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## Discussion

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The Central Asian region is a unique area where centuries-old civilisations, religions, and cultures have intersected. The region's ICH provides the basis for historical self-identification of the people that inhabit the region, and this ICH has influence on their future spiritual development.

The ancestral heritage is intertwined in a vast cultural material, which reveals itself in folklore, legends, festivals, and games; in the rules and norms of social behaviour; in music, songs, and dances; and in national costumes as well as in decorative and applied arts and crafts.

This year, Central Asian countries are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of their independence. Along with developing statehood, there has been an increasing need to revive the nations' cultural identity by preserving and protecting objects of rich spiritual heritage.

Central Asian countries have been increasingly involved in the processes of global cultural development, mainly via cooperation with UNESCO and its institutes as well as other international organisations such as ISESCO and TURKSOY.

The spiritual development of every nation is unthinkable without mutual learning and enrichment with other cultures, particularly given the affinity of their ICH. Despite the measures and mechanisms countries implement to safeguard ICH, the joint cooperation of Central Asian countries in this field is the primary condition for preserving and promoting the region's ICH at the international level.

Unfortunately, despite the fact of having huge potential in this area, Kazakhstan is still at the stage of ratifying the 2003 Convention. The main omission in this regard relates to Kazakhstan's non-inclusion in multinational nominations, such as Nowruz and the Art of Akyns, on the UNESCO ICH lists, as these traditions are widespread in the country.

Over the next year, this gap is expected to be filled. A large amount of ICH-related materials has accumulated during years of research in relevant institutions in the field of historical and cultural heritage of Kazakhstan. Our primary objective is systematising, making inventories, and developing Kazakhstan's national ICH lists, which will be the basis for preparing the first national nominations for the UNESCO lists.

Strengthening and expanding regional cooperation at the expert level by establishing stable links to share best practices and to ensure quality preparation for national and multinational nominations to the ICH lists should be seen as priorities in the context of ICH safeguarding in Central Asia.

The problem with ICH safeguarding in the region is complex, and it could be characterised by the region's magnitude, in as much as it requires implementing measures on such a large geographical scale. Safeguarding measures require additional state support as well as assistance from the international community.

Starting from 2004, Kazakhstan has been successfully implementing an important initiative—a national strategic programme called Madeni Mura (Cultural Heritage)—which is aimed at creating an integrated system of studying the historical and cultural heritage, including the intangible components, of Kazakhstan. A tremendous amount of work towards restoring the cultural identity of Kazakhstan has been accomplished by scientists in the framework of this programme.

Another step in which Kazakhstan can study and promote regional cultural heritage will be when the nation organises the Third Meeting of the National Commissions for UNESCO of TURKSOY Members (including fourteen Turkic-

speaking countries and regions) that will be held in September 2012 with the participation of observers and representatives from UNESCO Centres.

Kazakhstan welcomes UNESCO's important and timely initiatives planned for 2012 and 2013 with the assistance of the government of Norway, as these plans will strengthen the national potential of Central Asian countries in the ICH safeguarding field.

Such national and international projects aimed at fostering compliance with commitment under the 2003 Convention and expanding the regional partnership are key factors in preserving the identity of every nation and, consequently, the cultural diversity of the world.

Cultural values are an essential element of communication, mutual understanding, and rapprochement of nations. They act as the main criteria for supporting spirituality and an unbreakable bond between generations, integrating them into a chain of historical development.

The thirty-sixth session of the UNESCO General Conference adopted a resolution submitted by Kazakhstan on proclaiming the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures from 2013 to 2022. Numerous events aimed at promoting diversity of the world and cultural richness are expected to be held in the framework of the Decade under the auspices of UNESCO.

Each object of historical and cultural value and each work of art and monument of culture—they are all integral parts of an entire history, and in terms of their historical and cultural significance, they are solid and unique.

The task of each state is not only to preserve the core foundation of its being and ancestral traditions for future generations but also to make them a common patrimony of all humankind.

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# Discussion

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Since ancient times, Central Asia has been a crossroads of different cultures and religions. The major routes of the Silk Road crossed the territory, helped shape tolerance, and provided the intercultural dialogue.

Therefore, along with world-renowned historical and architectural monuments, Central Asia has a rich intangible cultural heritage. The people of the region have a rich tradition of music, folklore, customs, ceremonies, festivities, and applied arts and crafts, which have been passed down from generation to generation for centuries and thereby create an unforgettable and unique spiritual environment and cultural identity of the region.

In Central Asia, as in many other parts of the world, the expansion of globalisation and profound social and economic changes pose serious challenges to the existence of ICH. There is a risk that certain ICH elements could die out or disappear without help.

Adopting the 2003 Convention has provided States Parties with opportunities for international cooperation and assistance in protecting and keeping alive various forms of ICH.

So far, three countries in the region have ratified the 2003 Convention—Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are still considering the possibility of joining to the Convention.

Several cultural practices and expressions of Central Asian ICH have already been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

- **Art of Akyns, Kyrgyz Epic Tellers (Kyrgyzstan, 2008).** The predominant form of cultural expression among the Kyrgyz nomads is the narration of epics. The art of the Akyns, the Kyrgyz epic tellers, combines singing, improvisation, and musical composition.
- **Shashmaqom Music (Uzbekistan-Tajikistan, 2008).** For over ten centuries, the classical music tradition of Shashmaqom has evolved in the urban centres of Central Asia formerly known as Mâwarâ-al-nahr, an area that now encompasses present-day Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Shashmaqom, meaning “six maqoms”, constitutes a fusion of vocal and instrumental music, melodic and rhythmic idioms, and poetry.
- **Cultural Space of Boysun District (Uzbekistan, 2008).** The Boysun District, located in south-eastern Uzbekistan on the route from Asia Minor to India, is one of the oldest inhabited areas of Central Asia. With the diminishing importance of the Silk Road and the political changes in Central Asia, the region became quite isolated, which favoured the preservation of ancient traditions that show traces of several religions, including shamanistic beliefs, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Islam.
- **Navruz (Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, 2009).** Novruz marks the New Year and the beginning of spring across a vast geographical area. It is celebrated on 21 March every year, a date originally determined by astronomical calculations. Novruz is associated with various local traditions. The rites that accompany the festivity vary from place to place, ranging from leaping over fires and streams in Iran to tightrope walking, leaving lit candles at house doors, and playing traditional games in Kyrgyzstan.

- **Katta Ashula (Uzbekistan, 2009).** Katta Ashula (literally ‘big song’) is a type of traditional song that forms part of the identity of various peoples of the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan, which is also home to Tajiks, Uyghurs, and Turks, and some regions of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. An original genre, Katta Ashula combines performing arts, singing, instrumental music, Eastern poetry, and sacred rites.

### **Challenges Associated with Making Inventories**

- Not all countries joined the Convention
- Insufficient potential on an expert level
- Lack of technical and communication tools
- Lack of an institutional basis
- Insufficient involvement of local communities
- Shortage of financial means

### **Needs of International Assistance**

- Capacity building
- Technical and communication systems for ICH safeguarding
- Research expeditions to areas of living forms of ICH
- Publications of ICH inventories

### **ICHCAP Activities on Safeguarding ICH in Central Asia**

- First Sub-regional Network Meeting (Tashkent, Uzbekistan, March, 2010). Adoption of Action Plan
- Expert Meeting on ICH Inventory Making for the Central Asian Region (October-November, Seoul, Republic of Korea). Adoption of Call for Action
- Second Central Asia Sub-regional Network Meeting on the Safeguarding of ICH (Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 28-29 June). Adoption of Work Plan for 2011-2013

### **IICAS’s Activities on ICH Study and Documentation**

The activities of the International Institute of Central Asian Studies (IICAS) focusing on scientific research and documentation of intangible cultural heritage of Central Asia are as follows.

*Atlas of Applied Arts.* In 1999, IICAS initiated a large regional project on cataloguing applied arts objects of Central Asian people, i.e. main centres and types of handicrafts in the form of Atlas. Four volumes of the *Atlas of Applied Arts* were published as an outcome of the research. Each volume is dedicated to one of the following countries: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Catalogues contain analyses of fine arts and collected materials, and they discover strata of Central Asian folk art that were not studied before. Proceeding from the abovementioned project, it could be asserted that the *Atlas of Applied Arts* is one option of cataloguing (inventory making) ICH elements of the region.

*Suzani.* In 2011 IICAS translated into English and published *Suzani, Central Asian Traditional Embroidery*, a book by O. A. Sukhareva. Suzani is a distinguished branch of embroidery art in several Central Asian areas with Tajik and Uzbek populations.

*Artistic Arts of Central Asia between the Ninth and Fifteenth Centuries.* To continue work in studying, safeguarding, and inventorying artistic crafts of Central Asia, IICAS has decided to study this sphere further on the basis of archaeological and art expeditions being carried out in the region. The General Assembly of IICAS, held in 2009, approved the project *Applied Arts of Central Asia (IX-XV Centuries)*, which will be carried out until 2012. The outcome of this project is expected to be published in five volumes: Volume I: Ceramics, Volume II: Architecture, Volume III: Glass, Volume IV: Toreutics, and Volume V: Textile Fabrics and Bone Carving.

*Bulletin of IICAS.* In addition to initiating large-scale projects, IICAS constantly keeps an eye on the various issues of scientific study for ICH in Central Asia. For instance, the Bulletin of IICAS frequently publishes articles on different aspects of ICH—music, crafts, religious and ceremonial practices, traditional beliefs and knowledge, etc.

## Discussion

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Today's meeting is a continuation of the ICH safeguarding initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region, which is regarded as a distinctive interim outcome in creating the Centre and strengthening its role in ICH safeguarding in the region. It is necessary to note that activities linked with ICH safeguarding in the Central Asian region have intensified during last few years, and the role of ICHCAP has been very essential in that process.

Two important sub-regional meetings on ICH safeguarding took place in our region. The first one took place in March 2010 in Tashkent, and the second took place in July 2011 in Dushanbe. Experts from Central Asian countries, ICHCAP representatives, and UNESCO representatives participated in the work of these meetings. In my view, the fundamental outcome of the work has intensified the process in preparing inventories of ICH elements and improving awareness and has increased the focus of governments and societies on ICH safeguarding matters.

Taking into account preliminary experiences, we can confirm that the issues of safeguarding and transmitting ICH to future generations are more effectively settled with multilateral cooperation and with the participation and support



of authorised organisations, such as UNESCO and ICHCAP. Unfortunately, Central Asian countries began to carry out independent ICH safeguarding activities just recently. As is well known, ICH safeguarding matters were under the centralised authority of the Soviet government until Central Asian nations gained independence. The centralised safeguarding approach was not always effective, and the ICH interests of particular countries were frequently not taken into account or were ignored. It is pleasant to note that since then and with international support, our countries have a clearer and more active approach towards ICH safeguarding activities.

Even now, we witness considerable results from regional cooperation. We continue to present examples of successful regional cooperation with ICH safeguarding. For example, in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the classical music of Shashmaqom was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List and before then was proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003. These designations stimulated our countries to further develop and safeguard Shashmakom. They serve as representative examples of regional cooperation having a positive effect on ICH safeguarding in the region. Another initiative is the current inventory listing process. It will be the starting point in preparing ICH inventories in our countries, making it possible to fix ICH-element lists at legal and official levels.

In accordance with the plan of action adopted during the second sub-regional meeting on safeguarding of ICH, which took place in Tajikistan, the States Parties expressed their readiness to create specialised committees on ICH inventorying at the national level, to compile preliminary ICH lists, and to classify ICH categories. In this connection, I invite our countries to actively revitalise the plan of action.

In particular, I would like to focus your attention to the question of including ICH objects of our countries to the UNESCO ICH lists. Unfortunately, despite the unique nature of cultural and historical heritage of Central Asia, which served as a crossroads for ancient civilisations, the region's ICH is insufficiently represented on the ICH lists. In this regard, I invite active cooperation and support for one another. In regard to the important issues of regional and international cooperation in ICH safeguarding, I would like to remark that the international celebration of Navruz will take place in March next year in Dushanbe. It is expected that the leaders of Central Asian countries, guests from various parts of the world, and representatives

of international organisations will take part in the celebration. In this connection, we propose to consider the possibility of organising the joint event under the auspices of ICHCAP and UNESCO, which are both devoted to safeguarding and developing ICH in the region.

Navruz, a bright holiday with a three-thousand-year-old history, is celebrated by Central Asian countries as well as by Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. Although Tajikistan was one of the initiators on including Navruz to the Representative List, Tajikistan could not join the nomination since it was not a State Party to the 2003 Convention when the nomination was being prepared. However, now that Tajikistan has ratified the 2003 Convention, I would like to kindly request assistance and support to include Tajikistan in the Representative List for Navruz.

My dear colleagues, as mentioned before, the government of Tajikistan will continue to make great efforts to safeguard and develop ICH in the country and region. We are open to any form of cooperation and consider ICH safeguarding transmission a duty and obligation. In this respect, I would like to invite all of us to be more active in safeguarding our ICH and to achieve our goals and purposes. Once again allow me to thank the organisers for their warm reception and the opportunity to work in an atmosphere of beneficial cooperation and understanding. Finally, I'd like to express my hope to see all of you at our celebration of Navruz next year in Tajikistan.