

Intervention 14.COM 7: Draft plan for the use of the resources of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund in 2020–2021 (Bogotá, 9 December 2019)

Presented by Reme Sakr (Syria Trust for Development) on behalf of ICH NGO Forum and its Steering Committee

Thank you Madam Chairperson for the opportunity for the ICH NGO Forum to intervene within this agenda item.

I would like to begin by expressing the ICH NGO Forum's appreciation for the resources provided out of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund to support the participation of NGOs from developing countries in these meetings. This has had a direct and strengthened impact on the collaboration among NGOs that are accredited to UNESCO, and their networking activities which are positively reflecting on the current and potential advisory functions that accredited NGOs provide to the Committee.

Beginning at the 12.COM meeting in Jeju, the ICH NGO Forum has established a framework for its annual meeting sessions which are held prior to the kick-off of the Intergovernmental Committee meetings, and continue during the course of the Committee's meetings. And so while the official 14.COM sessions have started today, the ICH NGO Forum on yesterday and the day before has held largely successful capacity building and concept developing meetings which were directly focused on the topic of the current and potential advisory functions that NGOs provide under the 2003 Convention, and regional needs, opportunities and challenges. While on Sunday the Forum held its annual Symposium on the topics of ICH in urban contexts, the reforming of the listing mechanisms, and the development of the Forum's Bylaws and Code of conduct.

Madam Chair, the ICH NGO Forum considers these meetings of great benefit to the work of NGOs, their own capacity development and how they are operating under the Convention, and therefore, we would kindly request that the assistance provided to NGOs from developing countries from the Fund be extended to cover both days of the Forum's activities, which is the Saturday and Sunday before the Intergovernmental Committee Meetings, and not only one day as it currently is now. At the same time, we recommend for NGOs who benefit from the Fund to be formally requested to not only be present during the Committee meetings as they are currently requested to, but during the ICH NGO Forum's activities also, pre-Committee meetings and during.

Furthermore, the ICH NGO Forum continues to strengthen its organisational framework, and with this its Steering Committee take on an increasing scope of activities and responsibilities in the pursuit of a more active Forum in support of the Committee, and therefore, we request that support from the Fund is extended to the ICH NGO Forum's seven Steering Committee members, to ensure their active and full participation in the Committee and General Assembly meetings, regardless of their regional groups belonging to developing countries or not.

And lastly, the regional imbalance within the ICH NGO Forum is an ongoing challenge which is frequently discussed. To help counter this challenge we recommend to the Committee to make increased use of funds to support capacity-building activities to sustain and develop NGOs in under-represented regions.