

# PROCLAMATION OF MASTERPIECES OF THE ORAL AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF HUMANITY



Implementation guide

# INTRODUCTION

**1** The Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris, 1972 (known as the “World Heritage Convention”), of which the Organization is the custodian, referred to monuments, sites and landscapes of exceptional value for the whole of humanity. Cultural and natural sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List. Nonetheless, the Convention does not apply to the intangible heritage and consequently, from 1972 onwards, when the World Heritage Convention was adopted, several Member States took the initiative of establishing within UNESCO an international normative instrument relating to the various aspects of the intangible heritage, namely traditional culture and folklore. Therefore, the General Conference, at its 25th session in November 1989, adopted the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore.

**2** This instrument encourages Member States to implement legislative and other measures appropriate to identification, conservation, preservation, dissemination, protection, promotion and international cooperation in the field of this heritage, which is more exposed than other forms of heritage to the effects of world globalization. It should be noted that many expressions of the oral heritage, which today are in danger of disappearing, are often the very sources of cultural identity, particularly for minorities and native populations. It is therefore urgent to draw the attention of the authorities concerned, but more particularly those who have the appropriate expertise, to the value of this heritage and the need to preserve it. In the final article of the section concerning the promotion of international cooperation (G, (f)), the Recommendation stipulates that the Member States should “take necessary measures to safeguard traditional culture and folklore against all human and natural dangers to which it is exposed, including the risks deriving from armed conflicts, occupation of territories, or public disorders of other kinds”. Since then, the Member States have shown growing interest in the forms of intangible heritage which are often considered as

symbols of the spiritual values of the peoples and communities to which they belong. The Secretariat has therefore continually initiated projects along the lines of the Recommendation, such as action to foster greater public awareness of the intangible traditional and popular heritage and to ensure its identification, safeguarding, dissemination and preservation. Therefore, in accordance with 142 EX/Decision 5.5.5 taken by the Executive Board at its 142<sup>nd</sup> session, and after elaboration of a Guide on “Living Human Treasures”, the Director-General invited all the Member States to create such a system in their country.

**3** Similarly, the General Conference, at its 29<sup>th</sup> session (November 1997), adopted a resolution in order to create an international distinction entitled proclamation by UNESCO of Masterpieces of the oral heritage of humanity. At its 154<sup>th</sup> session, the Executive Board of UNESCO emphasized the fact that the oral heritage is inseparable from the intangible heritage and thus requested that the phrase “and intangible” be added in the title of the future distinction between “oral” and “heritage”. At its 155<sup>th</sup> session, the Executive Board devised Regulations relating to the proclamation by UNESCO of Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity (Annex I).

**4** In the text of the Regulations, the purpose of the international distinction and the definition of the term “oral and intangible heritage” are described as follows:

**OBJECTIVE** The aim is also to encourage governments, NGOs and local communities to identify, preserve and promote their oral and intangible heritage, considering this to be the depository and collective memory of peoples, which alone can ensure the survival of distinctive cultural characteristics. Proclamation is also intended to encourage individuals, groups, institutions and organizations to make outstanding contributions to managing, preserving, protecting and promoting the oral and intangible heritage in question, in accordance with UNESCO’s objectives, and its programme in this area, in particular as regards following up the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989).

**DEFINITION** The totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts. In addition to these examples, account will also be taken of traditional forms of communication and information.

**5** This guide has been prepared in order to facilitate the submission of candidatures for proclamation of Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

## SUBMISSION OF CANDIDATURES

**6** Each Member State may submit a single candidature every two years. Multinational candidatures involving the communities of several Member States may be submitted in addition to the quota for each State. The initiative of submitting a candidature may be taken:

- a** either by governments of Member States and of Associate Members;
- b** or by intergovernmental organizations, in consultation with the National Commission for UNESCO of the country concerned;
- c** or by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) having formal relations with UNESCO, in consultation with the National Commission for UNESCO of their country.

No candidature may be submitted to UNESCO without a written document, video or audio recording, or any other irrefutable proof testifying to the agreement of the community or the bearers concerned.

# FORMAT AND CONTENT OF THE CANDIDATURE FILES

**7** The candidature files should be drafted on the standard form model attached to this guide. Furthermore, each file must include:

- a** a plan of action that is appropriate to the space or form of cultural expression in question, listing the legal and practical measures to be taken over the next decade for the preservation, protection, support and promotion of that oral and intangible heritage. The plan of action will provide a detailed description of the measures proposed and of their implementation, taking account of the need to protect endogenous mechanisms for the transmission of traditions;
- b** details of the compatibility of the plan of action with the measures outlined in the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, as well as with UNESCO's ideals;
- c** details of the measures to be taken to involve the communities concerned in preserving and promoting their own oral and intangible heritage;
- d** names of competent bodies within the community and/or of the government concerned, that will be responsible for ensuring that the state of the oral and intangible heritage, as described in the submission, remains unchanged in the future.

**8** Each submission of candidature will include the necessary documentation for its evaluation, including maps and photographs, slides, audio and audiovisual recordings and any other useful material, together with a sound analysis of the reference works accompanied by a comprehensive bibliography.

# JURY

- 9** The Director-General, on the basis of proposals from Member States, competent NGOs and the Secretariat, will designate every four years a jury composed of nine members. The operating procedures of this jury (subsequently called “the Jury”) are defined by the “Regulations relating to the operating procedures of the International Jury for proclamation by UNESCO of Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

- 10** In its evaluation, the Jury and its experts will take account firstly of the first criterion laid down in the Regulations (Annex I), namely: its outstanding value as a masterpiece of the human creative genius. Consequently, any candidature, to be evaluated by the Jury, must be of outstanding value, in that it represents:
- a** either a strong concentration of the intangible cultural heritage of outstanding value; or
  - b** a popular and traditional cultural expression of outstanding value from a historical, artistic, ethnological, sociological, anthropological, linguistic or literary point of view.
- 11** Cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression proclaimed “Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity” must furthermore correspond to the five criteria mentioned in the Regulations relating to proclamation by UNESCO of Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. The cultural space or form of cultural expression submitted must therefore:

- a** give wide evidence of its roots in the cultural tradition or cultural history of the community concerned;
- b** reveal its role as a means of affirming the cultural identity of the peoples and cultural communities concerned, its importance as a source of inspiration and intercultural exchange and as a means of bringing peoples or communities closer together, and its contemporary cultural and social role in the community concerned;
- c** provide proof of excellence in the application of the skill and technical qualities displayed;
- d** affirm its value as a unique testimony of a living cultural tradition; and
- e** make plain the risk of its disappearing due either to the lack of means for safeguarding and protecting it or to processes of rapid change, or to urbanization, or to acculturation.

## PROCEDURE FOR THE EVALUATION OF CANDIDATURES

- 12** Candidature files will be accepted by UNESCO on condition that they are submitted by the national authorities of a Member State, with the agreement of the competent representatives of the communities concerned. The first submission shall be accompanied by a provisional list of the various cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression which the Member State plans to propose during the following decade with a view to being proclaimed “Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”. Once this provisional list has expired, a new list shall be submitted on the occasion of the following candidature. The accepted files will be recorded by the Secretariat after verification of their content to ensure that they meet the Organization’s requirements. Each file will include the elements listed under item 7 of this guide, including the plan of action

which is compulsory. Furthermore, in order that the Jury may evaluate the appropriateness of the plan of action (cf. the standard form in Annex III), the Secretariat will check:

- 1** the mandate of the public authorities or NGOs as regards the safeguarding, preservation, legal protection, transmission and dissemination of the cultural values in question;
- 2** the existence of appropriate administrative machinery and of effective mechanisms for supervising the implementation of the initial planning procedure that are respectful of local and national traditions;
- 3** the measures taken to raise awareness in the individual members of the community concerned of the value of the heritage and of the importance of preserving it;
- 4** the role accorded to the community concerned by the plan of action and the benefit that it derives therefrom;
- 5** the role accorded the bearers of the heritage in question;
- 6** the measures taken:
  - a** within the local community to preserve and promote this heritage;
  - b** to record the traditions in order to enable researchers at the national and international level to access the information, and in order to encourage scientific research as a means of preserving this heritage;
  - c** in relation to the bearers of the heritage to further develop the relevant skills, techniques and forms of cultural expression concerned;
  - d** in relation to the bearers of the heritage, in order to transmit the skills, techniques and forms of cultural expression to apprentices and/or young people in general.

**13** Once the completed candidature files have been registered by the Secretariat and after submission of any supplementary information, each completed file will be evaluated by one or several competent NGOs and by any other expert designated by the Director-General at the request of the members of the Jury. The experts designated by the Director-General or by the NGOs, as indicated in the "Regulations relating to the operating procedures of the International Jury for the proclamation by UNESCO of Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity" will

prepare an evaluation report (in French and in English) for each cultural space or form of cultural expression submitted for proclamation. Evaluation by the experts will include:

- a** a brief historical and geographical description;
- b** justification regarding the selection criteria to which the candidature corresponds;
- c** a comparative study with similar cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression in the same region of the world;
- d** a recommendation in favour of or against proclamation of the cultural space or form of cultural expression as a “Masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.

**14** On receipt of the experts’ reports the Jury will conduct a definitive evaluation and submit to the Director-General of UNESCO a list of proclamations together with a list of candidatures which will be re-examined two years later.

**15** On the basis of the Jury’s proposals, the Director-General of UNESCO will proclaim the “Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”. All cultural spaces and forms of cultural expression proclaimed will be recorded on a list updated during the month following each proclamation. The list will be distributed to Member States and to the general public.

**16** In carrying out its mandate, the Jury will take no account of the nationality, ethnic origin, sex, language, profession, ideology or religion of the individuals involved. However, the Jury may call for the participation or opinion of recognized depositaries of the oral and intangible heritage.

**17** The representatives of a Member State or NGO shall not intervene to support acceptance of a candidature for a cultural space or form of cultural expression for which the State or NGO has proposed proclamation, but merely to provide supplementary information in response to questions addressed to them.

- 18** In the event of donor States or private sponsors wishing to contribute with extra-budgetary funds which could serve to encourage the creation of prizes or the funding of actions to safeguard, protect and revitalize the oral and intangible heritage, the winners may be chosen by the Jury among the cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression which have been proclaimed by UNESCO as “Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”. The selection criteria for the winners will be defined at the time of creation of any prize or funds-in-trust.

## **TIMETABLE FOR THE PROCEDURE OF EVALUATION OF CANDIDATURES**

- 19** Every four years, before the end of December, the Director-General of UNESCO will appoint nine new members of the Jury, in accordance with the “Regulations relating to the operating procedures of the International Jury for proclamation by UNESCO of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.
- 20** Every two years, the list of candidatures received will be closed on 31 December. Candidatures received after closure of the list will be taken into consideration during the following year. After the files have been examined by the Secretariat, they will be forwarded for evaluation to the experts designated by the Jury and appointed by the Director-General. The evaluations and candidature files will be returned to the Secretariat before the end of the current year.

**21** The Jury will meet every two years in January in order to designate the cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression which deserve to be proclaimed “Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”. Before the end of January, the Jury will submit to the Director-General of UNESCO the list of candidatures proposed for immediate proclamation, together with the list of candidatures which will be re-examined two years later.

**22** “Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity” will be proclaimed by the Director-General of UNESCO every two years, in February, at a public ceremony.

## **MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP**

**23** At the time of proclamation of a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity, the Secretariat - according to the nature of each cultural space or each form of cultural expression chosen - will define with the competent authorities the most appropriate follow-up procedure in order to ensure implementation of the plan of action.

# INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

**24** The competent authorities of any Member State may submit to the Secretariat a request for international assistance. Such international assistance will be envisaged in two cases:

- a** to cover the cost of preparing the candidature files (preparatory assistance);
- b** to encourage action to safeguard, protect, revitalize or promote cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression that have already been proclaimed masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity (protection assistance).

**25** Furthermore, the Organization will also provide assistance in human resources and expertise, both for the preparation of candidature files and for implementation of the plan of action.

**26** In order to obtain preparatory assistance, the competent national authorities will submit a request comprising a brief description of the cultural space or form of cultural expression and a provisional budget for the preparation of the candidature file. In order that the request for preparatory assistance be taken into account by the Secretariat, the cultural space or form of cultural expression in question must already be on the provisional list submitted by the authorities of the Member State concerned. As regards preparatory assistance, UNESCO will never grant more than two-thirds of the provisional budget. Settlement of preparatory assistance will be made in two equal payments, the second of which will only be made after receipt of a financial report.

**27** In order to obtain protection assistance, any person designated in the candidature form as being responsible for the safeguarding of a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity may submit, with the agreement of the

competent national authorities, a request comprising a detailed plan for safeguarding, legal protection and promotion, in accordance with the plan of action and the provisional budget. According to opportunities for the granting of funds, the Secretariat, after possible consultation with the Jury experts, may grant assistance covering part or all of the provisional budget.

## CANDIDATURE STANDARD FORM

Proclamation of masterpieces  
of the oral and intangible heritage  
of humanity

### 1 IDENTIFICATION

- a Member State or group of Member States.
- b Name of the cultural space or form of cultural expression.
- c Name of the community concerned.
- d Geographical location of the cultural space or form of cultural expression.
- e Geographical location of the communities concerned (States, provinces, regions, villages).
- f Periodicity of the form of cultural expression.
- g Competent persons or bodies within the community or communities concerned or the government involved (name, first name, title, postal address, telephone, fax, e-mail).

### 2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE CANDIDATURE

- a Value of the cultural space or form of cultural expression from a historical, artistic, ethnological, sociological, anthropological, linguistic or literary point of view.
- b Value of the cultural space or form of cultural expression in terms of the number and importance of the bearers of expertise (information regarding the bearers: age, sex, occupation, position in the community, etc.).
- c Inventory of similar cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression recorded on the provisional list of the State concerned.
- d Comparative analysis of similar cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression in the region.

e Justification of the value of the cultural space or form of cultural expression according to the selection criteria:

- i - its outstanding value as a masterpiece of the human creative genius;
- ii - its roots in the cultural tradition or cultural history of the community concerned;
- iii - its role as a means of affirming the cultural identity of the peoples and cultural communities concerned, its importance as a source of inspiration and intercultural exchange and as a means of bringing peoples or communities closer together, and its contemporary cultural and social role in the community concerned;
- iv - excellence in the application of the skill and technical qualities displayed;
- v - its value as a unique testimony of a living cultural tradition;
- vi - the risk of its disappearing due either to the lack of means for safeguarding and protecting it or to processes of rapid change, or to urbanization, or to acculturation.

### 3 DESCRIPTION

- a Description of the space or form of cultural expression.
- b Historical background, development and social, symbolic and cultural purpose.
- c Technical description, authenticity, style, genre, school, influences and - for material cultures - materials, purpose, method of production, utilization.
- d References to (historical or recent) descriptions of the space or form of cultural expression (list of recognized depositories, bibliography, iconography, discography, filmography).
- e Durability and possible risks of disappearance, pressure or constraints due to:

- i - economic and technological development;
- ii - climate change and pollution;
- iii - the development of tourism;
- iv - an increase or decrease in population numbers of the community concerned;
- v - other factors.

#### 4 MANAGEMENT

- a Body or bodies in charge of the safeguarding, preservation and revitalization of the cultural space or form of cultural expression (legal status of the body, nationally recognized competence, name and address of the person in charge, sources of funding, etc.).
- b Measures taken or planned in order to guarantee conditions required for the cultural manifestation concerned to survive in its original context.
- c Machinery for safeguarding the space or form of cultural expression:
  - i - legal machinery;
  - ii - legal protection relating to the exploitation of the forms of cultural expression concerned;
  - iii - legal protection for the depositories of expertise;
  - iv - measures taken to ensure transmission;
  - v - other factors.
- d Means of implementing protection measures.
- e Plan of action for the next decade with a view to safeguarding, protection, revitalization and dissemination, including a detailed description of the involvement of the recognized bearers or communities concerned (as specified under item 7(c) of the guide).
- f Administrative machinery for safeguarding the space or form of cultural expression

- g Sources of funding and their level.
- h Number of persons involved.
- i Human resources (skills and experience) and opportunities for training in action for safeguarding, revitalization and dissemination.

#### 5 APPENDED DOCUMENTATION (inventory)

Photographs, films, videos or sound recordings.