

NGO Statement in Abu Dhabi

Speech on behalf of participating NGOs at 4COM

10.02.09

Abu Dhabi, October 2nd, 2009

Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee
for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Abu Dhabi, Sept – Oct. 2009

Common statement of NGOs[1]

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

I am Cristina Amescua and I am here to speak on behalf of some 30 NGOs recommend for accreditation, that for purpose of time I shall not mention, their names are on a document available outside, I'd like to sincerely thank our hosts for their warm and generous hospitality. We also want to thank all and each of the members of the Intergovernmental Committee and the Secretariat for their important contribution to the implementation of the convention.

Of course, diversity is what characterizes us: we come from northern and southern organizations. Some of us have been part of the process of the 2003 convention for several years now, but also, some of us are new. We represent organizations that work at the international level as well as others whose realm of action is national and local. It is important for us to include both NGOs and CBOs of the Developing countries. For this we are aware of the capacities we have within ourselves, we think our diversity is our best asset and we want to enhance it.



Safeguarding Heritage: Participants at 4COM, Abu Dhabi

We have extensive knowledge and important networks so we can contribute to that. We can add value and also be strategic partners in the challenge of keeping this democratic convention in motion and help the tasks of the Committee and the Secretariat.

We also believe that our involvement can and must go beyond the examination of nominations, for instance, as facilitators in an effort to attain regional balance in civil society representation. In doing so, we can also serve as an interface between UNESCO and the communities at the local level.

We are aware that our level of involvement has to be one that the State Parties feel comfortable with. In order to perform efficient and effective work we need some basic conditions to be fulfilled: some of them are up to us and can be built by ourselves through our already existing capacities, but for some others we need to work jointly with the committee and the secretariat. As enabling factors we suggest the following:

1. In order to enhance the NGO regional balance we look forward to the creation of virtual space for debate, using technological resources in a creative way to ensure that we can continue to build and strengthen the engagement of civil society for the Convention. We request the Secretariat to establish a web based e-group or platform where all NGOs and community-based organizations can also join, and share information, work experiences and activities. In this regard it would be really important to create for the Committee Sessions, a real life internet broadcast. This enables NGOs and community-based organizations that cannot, for whatever reason, attend the next sessions, to communicate live with the entire meeting.
2. We would like to hold a one day forum prior to each Intergovernmental Committee meeting, in order to put the virtual meeting place into a real one and collaborate more closely. This will go a long way to empowering those attending the sessions for the first time.
3. We need State Parties to let us know what is expected from us, and what is actually entailed by accreditation.
4. We want to take an active role in the examiners meetings, so we can offer our experiences and insights and knowledge as practitioners and academics.

This is why the willingness of our hosts today to provide the funding for our participation in this meeting is so important. We therefore urge the organizers of the next sessions to follow this example, thus guaranteeing that all organizations can be part of these important debates, especially from developing countries.

Today October 2, on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, we

recall in this regard his inspiring words “Be the change you want to see”

Thank you Mr Chair.

1. Association de Nasreddin Hodja et du tourisme, Association nationale Culture et Traditions, Centro UNESCO de Melilla, Chambre des Beaux Arts de Méditerranée, Craft Revival Trust, Extra Moenia, Goa Heritage Action Group, Human Heritage – La enciclopedia del patrimonio cultural inmaterial, ICOM, ICOMOS, ICTM, IDAST, Int. Organisation of Folk Arts, International Social Science Council, Int. Society for Ethnology and Folklore, Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation, Madhukali, Mediterranean Diet Foundation, MUSA, Norwegian Crafts Development, Repriz, SIMBDEA, Tamilnadu Rural Arts Development Centre, The Archival platform, Traditions for Tomorrow, UNESCO Centre for Catalonia, World Crafts Council, World Martial Arts Union, www.appennino4p.it