



Tasks for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region and the Vision of Activities of the UNESCO Category 2 Centre

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Introduction

With the 2003 adoption of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, aimed at safeguarding intangible cultural heritage at risk of deterioration, disappearance, and destruction in the course of industrialisation, urbanisation, and globalisation, international society began to acknowledge ICH as the mainspring of the creativity of humanity and cultural diversity.¹ The implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is expected to contribute to the protection of the traditional cultural heritage of mankind, and its revitalisation and sustainability for future generations as well.

The Asia-Pacific region can be called a treasure house of ICH because of its diverse heritage and rich cultural environment. However, much ICH in the region is facing the possibility of disappearance because of a lack of understanding of the value of ICH and a shortage of institutional and administrative support. In particular, developing or underdeveloped

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1_ UNESCO, 2003, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*

countries in the Asia-Pacific region are experiencing difficulties in effectively safeguarding their ICH in the context of maintaining traditions and promoting sustainable development within each society because globalisation, urbanisation, and modernisation stand as obstacles to this end.

Having established and implemented systems and policies for the safeguarding of ICH over the past half-century, the Republic of Korea is recognised as a leader in the field of ICH safeguarding. Through the establishment of a regional UNESCO category II intangible cultural heritage centre, the intention is that Korea would contribute to the safeguarding of ICH for the sustainable development of countries in the region. The proposal for the centre was approved during the 35th session of the UNESCO General Conference last month.²

As we move ahead, I would like to analyse the cultural environment in the Asia-Pacific region and then explain the safeguarding activities of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre of Asia and the Pacific (ICHCAP). In addition to reviewing the operational plans, strategies and the future vision of the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific under the auspices of UNESCO to be established in Korea, I would like to discuss strategic tasks regarding information and networking which will be the main functions of the Centre.

I. Understanding of the Cultural Environment in the Asia-Pacific Region

1. Richness of ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region

Culture has developed throughout global society in unique ways. The myriad forms of ICH that can be found are precious illustrations of the creativity of humanity, manifestations of individual cultural identity and representations of the cultural diversity of the world. Within the countries of the Asia-Pacific

2. *Proposal for the Establishment in the Republic of Korea of an International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO* was discussed as item 5.6 of the provisional agenda in the 35th session of the UNESCO General Conference and was approved on 23 October 2009.

region, each of the numerous distinct ethnic groups here has handed down their own unique cultural heritage from generation to generation. Over time, the unlimited forms of religious, geographical, cultural and social influences in the region have resulted in an abundance of ICH.

In the Asia-Pacific region many religions coexist. Although multi-religious cultures may not be common among every country in the region, in many, there is a coexistence of different religions and, ICH based on this coexistence can be found.

Also, geographically, the region has diverse natural environments. The Asia-Pacific region occupies a wide area that stretches from the Siberian tundras to the balmy Polynesian Islands. This region consists of different ecosystems such as highlands, farmlands, grasslands, islands and deserts. The people of this region have adapted to these different environments while developing unique and diverse cultures.

The development of various customs and traditional knowledge has also played an active part in ICH in the region. There are stages that humans go through from birth to death. Customs and traditional knowledge, as a fount of intangible and material richness³ related to different stages in the course of human life from birth to death vary widely due to the fact that each country practices different ceremonies and traditions according to their region, ethnicity, and social structure. Due to the diversity of these influences, multifarious customs and traditions have been developed in the region.

The rise and fall of dynasties and their cultural legacies on the region are another important distinction in this regard. In the Asia-Pacific region, many remarkable cultural traditions of royal empires long past can still be found today. Although most royal leaders have been rendered obsolete in this modern age, the outstanding cultural heritage of royal families is still being handed down. These traditions seem to stand in marked contrast to the heritage being handed down among common people in terms of size and form.

Lastly, most countries in the Asia-Pacific region are home to multiple ethnic groups and these groups have maintained unique cultures based on their specific traditions and lifestyles. The region represents this co-existence

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3_ UNESCO, 2005, *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression*
Recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge as a source of intangible and material wealth, and in particular the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples, and its positive contribution to sustainable development, as well as the need for its adequate protection and promotion.

of various cultures and groups that have evolved throughout the long history of the region.

Thus, these distinct features of the co-existence of plural religions, a vast region with diverse natural environments, the development of various customs and traditional knowledge, the rise and fall of dynasties, and the co-existence of multiple ethnic groups have contributed to establishing a foundation of abundant ICH in the region.

2. Threats to the transmission of ICH

Despite these many factors that enrich the ICH of the Asia-Pacific region, there are also those threaten this rich heritage. Adversely affecting transmission, these factors stand as a direct threat to the existence of ICH: globalisation, modernisation, the precedence of economic development, social and political unrest, discontinuation of traditional forms of transmission, and the lack of public awareness of ICH.

The ICH in the Asia-Pacific region has already undergone a process of deterioration and destruction.⁴ However, these changes are harder to perceive due to social change such as globalisation-influenced shifts in social structures, and environmental changes on a global scale. In addition, most of the countries in the region have either already experienced or are currently undergoing rapid industrialisation and modernisation, and those put ICH into more critical condition.

Today, few countries are free from the influence of globalisation. The reality is that most countries in the Asia-Pacific region are not yet equipped with the ability to transmit their traditional cultures against the inflow of Western culture. Moreover, the perception that westernisation is equated with modernisation is because of the overriding influence of Western-oriented culture, whose emphasis on development, has contributed to significant attenuation in the transmission of traditional cultures in many countries throughout the region.

The logic of economic development also threatens the transmission of

4. Korean National Commission for UNESCO, Office of the Cultural Properties of the Republic of Korea, 1996, Recommendation on the Policy Meeting on the Development of Methodology for the Preservation of Intangible Heritage, *Methodologies for the Preservation of Intangible Heritage: Final Report of the Policy Meeting on the Development of Methodology for the Preservation of Intangible Heritage*, pp. I-II.

ICH. While economic development is an important issue for all countries and all societies are concerned with escaping poverty and promoting the welfare of their people, for many countries in the Asia-Pacific region in particular, economic development is given first priority in national policies. Therefore, whenever the issues of safeguarding traditional culture and economy are placed in opposition, the logic of economic development, which is considered to be in the interest of the majority, always prevails; hence the uncertain future of ICH.

In addition, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have experienced social and political instability due to wars and changes in government regimes. This turbulence has contributed to a negative impact on the safeguarding of ICH. Fortunately, efforts are currently being made to restore ICH at risk of vanishing due to social and political unrest. Nonetheless, continued interest and efforts are required since these attempts are in their early stages.

Another significant risk factor is the issue of maintaining successors. Of course, there is some ICH that attracts considerable attention across generations; in most cases however, the number of successors is showing a decreasing trend. Besides dwindling numbers, the gradual aging of major successors who can transmit intangible heritage traditions is also a factor. In which case, the life of certain traditions could be terminated with the current generation.

The last issue we should address is the lack of public awareness of ICH. In the Asia-Pacific region, awareness of the importance of safeguarding ICH is largely lacking. This is evidenced by the fact that only a few countries in the Asia-Pacific region currently have relevant legislation in place ensuring cultural heritage protection including safeguarding measures for ICH. This absence of awareness is the fundamental problem obstructing the establishment of effective strategies to protect ICH from the detrimental effects of social change.

The focus of safeguarding strategies should thus be to examine the root causes and develop solutions to these various factors threatening ICH.

II. Cooperative Activities of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific (ICHCAP)

In an endeavour to embody the spirit of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and to actively support safeguarding activities for ICH in the Asia-Pacific region, the Republic of Korea began working toward the establishment of a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre for the Asia Pacific region. Toward this end, the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea formed the Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific (ICHCAP) in September 2006 and has been promoting cooperative projects to protect ICH within the region ever since. The following is an overview of the activities that ICHCAP has been involved in.

1. Establishing an information framework for ICH in the region

ICHCAP is establishing the foundation for an information hub through a field survey⁵ project whose aim is to grasp the present state of ICH in the Asia-Pacific region as well as ICH safeguarding efforts being undertaken. Through this project, information on the current status of ICH is collected from designated countries including national representative lists of ICH, safeguarding systems and policies, activities of holders and relevant organisations. This project was implemented beginning in 2009 with field surveys being carried out in Uzbekistan, Cambodia, Fiji, Mongolia and Thailand.

The establishment of an information framework has also taken the form of providing assistance with inventory-making efforts in the region. Since 2007, ICHCAP has been working in cooperation with the Indian government and the UNESCO New Delhi office supporting the development of the Cultural Atlas of India⁶, an inventory of the ICH of India which will serve as the

5_ This project, the *Field Survey of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Efforts in the Asia-Pacific Region (2009-2013)* will conduct surveys of five to ten countries each year. ICHCAP selects countries among the States Parties to the UNESCO ICH Convention to establish key bases for safeguarding ICH in the region and encourage developing countries to implement and become State Parties to the Convention.

6_ *Joint Cooperation Project for the Safeguarding and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in India (2007-2008)* and *Joint Cooperation Project for Cultural Atlas of India (2008)* of ICHCAP.

foundation for the future national list of ICH. The Cultural Atlas is designed to be a comprehensive database cataloguing the ICH of India by region, thereby establishing a highly accessible web archive to develop information system models for the safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific region.

2 . Building cooperative networks in the ICH field

ICHCAP is working to create ICH expert networks together with the University of Queensland in Australia. The project aims to reinforce the safeguarding capability of the Asia-Pacific region through the development of professional programmes used to foster experts in the safeguarding and transmission of ICH.

In order to apply this programme within the context of networking, ICHCAP is holding a capacity building workshop for experts representing countries throughout the region. The three-week workshop is currently being held in Buyeo at the Korean National University of Cultural Heritage Training Center for Traditional Culture and will last until mid-November.⁷

ICHCAP has also cultivated cooperative networks with the purpose of promoting mutual exchange with relevant domestic and international organisations and experts, establishing expert pools, and securing support bases for the Centre. ICHCAP has also produced various print and internet promotional materials for the Centre, including the *ICH Courier* newsletter.

In addition, a photo exhibition of the ICH elements inscribed on the Representative List, including the former Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity as proclaimed by UNESCO is being held here as a means of promoting awareness and visibility of ICH as well as the diversity of heritage within the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Already a travelling exhibition of UNESCO, the photo exhibition will be shown in additional locations around the country.

7_ This programme, co-organised by ICHCAP and the Training Center for Traditional Culture at the Korean National University of Cultural Heritage, consisted of expert lectures on the safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific region, study tours to cultural heritage safeguarding relevant organisations and World Heritage sites in Korea. The workshop served to establish a cooperative network with the participants.

3. Disseminating institutional safeguarding systems for ICH

ICHCAP has been working closely with the governments of Vietnam and Mongolia since 2007 to assist in the introduction of the Living Human Treasures System in each country. ICHCAP serves to strengthen the national capacity of UNESCO by providing resources and expertise based on existing safeguarding protection systems such as co-organising training workshops in order to guide administrators and concerned stakeholders through the process of establishing their own system. It is through this process that these countries have been able to achieve rapid progress in developing legislation for the safeguarding of ICH.

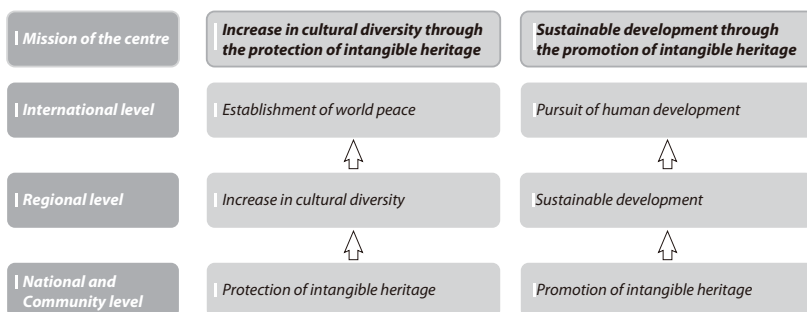
III. Major Objectives and Functions of the Category 2 Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Korea

Based on the spirit of the UNESCO Constitution⁸, in terms of the pursuit of world peace and human development through international cooperation for mutual understanding between countries and the promotion of culture, the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region will contribute to activities seeking to protect and promote ICH in the Asia-Pacific region; thus contributing to the implementation of UNESCO ideals.

The Centre will promote intercultural dialogue through intangible heritage safeguarding efforts in the Asia-Pacific region while raising awareness of the importance of safeguarding ICH, and pursuing sustainable development by creatively utilising ICH for community development.

In other words, the Centre will focus on enhancing cultural diversity through the safeguarding of ICH, and expanding sustainable development through the promotion of ICH as the two primary missions of the Centre.

8_ UNESCO Constitution, 1945



[Table 1] Mission of the Centre

Guided by its mission of enhancing cultural diversity and expanding sustainable development through ICH, the Centre’s aim is to reinforce the capacity of the Asia-Pacific region. Toward this end, the Centre’s objectives⁹ are to:

1) safeguard ICH in relation to the implementation of the 2003 ICH Convention; 2) actively encourage the participation of relevant communities, organisations, and individuals; 3) enhance the awareness of the general public, especially youth, regarding the importance of ICH safeguarding; 4) reinforce regional and international cooperation through ICH safeguarding activities and; 5) building future-oriented environments for the safeguarding of ICH by effectively utilising information and communication technology.

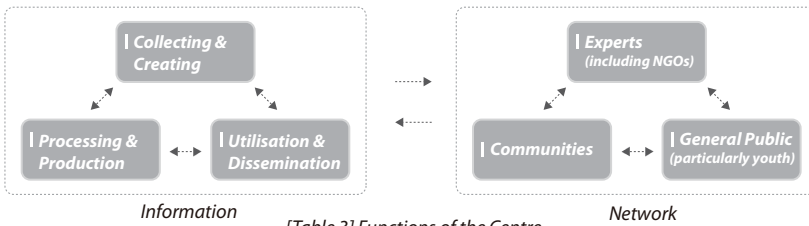


[Table 2] Objectives of the Centre

9_ UNESCO, Republic of Korea, 2009, Agreement between the government of the Republic of Korea and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regarding the Establishment in the Republic of Korea of an International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the Auspices of UNESCO (Category 2), Article 7 – Objectives and functions.

As a framework to carry out its objectives, the Centre will focus on the primary functions¹⁰ of information and networking. Information specifically refers to the entire information distribution system of collecting and producing information related to ICH using digital technology and global online systems, for both production and distribution.

Networks include online and offline networks in relation to the Centre. These also imply relations with communities, transmitters, experts, specialised centres and institutes, as well as the general public who may take part in ICH safeguarding activities of the Centre.



[Table 3] Functions of the Centre

IV. Mid to Long Term Operational Strategies for the Category 2 Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Korea

The Centre would implement activities and projects designed to effectively protect and promote ICH through the following operational strategies:

First, cooperative activities designed to protect ICH in the Asia-Pacific region would be promoted through close cooperation with Member States in the Asia-Pacific region. Through the Centre's governing bodies (Governing Board, Executive Committee), which will include representatives from the region, the Centre will coordinate and strengthen regional cooperation by discussing and identifying the current needs of the region to generate the most effective way of implementing safeguarding measures within the region.

Moreover, in planning and implementing cooperative projects, the Centre will cooperate with the governments of regional Member States, headquarters

10_ ICHCAP, 2009, *Reference Book for the Feasibility Study on the Establishment of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific as a Category 2 Centre under the Auspices of UNESCO*, pp. 9-11.

of UNESCO, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while ensuring that intangible heritage-related communities, organisations, individuals, experts, research institutes, and specialised centres can appropriately participate in cooperative projects of the Centre to uphold the 2003 Convention as outlined in Article 15¹¹ of the Convention. In promoting various cooperative projects, the Centre will expand its roles as adjuster and catalyst.

ICH is a vivid illustration of the diversity and range of cultural influences. Therefore, the planning, execution, and evaluation stages of cooperative projects will involve the participation of experts and institutions with various academic backgrounds and specialties. The Centre will seek to maximise project impact and effectiveness through trans-disciplinary approaches.

Meanwhile, project priorities will be determined based on the degree of importance, urgency, and potential range of impact. In addition, strategies of selection and concentration will be applied taking into account the expected limited resources and project effectiveness. In particular, projects with the potential for overlap will be integrated to generate a synergy effect.

While promoting regional cooperative projects, Korean know-how will be utilised in the dissemination of safeguarding systems and development of ICH-related contents. In particular, regional- and international-level cooperative networks will be reinforced to ensure the effective collection and distribution of information.

V. Strategic Tasks of the Category 2 Centre in Korea

Based on the Centre's main functions of information and networking, the Centre will implement tasks related to the safeguarding of ICH based on the five categories of 1) identification and documentation, 2) promotion and distribution, 3) policies and systems, 4) transmission and enhancement, and 5)

11_ UNESCO, 2003, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Article 15

Article 15 – Participation of communities, groups and individuals

Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management.

exchange and cooperation. The Centre will develop effective methodologies so that the measures and tasks within these categories can be utilised in the establishment of information and networks while taking into consideration the needs of the Member States of the region.

1. Identification and Documentation

The Centre will assist in conducting field surveys to identify the current situation of ICH in the region and document and understand the transition of ICH. In the process of making national inventories and documentation, the relevant information and data will be digitised and archived for the dissemination in the region. In particular, the Centre will develop guidelines and manuals with organisations from the region and provide specialised institutes with technical assistance in establishing their own archives.

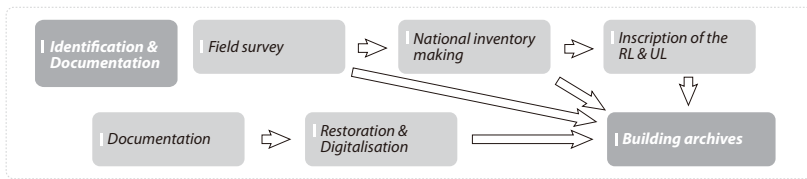
The identification work of the Centre will include conducting field surveys, making national inventories of ICH and supporting nominations to the Representative List and the Urgent Safeguarding List of UNESCO ICH Convention. In this regard, as a basis for establishing safeguarding systems, ICHCAP will select and invite researchers in each country to conduct a field survey of the ICH in that country and answer a comprehensive questionnaire that will provide relevant information about the status of domestic safeguarding activities. The Centre will also publish and disseminate the guidelines of the survey. In addition, assistance will be provided to State Parties in the creation of national lists and urgent safeguarding lists in an effort to identify the current status of ICH in each country and provide support at the national level. The Centre will also assist State Parties in preparing nominations of elements for inscription to the Urgent Safeguarding List and the Representative List.¹² The Centre will also collaborate with State Parties in identifying ICH elements in danger which require urgent safeguarding as well as promote activities to enhance the implementation of the convention.

In the documentation work of the Centre, the focus will be placed on the development of a documentation manual, data restoration and digitalisation as well as archive establishment. In this effort, the Centre plans to develop

12_ UNESCO, 2003, *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Article 16 – Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Article 17 – List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

manuals for documentation, support other State Parties in documentation efforts especially in recording elements at risk of extinction, and support archive efforts of relevant organisations. In order to secure the stability and utility of data preservation, the Centre plans to assist State Parties in restoring or digitalising aged or damaged ICH-related data of relevant organisations.

The Centre will also develop classification systems and metadata for the systematic storage and management of data, produce and supply guidelines for the establishment of archives, support related institutes in archive building, and organise networks to link archives through a central portal website.



2. Promotion and Dissemination

The Centre will utilise accumulated ICH data to increase visibility. The Centre will also enhance the debate concerning intellectual property rights of ICH and take a leading role in preventing issues of intellectual property rights infringements which could be raised in the process of collecting and utilising ICH information. In addition, the Centre will publish ICH promotional materials and contents for distribution to promote the social and cultural value of ICH.

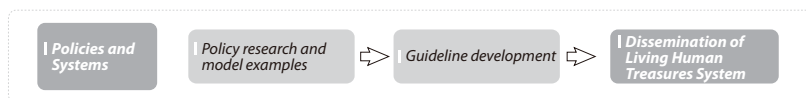
In this regard, the Centre will conduct surveys of intellectual property rights, which is a central issue in terms of the implementation of the Convention, and discuss the issue of the application of related laws, and the issue of rights and obligations as related to bearers. At the same time, in order to enable greater accessibility of ICH in daily life, the Centre will publish ICH magazines for the general public, publish online and offline newsletters of the Centre, and produce and distribute ICH-related promotional materials. Additionally, to create added value utilising ICH, the Centre will support the development of digital contents, hold related contests, and create avenues for the contents to be utilised through the internet and media.



3. Policies and Institutions

The Centre will promote cultural policies to safeguard ICH and encourage Member States to adopt appropriate legal and administrative safeguarding systems. It will collect ICH information on policies and exemplary cases of safeguarding as well as produce guidelines related to ICH safeguarding. It will also promote dissemination projects related to the UNESCO Living Human Treasures System.

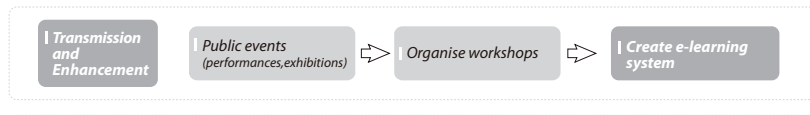
In this context, the Centre will research and explore exemplary cases of intangible heritage safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region and utilise these cases to establish support for safeguarding systems that can be adjusted and applied to other countries in the region taking into account specific social and cultural characteristics. The Centre will also develop practical guidelines for ICH measures. These guidelines relate to ICH safeguarding measures including identification, documentation, research, preservation, systems, promotion, transmission, revitalisation, formal and informal education. The Centre will also provide technical and administrative support for the dissemination of the Living Human Treasures System to support Member States in establishing ICH safeguarding activities. The Living Human Treasures System was adopted in 1993 by UNESCO and focuses on institutional safeguarding to retain essential knowledge and skills to transmit ICH.



4. Transmission and Enhancement

The Centre will organise public events to raise visibility of ICH. These events will include creating and operating a transmission programme targeting the general public, particularly youth, to encourage the sustainability of transmission. In addition, by utilising information technology, the Centre will develop intangible heritage-related digital contents to be available online via an e-learning system. In relation to these efforts, the Centre will hold open events for the general public such as exhibits, performances, and international festivals to foster increased contact and interaction with ICH, as well as camps that offer the chance to experience and learn different forms of ICH.

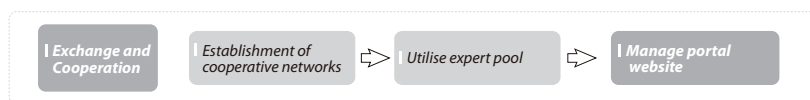
The Centre will also develop and operate various workshop programs for the purpose of building cooperative networks and capacity building for ICH relevant specialists, practitioners, and government officers. The Centre will also move toward the creation of an online e-learning system which will allow for better accessibility to ICH-related knowledge and information for experts, transmitters, as well as the general public while strengthening the capacity of those involved in the field of ICH.



5. Exchange and Cooperation

The Centre will promote the reinforcement of international and regional cooperation among ICH relevant institutes for the exchange of information and knowledge related to ICH. The Centre will establish cooperative networks for the safeguarding of ICH and pools of related experts. There are also plans to operate an ICH-related portal site.

In this regard, the Centre will utilise these networks in programs, projects, activities, and collaborative studies for safeguarding activities by establishing international cooperation networks among various parties including ICH-relevant organisations, experts, and transmitters. In addition, the Centre plans to establish pools of experts in ICH for use in collecting information on safeguarding activities by area to select and implement safeguarding projects suitable to the social, cultural, and regional characteristics and needs of each country in the region. The Centre also plans to develop integrated information systems for ICH through a portal website. This web portal will function as an integrated information centre to collect archival data related to ICH in the Asia-Pacific region and integrate and connect various related websites so that related organisations and individuals can exchange data and information online quickly and conveniently.



VI. Anticipated Contribution of the Category 2 Centre in Korea to the Asia-Pacific Region

As a UNESCO regional category 2 centre, the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region will implement the various tasks described above. Now, I would like to discuss the Centre's expected contribution through its future activities.

The Centre will strive to contribute, through its activities, to the promotion of the culture of peace at both regional and international levels. The Charter of UNESCO states that "*Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed*".¹³ Through the projects of the Centre together with activities for the safeguarding and transmission of ICH created by human mind and spirit, the Centre will contribute to the peace of the region and international society, advancement of human rights, and promotion of each country's culture.

The Centre will work toward generating potential methods contributing to sustainable development through ICH safeguarding activities in the region. Based on the idea of sustainable development going beyond basic economic and quantitative growth, it is understood that the idea of sustainable development should be compatible with the fundamental freedom of humankind and the enhancement of the quality of our lives.¹⁴ Within this context, the safeguarding and utilisation of ICH has become a key issue in terms of ensuring sustainable development from a long-term perspective. The activities of the Centre will enhance the role of communities and practitioners through the dissemination of safeguarding practices as a factor in social development to preserve traditional culture values and the ICH of individual societies. Meanwhile, the Centre will contribute to the sustainable development of society and cultural economic development through the utilisation of ICH and by continuously seeking methods to link ICH resources to various sectors of the cultural industry such as cultural tourism and cultural contents.

13_ UNESCO Constitution, 1945

14_ The Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, *Our Creative Diversity* has recommended the formulation of human development strategies that preserve and enrich cultural values and ethnic heritage according to item 2.5 of the International Agenda.

It is my expectation that the Centre's activities will also play a role in enhancing cultural diversity and sustaining cultural identity. Since ICH is a precious resource in terms of the future development of mankind, the dissemination of cultural diversity as well as the enhancement of creativity within each society,¹⁵ the Centre will focus on the systematic preservation and management of ICH resources as well as reinforcing their accessibility.

Moreover, the Centre will make a contribution to promoting intercultural dialogue. In regional and international societies where differences between ethnic groups, races, religions, and cultural backgrounds are often the cause of conflict and tension, dialogue is an indispensable tool. Through its activities, the Centre will work to encourage individual countries in the Asia-Pacific region to acknowledge and mutually respect the value of traditional culture and ICH of each country, and promote intercultural dialogue through ICH activities and cooperative efforts. In this way, the Centre will act as a mediator to resolve potential conflicts and revitalise cooperative activities for safeguarding ICH by supporting joint inscriptions of ICH among countries with interlinked cultures.

In addition, the Centre's activities are expected to facilitate cultural development through ICH safeguarding in our societies. Intangible cultural heritage is a reflection of the evolution of culture over the course of history, such as the transformation of traditional values and life patterns of individual societies. In order to promote regional cooperation in the field of ICH, it is important to study the development of ICH in individual countries, as well as the relationship between neighbouring states and their mutual influences in the context of ICH. The future activities of the Centre are expected to play an important role in establishing and utilising the necessary cooperative networks in the Asia-Pacific region, and actively contributing to the development of the region's cultural history by promoting comparative study and exchange.

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15_ UNESCO, 2001, *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, Article 7

Conclusion

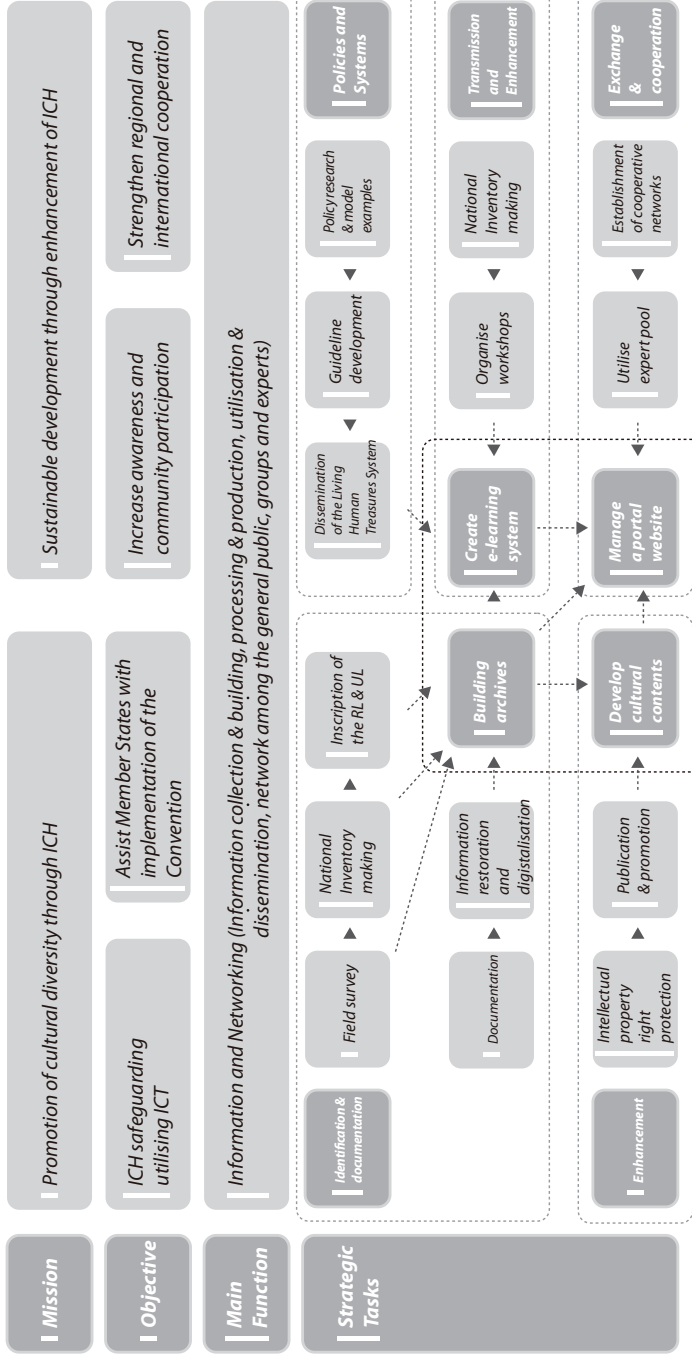
This has been an introduction to the establishment of the UNESCO category 2 centre for ICH and its objectives and functions. In particular, as the Executive Director responsible for the establishment and administration of the Centre, I presented the strategic tasks that have been developed, for the Centre with a focus on the functions of 'information and networking.'

Taking this chance, I would like to deliver several additional points to finalise this keynote presentation. The activities of the Centre will start with various efforts to strengthen the international cooperation and solidarity for the ICH field in line with realising the spirit of the 2003 UNESCO Convention which is to fundamentally ensure the viability of the intangible cultural heritage of the world. The activities of the Centre will prioritise the provision of safeguarding measures for intangible cultural heritage at risk of extinction as well as in developing countries that require capacity-building support for the safeguarding of their intangible cultural heritage.

Under the 2003 UNESCO Convention, we have observed that the General Assembly of the States Parties and the Intergovernmental Committee to the Convention have engaged in in-depth discussions on the tasks for the safeguarding of ICH on an international level. In this regard, we anticipate a greater possibility for future cooperation and development in this field. A new category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO in Korea would play an important role as a catalyst in developing and implementing effective strategies for the tasks of the ICH policy field in the region.

In this regard, the Centre as a specialised category 2 institute of UNESCO will be required to develop and implement cooperative projects utilising related information and networking in a timely manner. This will be another mandate to expand the scope of the Centre's activities and promote the visibility of the field.

This International Conference on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage: How to Apply Information and Networking held with the participation of experts from the Asia-Pacific region and international organisations including UNESCO and WIPO, will serve as an important stepping stone for the future activities of the UNESCO category 2 centre for ICH to be established in the Republic of Korea. I commit that the contents discussed in this meeting will be reflected upon in the activities and operations of the Centre, and I hope that all the participants will actively contribute to the candid discussions.



ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR THE CENTRE