

## **ICH NGO Forum Statement at 8.GA (September 2020)**

Presented by Meg Nömgård (The Storytelling Network of Kronoberg), chair of the ICH NGO Forum Steering Committee

Distinguished Delegates of the States Parties to the 2003 Convention and UNESCO Secretariat, I direct this message on behalf of the Steering Committee of the ICH NGO Forum and the accredited organizations that work actively with the communities and bearers of ICH.

We are facing unprecedented challenges in the modern history of humanity; the world is learning and adapting to this new reality. ICH bearers and their communities are no exception. However, we wish to emphasize in these difficult times that the 2003 Convention is above all a celebration of life. Individuals and communities transmit knowledge, skills and techniques from one generation to another, learn and enrich their legacy with contributions from other cultures. We are the story that has been told through time, the song that echoes at each end of the earth and reminds us that we are one humanity.

The agenda of this session is rich; therefore please allow us to take this opportunity to address only three items.

### **Item 9: ICH in emergencies**

The COVID-19 has put the whole world suddenly in a state of emergency. The World is using now much more online communication tools, and these could be very useful in coping with the pandemic, including various capacity building

actions, in which NGOs could and should be acknowledged as one of the key partners in safeguarding ICH. UNESCO's platform on living heritage experiences under the pandemic clearly testifies to an important role played by ICH NGOs.

Regarding online communications, we also like to stress that communities and other stakeholders have different capacities in accessing digital tools. In this regard, we would appreciate if GA might consider to expand the scope of the ICH Fund, which you will address under Agenda item 7, to help resilience of ICH under the pandemic, in particular ICH of more vulnerable, indigenous and minority communities, as well as to decrease digital divide in our increasingly interconnected world.

**Item 11: Update on the reflection on the listing mechanisms of the Convention**

Following the outcomes of the ICH NGO Forum Symposium held during 14.COM in Bogotá, we shall present our main suggestions on the listing mechanisms within our intervention on agenda item 11.

We kindly ask the distinguished Delegates to consult the ICH NGO Forum website for more detailed elaboration of these suggestions.

**Item 12: Update on the reflection on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Convention**

Concerning the participation of NGOs in the Convention, we very much welcome the ongoing reflection on this matter. Let us emphasize that since the last General Assembly, the ICH NGO Forum has developed and adopted its Bylaws and Code of conduct, including the recognition of various advisory functions that NGOs may play – and do play – in safeguarding ICH apart from

their services in the Evaluation Body, the development of policies to overcome geographical imbalance of accredited NGOs, and the overall strengthening of structure, activities and collaboration between ICH NGOs.

ICH NGO Forum is an association of accredited NGOs that encourages plurality of expertise, and fair and equal participation among different NGOs and regions. Therefore, we wish to reaffirm that the ICH NGO Forum advocates and operates in favour of plurality, diversity and participation. We are happy that these positive developments have been recognized by the Committee, which included the report on our activities as a separate agenda item at its next, 15th session.

Finally, I want to thank you for your attention. We as 157 accredited NGOs plus those that are expected to be confirmed at this session, are closely following your deliberations and decisions. We will discuss them at our online session scheduled for 14 September. You are welcome to join us.

We wish you a successful General Assembly.