries;

**Support to States Parties**

1. Appreciates the efforts of the Evaluation Body in making the broadest possible use of the dialogue process, contributing towards achieving more geographical balance in the Lists and the Register of the Convention, and encourages the Evaluation Body to continue utilizing this process in future cycles;
2. Invites States Parties, particularly those with no inscriptions on the Lists and Register of the Convention, to consider utilising preparatory assistance as provided for in the International Assistance mechanism of the Convention, with reference to paragraphs 21 and 22 of the Operational Directives;

**Thematic issues**

1. Highlights the role of ‘family’ amongst the present cycle’s files, particularly that of women, in safeguarding living heritage and transmitting living heritage practices in non-formal settings and everyday life, while appreciating the indexing analysis undertaken to understand the thematic connections between the nominated elements in order to characterise the 2023 cycle;
2. Welcomes the continued attention given to the links with the environment and biocultural diversity, and encourages submitting States to take into account any potential impact on the environment in their safeguarding measures;
3. Encourages States Parties to explore ways, when preparing nominations and following-up after the inscription, to maximize the positive effects of economic dimensions of intangible cultural heritage elements on communities, groups and individuals while mitigating their negative impacts;
4. Further takes note that a number of files in this cycle concern migrant or nomadic communities as well as the phenomenon of rural-to-urban migration, and encourages submitting States to ensure that such nominations describe the communities concerned in detail, as well as the context and social functions of the element;

**Central role of communities, groups and individuals**

1. Also takes note that a noticeable number of nominations submitted continue to feature standardized letters of consent and lists of organizations involved in the safeguarding plan, and reminds submitting States to ensure the widest possible participation of communities in the planning of the safeguarding measures, in line with the Ethical Principles for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and to ensure that files clearly explain their role in these measures.

1. The work of the Evaluation Body in 2023 includes the evaluation of requests for International Assistance greater than US$100,000 in conformity with the 2020 edition of the Operational Directives for the implementation of the 2003 Convention. Following the amendments to the Operational Directives by the ninth session of the General Assembly in July 2022, upon the completion of the global reflection of the listing mechanisms of the Convention, all ‘stand-alone’ International Assistance requests are examined by the Bureau of the Committee and no longer by the Committee (the maximum amount that States Parties can request is capped at US$100,000). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)