

## ICH NGO Forum Statement for the 10.COM IGC for the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural heritage.

As it has now become customary, the ICH NGO Forum provides a statement on the occasion of 10.COM.

### 1. Developments in the ICH NGO Forum in 2015

2015 has been an active year for the ICH NGO Forum with significant activities. A catalyst for these developments has been the changes to the operation of the Convention with the 1<sup>st</sup> review of the accredited NGOs and the introduction of the Evaluation Body in 2014 in which six NGOs offer important advisory services to the committee. We take note of the invaluable contribution of the work of the Evaluation Body, which deserves careful consideration because of the recognised quality of its recommendations.

The Forum held its first international conference outside its regular meetings at the IGC and General Assembly sessions. Members of the Forum felt the need to make time to discuss specifically the future direction of the Forum in response to the changes in the Operational Directives of the Convention. This opportunity was provided by the Ens De L' Assocacionisme Cultural Catala at the Forum Conference that took place from June 6-13 in Santa Susanna, Catalonia, Spain and the following were agreed:

- a. The role and function of the Forum with a **shared vision, a mission and values** was reaffirmed along with the indication of nine clear functions for the Forum -
- b. The Forum is the **representative coordinating body of the accredited ICH NGOs** and is there to **facilitate the contribution of the ICH NGOs to the implementation of the Convention.**
- c. The Forum is committed to **developing the network of accredited ICH NGOs**, facilitating dialogue and the exchange of information and experiences.
- d. The Forum can be **consulted as the definitions and criteria for accreditation** which will continue to develop in response to changing demands.

The Forum's potential contribution to the Evaluation Body was also discussed. NGOs will be encouraged to **list their own areas of specialisation through the website to provide greater visibility.** It will inform the Accredited NGOs of the newly elected members of the Evaluation Body and shall encourage ICH NGOS members of the Evaluation Body to share their experiences with the Forum.

Finally, a **Steering Committee** was proposed to better prepare and coordinate the activities of the Forum. This Steering Committee together with the proposals for the Forum were ratified at the Windhoek meeting of the Forum.

### 1. Sustainable Development and Ethics

The topic of sustainable development was explored in line with the proposed additions to the Operational Directives at a symposium led by the Museums Galleries Scotland in November in Edinburgh – 'For Everyone: The role of Living Culture in Identities and Sustainable Community Development'. **Sustainable development, identities and human**

rights were discussed which shaped the agenda for the Forum symposium of November 29, 2015.

"A code of ethics for the ICH NGOs" was the topic of the symposium. **Key insights of the Symposium** into this very complex area included:

- **Dialogue and communication at all levels are crucial to safeguarding ICH at local, national and international fields.**
- Challenges need to be **dealt with on a case by case basis**, always keeping in mind that the communities, groups and individuals are the primary actors in ICH.
- The **importance of contextualisation and culturally diverse ethics** was underlined.
- Proposals were made for the NGO Forum to take the discussion forward through a working group in the coming year.

## 2. #Heritage Alive

#Heritage Alive was established in the 8.COM in Baku and is the web-based journal for Accredited NGOs sharing experiences from the field. There have been six articles published and discussed to date with some of them gaining more than 2000 hits on the web. We believe #Heritage Alive has become an important tool for improving the methodology and safeguarding actions in the field.

## 3. Heritage in conflict

Finally, at its Symposium, in line with the important issues raised at the 38th session of the General Conference, the Forum expressed its deepest concern for the current destruction of cultural heritage arising from conflicts in the Middle East and other parts of the World where rich ICH so often embedded. ICH NGOs shall contribute their efforts to the #Unite4Heritage campaign. Concern is expressed too about the invasive processes and contexts that pressure and threaten living heritage generally.

## 4. Conclusion

Finally, we wish to express our deep gratitude to **Indonesia, the first experience of a State Party bringing financial support to the Forum on the occasion of this IGC.** The ICH NGO Forum hopes that other States Parties will follow Indonesia's initiative. Your support to our Forum will foster NGO cooperation and improve the implementation of the Forum.

The ICH NGO Forum has become a useful component in the implementation of the Convention. Instruments it has created such as its website provide a valuable platform for exchanges of ideas and information and facilitate the induction of newly accredited NGOs by their peers in a supportive manner.

With the recent creation of its Steering Committee, the Forum now has a collective voice that can interact and respond to the shared challenges of safeguarding ICH in today's ever changing world.

Accredited ICH NGOs will continue to make a contribution to the implementation of the Convention, as well as providing platforms for new thinking as a source of inspiration for the future.