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

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION**

**Tenth session**

**UNESCO Headquarters, Room I**

**11 to 12 June 2024**

**Item 7 of the provisional agenda:**

**Proposed revisions to the Operational Directives   
for the implementation of the Convention**

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| **Summary**  The present session of the General Assembly is requested to approve the proposed amendments to the Operational Directives in order to simplify the selection criteria for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices as well as to enlarge the access to preparatory International Assistance.  **Decision required:** paragraph 16 |

**Introduction**

1. The present session of the General Assembly is requested to approve two sets of amendments to the Operational Directives of the Convention in order to follow up on the results of the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention,[[1]](#footnote-1) which was launched by the thirteenth session of the Committee in 2018 and concluded by the ninth session of the General Assembly in July 2022.
2. Endorsed by the eighteenth session of the Committee in December 2023 (document [LHE/23/18.COM/11](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-11_EN.docx) and Decision [18.COM 11](https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/18.COM/11)), the draft amendments aim to improve the following two aspects of the international cooperation mechanisms of the Convention:

* Simplification of the selection criteria for programmes, project and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention, notably as regards the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (Part A)
* Enlargement of the access to preparatory assistance under the International Assistance portfolio of the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Part B)

1. **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices**
2. With only thirty-seven good practices selected (which represents 5 per cent of the 730 elements and practices currently included in the listing system as a whole), the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (hereinafter ‘the Register’)[[2]](#footnote-2), which was established in 2009 with reference to Article 18 of the Convention, has been underutilized compared to the other two listing mechanisms of the Convention (the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, hereinafter ‘the Representative List’ and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, hereinafter ‘the Urgent Safeguarding List’).
3. The governing bodies of the Convention have already accomplished a certain number of improvements for the operationalization of the Register through the global reflection (Decision [16.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/14) and Resolution [9.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/9)), which concern: (a) the deletion of selection criterion P.9 (paragraph 7 of the Operational Directives)[[3]](#footnote-3) and (b) the possibility for the Evaluation Body to recommend the inclusion of successful safeguarding experiences in the Register in the context of transfers of elements from the Urgent Safeguarding List to the Representative List (Paragraph 39.3 of the Operational Directives).
4. As a follow up to the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the 2003 Convention, the sixteenth session of the Committee also decided to launch a separate reflection to explore the full potential of Article 18 of the Convention (Decision [16.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/14)). This new reflection was made possible thanks to a generous contribution by the Kingdom of Sweden. The issues under the reflection on Article 18 were presented in detail to the Committee at its seventeenth session in 2022, which in turn established the reflection topics and a timeline with intergovernmental steps for the reflection (document [LHE/22/17.COM/10](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-17.COM-10-EN.docx) and Decision [17.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/10)).
5. One of the main topics of the new reflection concerned the further simplification of the selection criteria for the Register, as it could not be dealt with fully during the global reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention. The purpose of the simplification would be to contribute to improving the access to and increasing the visibility of the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. Accordingly, a Category VI meeting of experts took place from 19 to 21 April 2023 (Stockholm, Sweden). During this meeting, twenty-one experts discussed and adopted a report with recommendations which was then put forward to the Open-ended intergovernmental working group (document [LHE/23/18.COM EXP/4](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-EXP_ART18-4_EN.docx)).
6. The Open-ended intergovernmental working group in the framework of the reflection on a broader implementation of Article 18 of the Convention met at UNESCO Headquarters on 4 and 5 July 2023.[[4]](#footnote-4) The working group was chaired by Mr Martin Sundin (Sweden), and the following five Member States acted as the Bureau for the working group: Estonia, Peru, Philippines, Angola and Morocco. The recommendations of the working group were submitted to the eighteenth session of the Committee in December 2023, as contained in Annex I of document [LHE/23/18.COM/11](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-18.COM-11_EN.docx).
7. Based on Recommendation 3 of the working group, the eighteenth session of the Committee considered amending paragraph 7 of the Operational Directives in order to adjust the selection criteria for the Register, as summarized below:
   1. Changes to the ‘chapeau’ of paragraph 7, with the understanding that the proposals for selection to the Register should satisfy all of the selection criteria;
   2. Simplification of the selection criteria, implying the deletion of criteria P.2 and P.8 as well as the merging of criteria P.1/P.3 and P.6/P.7;
   3. Renaming of the criteria as G.1, G.2, G.3 and so on (instead of P.1, P.2, P.3 and so on) in order to distinguish this new set of selection criteria from the previous system.
8. These adjustments took into account the following considerations as put forward through the above-mentioned expert consultation (document [LHE/23/18.COM EXP/4](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-23-EXP_ART18-4_EN.docx)):
9. Criteria should focus on the description of the programme, project or activity in the sense of Article 2.3 of the Convention, references to safeguarding measures in the Operational Directives, and the principles and objectives of the Convention and the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (criteria P.1 and P.3, which can be merged).
10. The participation of the communities concerned should be an important requirement (criteria P.5 and partly P.7, with the inclusion of Ethical Principle 4).
11. A demonstration of the effectiveness of the programme, project or activity is necessary, but this may make the requirement to carry out an assessment of the results redundant (criterion P.4 could be therefore kept and criteria P.8 deleted).
12. Criterion P.7 may be adjusted to use ‘good practices’ instead of ‘best practices’.
13. Reference to the possibility of using the good safeguarding practices as a model (P.6) may be included in the combined criterion for P.1 and P.3, but should not be limited to the international level, as some models may be relevant at the national level.
14. Some good safeguarding practices may be limited to local activities and criterion P.2 may therefore unnecessarily limit the diversity of the Register and could be deleted.
15. In accordance with Decision [18.COM 11](https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/18.COM/11) of the eighteenth session of the Committee, the General Assembly is hereby requested to examine the proposed amendment to paragraph 7 of the Operational Directives included in [Section I](#PartI) of the Annex to the present document.
16. Once the amendment is approved, Form ICH-03 shall be adjusted to reflect the revised selection criteria. As per Recommendation 3 of the working group, the revised form shall include references to the relevant provisions of the Operational Directives and the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. The adjusted Form ICH-03 will then be made available after the present session of the General Assembly and in time to prepare the 2026 cycle’s proposals for selection to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, for which the next submission deadline is on 31 March 2025 and yearly thereafter.
17. **International Assistance**
18. Through the global reflection on the listing mechanisms, the scope of preparatory assistance was enlarged to include assistance for the preparation of ‘(c) requests for the transfer of an element from one List to another, and (d) nomination files on an extended or reduced basis of already inscribed elements’ (Resolution [9.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/9)). These additions complemented the preparatory assistance which had already been provided to support the preparation of (a) nomination files to the Urgent Safeguarding List and (b) proposals of programmes, projects, and activities for selection in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (Chapter I.7 of the Operational Directives).
19. The seventeenth session of the Committee considered broadening the scope of preparatory assistance once again and requested that the Secretariat ‘elaborate a proposal for changes to the Operational Directives in order to make it possible for Member States with no previous elements inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity to request International Assistance for the preparation of their first nomination thereon’ (Decision [17.COM 7](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/7)). This proposal was made with reference to Article 20 (d) of the Convention, which foresees that International Assistance may be granted for ‘any other purpose the Committee may deem necessary’. It is also in line with the spirit of the Convention, which aims to ensure equitable geographical representation in all aspects of its implementation, particularly for the listing mechanisms.
20. It is understood that preparatory assistance would be open to States with no national element inscribed on the Representative List, regardless of whether or not they have any multinational elements already inscribed. As per the practice of the Convention, priority may be given to those States which receive Official Development Assistance. At the same time, requests from States Parties in Electoral Group I (three States without any national elements inscribed) would not be treated as a priority. With the current inscription status, a total of forty-seven States could benefit from preparatory assistance, with the geographical breakdown as follows:

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| E.G. I | E.G. II | E.G. III | E.G. IV | E.G. V(a) | E.G. V(b) |
| 3[[5]](#footnote-5) | 0 | 12 | 15 | 19 | 1 |
| Total: 47 States excluding E.G.I | | | | | |

1. In accordance with Decision [18.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/18.COM/10), the General Assembly is hereby requested to examine the proposed amendment to paragraph 21 of the Operational Directives included in [Part II](#PartII) of the Annex to the present document. The submission deadline and the process of examination, as described in Section I.15 of the Operational Directives, will remain unchanged, as will the amount requested, which usually ranges between US$5,000 and US$10,000. Once the amendment is approved, Form ICH-05 would be revised and would be made available after the present session of the General Assembly, to enable States Parties with no national element inscribed on the Representative List to request preparatory assistance by the next deadline on 31 March 2025 and thereafter.
2. The General Assembly may wish to adopt the following resolution:

DRAFT RESOLUTION 10.GA 7

The General Assembly,

1. Having examined document LHE/24/10.GA/7 and its annex,
2. Recalling Resolution [9.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/9) as well as Decisions [16.COM 14](https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/16.COM/14), [17.COM 7](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/17.COM/7), [18.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/18.COM/10) and [18.COM 11](https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/18.COM/11),

**Register of Good Safeguarding Practices**

1. Takes note of the proposed amendments to the Operational Directives concerning the selection criteria for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, endorsed by the eighteenth session of the Committee and based on the recommendations of the Open-ended intergovernmental working group;
2. Thanks Sweden for having supported the reflection on a broader implementation of Article 18 of the Convention;
3. Expresses its appreciation to the Open-ended intergovernmental working group and the experts who took part in the consultation for their work and reflection on how to improve access to and increase the visibility of the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices;
4. Approves the amendments to the Operational Directives as contained in Section I of the annex to the present Resolution;

**International Assistance**

1. Takes note of the proposed amendments to the Operational Directives to enlarge the scope of preparatory International Assistance, endorsed by the eighteenth session of the Committee;
2. Encourages eligible States Parties without a national element inscribed on the Lists of the Convention to apply to the Fund for assistance with preparing their first national nomination file to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, bearing in mind the next deadline on 31 March 2025 and yearly thereafter;
3. Approves the amendments to the Operational Directives as contained in Section II of the annex to the present Resolution.

**ANNEX**

**Proposed amendments to the Operational Directives for the implementation of the Convention**

1. **Criteria for selection of programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention**

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| **Operational Directives (2022 edition)** | | **Proposed amendments** | |
| **I.3** | **Criteria for selection of programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention** | **I.3** | [No change.] |
| 7. | From among the programmes, projects or activities proposed to it, the Committee shall select those that best satisfy all of the following criteria:  P.1 The programme, project or activity involves safeguarding, as defined in Article 2.3 of the Convention.  P.2 The programme, project or activity promotes the coordination of efforts for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage on regional, subregional and/or international levels.  P.3 The programme, project or activity reflects the principles and objectives of the Convention.  P.4 The programme, project or activity has demonstrated effectiveness in contributing to the viability of the intangible cultural heritage concerned.  P.5 The programme, project or activity is or has been implemented with the participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent.  P.6 The programme, project or activity may serve as a subregional, regional or international model, as the case may be, for safeguarding activities.  P.7 The submitting State(s) Party(ies), implementing body(ies), and community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned are willing to cooperate in the dissemination of best practices, if their programme, project or activity is selected.  P.8 The programme, project or activity features experiences that are susceptible to an assessment of their results. | 7. | From among the programmes, projects or activities proposed to it, the Committee shall select those that ~~best~~ satisfy all of the following criteria:  ~~P.1~~ G.1 The programme, project or activity involves safeguarding, as defined in Article 2.3 of the Convention, reflecting the principles and objectives of the Convention.  ~~P.2 The programme, project or activity promotes the coordination of efforts for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage on regional, subregional and/or international levels.~~  ~~P.3 The programme, project or activity reflects the principles and objectives of the Convention.~~  ~~P.4~~ G.2 The programme, project or activity has demonstrated effectiveness in contributing to the viability of the intangible cultural heritage concerned.  ~~P.5~~ G.3 The programme, project or activity is or has been implemented with the participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior, sustained and informed consent.  ~~P.6 The programme, project or activity may serve as a subregional, regional or international model, as the case may be, for safeguarding activities.~~  ~~P.7~~ G.4 The submitting State(s) Party(ies), implementing body(ies), and community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned are willing to coordinate and cooperate in the dissemination of ~~best~~ good practices, if their programme, project or activity is selected. They may serve as a source of inspiration at local, subregional, regional or international levels, as the case may be, for safeguarding activities.  ~~P.8 The programme, project or activity features experiences that are susceptible to an assessment of their results.~~ |

1. **Submission of files**

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| **Operational Directives (2022 edition)** | | **Proposed amendments** | |
| **I.7** | **Submission of files** | **I.7** | [No change.] |
| 21. | States Parties may request preparatory assistance, in consultation with communities, groups and where appropriate, individuals concerned, for the elaboration of:  (a) nomination files to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding,  (b) proposals of programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention,  (c) requests for the transfer of an element from one List to another, and  (d) nomination files on an extended or reduced basis of already inscribed elements. | 21. | States Parties may request preparatory assistance, in consultation with communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals concerned, for the elaboration of:   1. nomination files to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, 2. nomination files to the Representative List (only for States Parties with no national elements already inscribed on this List), 3. proposals of programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention, 4. requests for the transfer of an element from one List to another, and 5. nomination files on an extended or reduced basis of already inscribed elements. |

1. See also the dedicated webpage for the global reflection: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/global-reflection-on-the-listing-mechanisms-01164>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. According to Article 18 of the 2003 Convention, the ‘Committee shall periodically select and promote national, sub-regional and regional programmes, projects and activities for the safeguarding of the heritage which it considers best reflect the principles and objectives of this Convention, taking into account the special needs of developing countries.’ In order to implement this provision, the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices was established in 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Before its deletion, Criterion P.9 stated the following: ‘the programme, project or activity is primarily applicable to the particular needs of developing countries’. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See the [dedicated webpage](https://ich.unesco.org/en/meeting-of-experts-category-vi-01306) for the meeting of the working group, including the agenda and timetable as well as other working documents. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland deposited its instrument of ratification on 8 March 2024 and will become the 183rd State to join the 2003 Convention on 8 June 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)