

NGO STATEMENT ICH-8.COM

Baku, 7th December 2013

1. The NGO Forum expresses its gratitude to Azerbaijan for the warm welcome extended to the NGOs and for the support provided to the NGOs, which has helped them to undertake their activities along side the Committee's work.

2. The NGO Forum also thanks the Secretariat for its constant support.

3. The NGO Forum welcomes the decisions of the Committee on the recognition of the role of NGOs and on the necessity of their greater involvement in the implementation of the Convention. In the same sense, the NGOs wish to express their appreciation to the IOS for its inclusive consultation which allowed them to convey their visions of the implementation of the 2003 Convention.

4. This year the progress of the NGO Forum is reflected through several significant activities - 105 NGO representatives attended the IGC meeting and 65 took part in the NGO Symposium on December 1st. Moreover, 15 of the NGOs were able to attend thanks to the support of the Fund for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

5. Concrete results :

- The new operational website of the NGO Forum allows for a better sharing of experience between its members and provides NGOs with a platform for greater visibility (www.ichngoforum.org).
- Upon the request of the Secretariat, the Forum is also in charge of the Facebook page "Intangible cultural heritage and civil society".
- The Baku symposium explored the role of NGOs within the framework of the 2003 Convention.
- Two thematic working groups have been established, in line with the recommendations #12, 16 and 19 of the IOS in its evaluation report.
 - The first one, dedicated to methodologies in the field, allows accredited NGO representatives and experts to exchange their methods and their experiences of good practices as well as failures, so as to broaden their views and strengthen their competences. In 2014, this working group will undertake the regular publishing of articles on the Forum's website.
 - The second working group is devoted to two themes, gender issues and the issues of intellectual property in ICH. The group will consider both themes from the perspective of equity and sustainability.

By these actions, the NGO Forum supports and delivers on the goals and objectives of the Convention. These actions provide tools that are relevant to all stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention.

In relation with the decisions of the Committee:

6. The NGO Forum welcomes the inscriptions on the Urgent Safeguarding list, on the Representative list as well as on the Best Practices Register, regretting however the underutilization of certain mechanisms, particularly the International Assistance. The Forum notes the important role that NGOs can play in the promotion and use of these mechanisms.

7. The NGO Forum takes note with interest of the decision 8.COM 13.d regarding the status of the evaluating bodies and expresses its expectation for the balance of the standards of evaluation of the nominations.

8. The NGO Forum welcome the recommendation for the accreditation of new NGOs, and take this opportunity to recall some actions by which the NGOs are contributing to the implementation of the Convention:

- capacity building, education and training
- Informing on the Convention
- enriching documentation on ICH
- mediating between the States and the communities
- developing networks to foster exchange of safeguarding experiences

9. Therefore:

- NGOs may help develop alternate, more 'light touch' ways of sharing safeguarding experiences to complement the register of best safeguarding practices.
- NGOs may contribute to the definition of policies, legislation, and to the elaboration of safeguarding plans that contribute to sustainable development.
- NGOs may complement the data gathered by State parties on the implementation of the Convention through the periodic reports to the Secretariat.

10. The NGO Forum welcomes Committee decision 8.COM 5.c particularly concerning the participation of NGOs at the Committee debates and the inclusion of the Forum outcomes in the Committee agenda.

11. Taking into consideration that a recognition of the commitment of the NGOs in the implementation of the Convention would reinforce their activities both with the holders of ICH and with the State parties, the NGO Forum suggests that a certain form of recognition of the activities of the NGOs is to be developed while revising the accreditation procedure, in the spirit of the decision 7.COM 16b.

12. Finally, the NGO Forum wishes to draw the attention of the Committee and the States Parties on the following points:

- the need for the broadest information to be made available on the inscriptions and their related safeguarding plans, and the potential contribution NGOs can have in this.
- There would be value for the State parties who are evaluating future nominations in establishing a committee, which brings together the wider skills, competences and associations of the private and public sectors, and NGO's.
- the importance of exchange of views between the Committee, the evaluating Bodies and the NGO Forum. Therefore, the NGO Forum looks forward to invite the presidents of the evaluating Bodies and the members of the Committee to its annual Symposium.
- the opportunity for NGOs to access the Fund for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage so as to be able to contribute to the implementation of the 2003 Convention, as is the case in the 2005 Convention.
- the NGO Forum requests the support of the Fund or of a donor State party for the provision of interpreters in the two languages of the Convention during its working sessions on the occasion of the IGC meetings and of the General Assembly.