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# Discussion

Thi Minh Ly LE

Director

The Center for Research and Promotion of the Cultural Heritage  
Vietnam Association for Cultural Heritage

Mr Timothy Curtis's presentation provided us with a rich and valuable overview of the strategies and goals of South-East Asian countries with regard to implementing the 2003 Convention in the Asia-Pacific region in general and South-East Asia in particular. I would like to provide some updated information, comments, and concrete ideas with regard to our cooperative networking in ICH safeguarding.

In our thinking and our actions, cooperation among South-East Asian countries has been formulated and has been constantly developing. We have witnessed great changes over the past twenty years of ASEAN development, and we have faced many challenges affecting our communities in the ICH safeguarding field. We fully appreciated the great significance of the Convention, and we ratified it promptly. We became members of the Intergovernmental Committee (Viet Nam's term: 2006 to 2010 and Indonesia's term: 2010 to 2014) to contribute to strengthening the Convention.

ICH vitally embodies today's spiritual and cultural values throughout region. It represents ideas and visions created and transmitted to us by our ancestors,

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and thanks to the care taken to preserve and protect ICH in its many forms and expressions, we now have a diverse picture of ASEAN cultures of the past and present. There have been hundreds of valuable ASEAN projects over the past twenty years dealing with ICH and the spirit of the Convention. When we reflect on these achievements, we can see individual communities and countries united while sharing a single purpose and commitment. Looking into it, we can see various communities in one big community. We can be proud of our heritage and can be deeply aware of our responsibility to carry on this vital work into the future.

We are all now facing many challenges relating to issues of development, modernisation, and globalisation, especially with the rapid growth of tourism. The changing environment and living conditions and the concerns of community development make ICH safeguarding more difficult, as safeguarding occurs in light of our constant struggle to combine and balance the need of preservation with those of development.

We are most appreciative of Mr Curtis's remarks about Viet Nam in his presentation, so we are pleased to share with you some updated information. First, our statute on cultural heritage, which was announced in 2001 and went into effect in 2002, was revised and amended in 2009 to be in line with the circumstances of present-day life as well as the 2003 Convention. UNESCO has determined that the articles of this legislative provision are basically in conformity with the Convention. We have incorporated new concepts in this major legal enactment, mostly in the area of ICH, including structures and measures to safeguard and protect ICH and the appropriate identification of the responsibilities vested in each sector in implementing cultural heritage safeguarding. It is also important to recognise that ICH includes living heritage, which exists in a dynamic and unceasing framework of developing social relations. ICH, which is seen as living, contemporary, and traditional, is crucial not only because it is an essential element of community heritage but also because of its importance to contemporary and future identity. Therefore, ICH safeguarding must entail measures aimed at ensuring and protecting knowledge of that heritage, including identifying, documenting, and researching various aspects of the heritage as well as preserving, promoting, enhancing and disseminating this heritage through formal and informal education.

Bearing in mind that most countries involved in these important efforts are developing nations, and the key challenges for ICH safeguarding are the lack of professional measures, the lack of information, and limitations of financial and human resources. To strengthen the cooperation among South-East Asian countries in the region, we recommend the following measures:

We should identify the ICH safeguarding capacity of institutions and bodies in the region to establish cooperation and share experiences to assist one another in implementing the Convention. To avoid decentralisation, we must ensure that there are specific bodies capable of effectively working to play the key roles. To target urgent activities, there needs to be priority cooperation initiatives.

Sharing information and establishing networks among Asia-Pacific countries is very important in our current situation. We recommend establishing a strong ICH database centre at ICHCAP and databases in every country, and we encourage networking in the future for safeguarding ICH in the region.

We hope that ICHCAP can develop such an action plan speedily, and we wish to share the tasks of each Member State carrying out this programme of cooperative activities.

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## Discussion

Jesus Tamayo PERALTA

Consultant

National Commission for Culture and the Arts

Making inventories of ICH elements that are evolving but are in danger of disappearing may be tedious, but safeguarding this is even more daunting. How does one safeguard something that is constantly changing? Determining the point of entries in their histories in this endeavour involves a great deal of thought, and does one even attempt to channel the direction and manner by which the changes will take?

At least two things operate there: an agent of change and the practicing society itself. An agent of change, such as a government, may act, but unless the actions are compatible with how the society operates, no amount of success can be expected. More often than not, it is the practicing society itself that determines what changes take place, and the magnitude and direction of those changes and the degree of societal involvement. Social compatibility is the key to viability; otherwise the alternative will be rejection.

The imperatives are that a detailed knowledge of the organisational structure and operations of a society is comprehended and familiarity with the relevant individuals in the practicing unit. However, since cultural diversity makes

societies distinctly different from each other, the approaches to safeguarding must vary in accordance with the cultural distinctness of different societies. There can be no generic action plan but only specifically designed strategies. However, there can be generic guidelines developed, among which are, for instance:

- developing pride in the social practice through an intensified publicity campaign through multiple media;
- developing new generations who are able to practice by setting up Schools for Living Tradition (HSLT) in key areas;
- creating opportunities and occasions for the practice;
- arousing interest and participation by setting up competitions in both the adult and youth levels (even if these are performances rather than social practice);
- recognising and honouring practitioners, agents of change, resource persons, and others;
- engaging the private sector and provincial and other local government offices into the programmes;
- engaging the Department of Education in making the teaching of the ICH a permanent feature of the school's curriculum;
- involving prestigious and dedicated individuals in the community in the pursuance of the programmes;
- continuing research into the culture and engaging the services of local experts and researchers; and
- developing as much as possible and continuing the actual social practice of the ICH.

The aim is to encourage governments, NGOs, and local communities to identify, preserve, and promote their intangible heritage. It is also intended to encourage individuals, groups, institutions, and organisations to make outstanding contributions to managing, preserving, protecting, and promoting the intangible heritage.

Our experience in the northern Philippines in safeguarding the Ifugao *hudhud* was a mind-opening one in that introducing effective measures of safeguarding required continuous adjustments not only in methodology, but in

the use of the expertise of individuals, much of which was done by trial and error and continuous adaptation and by making use of incidental nodes of approach—improvisations so to speak—along the way. After eight years, in the end, the safeguarding was institutionalised by the Ifugao themselves.

When we started to safeguard the Darangen chant of the Maranao of the southern Philippines, it was found that the techniques used in the northern Philippines could not be used among the Maranao for the simple reason these people are completely different culturally from the Ifugao. One of the constraints, for instance, was dictated by the ICH item itself. The mode of transmission of the Ifugao *hudhud* had always been by group participation learned by rote through time and through life, during the four occasions of social practice. The Maranao Darangen transmission, however, had always been performed through a guild method, with a master and any number of apprentices, and the performance is always done solely by one chanter supported by a retinue that does not chant. It became evident that a new strategy must be used in this instance. The reason for this was the fact that while the chanting of the epic is done by one person, the chanting is done within the context of a social activity that involves a retinue—it is a process within another social process so to speak, where one cannot be separated from the other.

In the Philippines alone, there are at least eighty major ethno-linguistic groups, with any number of sub-groupings, so considering the number of South-East Asia's societal groupings would be mind-boggling. Successful safeguarding measures cannot be applied in a general way as models. Planning safeguarding strategies adapted to specific groups should be characterised by specially designed measures.

However, it is expected that, in broad areas of South-East Asia, generalised lines of safeguarding may be drawn, in which core culture areas may be identified. Exchanging safeguarding strategies in similar core culture areas may be beneficial to Member States, for experiences in these similar and often contiguous areas will certainly facilitate safeguarding measures especially in similarly structured and organised core culture areas. From these generalised strategies, specific actions plans may then be generated.

With this in view, exchanging information in the broad areas of South-East Asia is recommendable where there are success and failure stories. The kind of

information useful for this type of strategy would include, for instance, areas with similar prevailing kinship systems, population size, nature of the private sector, presence of resource personnel, kinds and number of relevant institutions operating in the area, political and leadership systems, and religious structure.

With these information exchanges among similarly structured core areas, strategies recommendable for specific types of social conditions may be formulated to facilitate safeguarding efforts. This area of information dissemination may be taken up by ICHCAP to map out similar core cultural areas in the Asia-Pacific region, where Member States may be able to benefit from successes and failures. To augment the effort, it may well be that exchange of expertise of similarly experienced personnel may also be undertaken.