

Preface

Article 11 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 2003, stipulates that each State Party shall identify and define the various elements of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) present in its territory and take necessary measures to ensure appropriate safeguards needed to protect them with the participation of communities, groups, and relevant NGOs. Also, Article 9 of the Convention stipulates that NGOs with recognized competence in the field of the ICH shall be accredited to the General Assembly of the Convention (GA) or the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the ICH (IGC) to act in an advisory capacity for the policymaking to safeguard ICH. In the Operational Directives for implementing the Convention, more details are provided with regard to the modalities for communities and NGOs to participate in ICH safeguarding activities with the government.

Even before the Convention was adopted, many NGOs had already contributed greatly to safeguarding diverse forms of ICH in many countries, but little has been done in the area of international networking or with systematic collaboration. As the accredited NGOs participated in the GA and IGC as observers, a forum began to be held for information exchange. ICHCAP, with our mission of information and networking, has the mandate and role of promoting intergovernmental collaboration and networking among communities and experts as well as NGOs.

At the eighth session of IGC held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2013, during our discussion with the four representatives of the NGO forum—namely, Diego Gradis, Jorijn Neyrinck, Ananya Bhattacharya, and Emily Drani—we promised to help strengthen international NGO networking and to start with convening an international conference of NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region. In March 2014, we had the first networking conference for Korean ICH NGOs in Seoul, where we invited all four leaders of the NGO Forum to share their experiences and to lay out plans to organize an international networking seminar of ICH NGOs.

Soon after this preparatory meeting in Seoul, this international conference of ICH NGOs was organized to be held in the National Intangible Heritage Center in Jeonju from 26 to 28 June 2014 to strengthen our networking efforts. Under the theme of “Towards Efficient Roles of NGOs for Safeguarding ICH in the Asia-Pacific

Region,” some fifty NGOs from the Asia-Pacific, Europe, South America, and Africa participated in the lively discussion on the diverse roles of NGOs as mediators between the government and local communities. This book is an outcome of the conference presentations and discussions.

During the two-day conference, reports of NGO activities in many parts of the world deepened our understanding of various roles and activities of ICH NGOs. We learned that ICH NGO activities are hard to define, because some NGOs are more closely tied to local communities while others are supported by governments to help other groups and individuals. Also, some NGOs focus on domestic activities while others engage in regional and international networking, making it harder to define or categorize the role of NGOs.

Nevertheless, the conference provided a venue to have a better understanding of various ICH NGOs working on the protection, transmission, and revitalization of ICH and their roles as mediators, supporters, educators, and facilitators. Such understanding enabled us to seek greater cooperation.

I hope this volume can be used as a meaningful reference in supporting NGO activities and as a motivator to grow NGO networking, not only in the Asia-Pacific region but also throughout the world.

Finally, let me give words of gratitude to all the participants who came to Jeonju from far and near and the panel members who came from over twenty countries. I’d like especially thank Tim Curtis, Head of the Culture Unit, UNESCO Office in Bangkok and Professor Antonio Arantes of the State University of Campinas, Brazil, who gave the keynote speeches. And let me add words of deep gratitude to the leaders of the ICH NGO Forum for their advice and cooperation.

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