

SPEECH NGO FORUM at opening 7GA

Thank you, Mrs. Chair,
For giving the NGOs opportunity to speak at the opening of this august General Assembly.

This is 2018 – a year when the UNESCO 2003 Convention will celebrate 15 years of international cooperation for the safeguarding of living heritage practices throughout the globe. A living heritage in all its rich and fascinating diversity, that is cherished by all of us assembled here.

We live in vastly changing times, moving through globalisation, migration movements, digitisation, the economic crisis, climate change...

Given the fragility of numerous ICH practices facing enormous challenges, we have come forward to collaborate keeping in mind the value of ICH as a source of cultural diversity and a vector of sustainable development.

The 2003 Convention has been one of the pioneers in the UN to explore participation of civil society in heritage governance. It has been inviting NGOs from all the regions of the world to relate to the work of the Convention and to offer advisory services.

There is transnational networking and cooperation among ICH communities, NGOs and heritage organizations. NGOs are contributing towards achieving the goals of the Convention through concrete safeguarding activities like the Report on the Contribution of ICH to Sustainable Development in South Asia, or the transnational cooperation project on ICH and Museums in European context. The NGO Forum's online journal for exchange of experiences from the field, **#HeritageAlive**, reached a new milestone with the publication of a book on traditional knowledge of medicine in 2017 with support of ICHCAP (Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region).

As you all may be aware, collaboration and collective efforts by the accredited NGOs have gathered momentum through the establishment of the ICH NGO Forum some years ago. Developing a platform for communication and coordination with accredited NGOs, the Forum has delivered numerous outcomes already and is dedicating growing efforts for the outreach and civil society involvement in the life of the Convention. These include:

- **Capacity-building for NGOs**, made possible in 2017 with the generous support of Indonesia and CHF - Korea Cultural Heritage foundation.
- **Working Groups** addressing actual challenges faced in the safeguarding work.
- **Regional networks** to develop network cooperation, relationships and capacities in the regions.
- Beyond all this, the ICH NGO Forum is continuously working towards a transparent and sustainable format of **governance**. Since the GA 2 years ago, it has set up an association and a bank account for transparent management and to enhance productive cooperation and support possibilities with states parties and other partners in the Convention. The Forum held first elections of its Steering Committee during the 12.COM meetings in Korea.

The State Parties have consistently welcomed the endeavours of the Forum.

There is now a new possibility. At the end of 2017 the IGC decided to 'invite the Secretariat and the informal ad hoc working group to reflect, in consultation with the accredited NGOs, on the possible ways in which the participation of NGOs under the 2003 Convention could be further enhanced and how this would be reflected in the accreditation and renewal mechanisms of NGOs.

We look forward to the process and will continue to work constructively towards the aims of the Convention and safeguarding of ICH across the world.



We would like to thank UNESCO for encouraging and giving the opportunity to NGOs to share some of their safeguarding actions during this General Assembly. We are happy to invite you today and tomorrow at the **exhibition** and on 5 and 6 June from 9:30 am to 10:00 am at the **presentations**. This exhibition is hosted by more than 20 NGOs from Asia, Europe, South America and Africa. Join us to enjoy presentations and services on the ICH. On June 5th, in addition to the exhibition, there will be dance, martial arts and storytelling performances between 1:00 pm and 1:30 pm and between 6:00 pm and 6:30 pm.

Dear Mrs. Chair and all parties assembled in this room or following us online

The year 2018 has all the promises of an interesting journey. The ICH NGO Forum wishes you a very fruitful time in discussing and outlining

- the **Overall Results Framework to guide the Convention**,
- fine tuning the **Operational Directives**,
- and taking care of the **Governance, Procedures and Working Methods** of this Convention,

Wholeheartedly,

in the name of the accredited NGOs gathered through the ICH NGO Forum

Thank you