

Evaluation of the Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2) based in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran (2012-2018)

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Executive Summary

The Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2) based in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran (hereinafter "the Centre") was established in 2012 for the purposes of the delivery of training, development of research, and the identification and dissemination of information in relation to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter "the Convention" or "2003 Convention"), and in the diverse West and Central Asia region. In its operation, the Centre has faced several challenges, including conflict in many countries under its purview, financial challenges due to constraints in the Iranian financial system, disruptions to leadership, lack of adequate training of its staff, and an excessive focus on programming priorities that do

not clearly align with its Constitution or the Agreement signed between United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereinafter “UNESCO”) and the Iranian government for the creation of the Centre.

Its programs in particular have focused too much on awareness-raising, and even the capacity building for preparation of nominations for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) Convention lists, and not enough on capacity building to safeguard ICH and to develop good safeguarding practice, which is one of the Centre’s key priorities. The Centre’s difficulties to reach an autonomous legal status from the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (hereinafter “ICHHTO”), a governmental agency, due to bureaucratic issues, has impeded to the Centre to perform its role in a formal independent way, in accordance with UNESCO priorities and the Agreement with UNESCO.. This dependency has also impacted on human resources at the Centre, with the majority of the staff lacking a broad expertise in ICH and the international context, particularly relating to UNESCO and on financial resources.

In spite of these difficulties, in the evaluators’ view the Centre warrants renewal of its status, and continuation as a Category 2 centre (hereinafter “C2C”) under the auspices of UNESCO. It is essential, however, that significant changes be implemented, and these include a revision of the Agreement creating the Centre, so as to: realign its priorities closer to UNESCO priorities; strengthen provisions to guarantee the independence of the Centre in relation to the Iranian government; strengthen the Centre’s financial position; and enhance the participation of other States from the region in the Centre.

Introduction

Category 2 centres (hereinafter “C2Cs”) under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereinafter “UNESCO”) have been created to facilitate and support the action of UNESCO. They are established to contribute to the achievement of UNESCO’s objectives at the regional or international levels. C2Cs are expected to contribute directly to achieving the strategic programme objectives or programme priorities and themes of UNESCO. They can also play a considerable role in helping UNESCO achieve programme objectives for which sectoral expertise or resources are insufficient. Among these C2Cs is the Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2) (hereinafter “the Centre”) based in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Centre is one of four such C2Cs for intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region. Each C2C is differentiated by area of responsibility (the Centre in Tehran has the broadest mandate among the four) as follows:

- The Centre based in Iran is responsible for the delivery of training, development of research, and the identification and dissemination of information, relating to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH).
- International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (CRIHAP) based in China – The CRIHAP is responsible for the development and delivery of training on the safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region (<http://en.crihap.cn/news.html>).
- International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) based in Japan – The IRCI is responsible for the instigation and development of research into practices and methodologies of safeguarding endangered ICH in the region (<https://www.irci.jp/>).
- International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP) based in the Republic of Korea – The ICHCAP is broadly responsible for the identification and dissemination of information relating to ICH within the Asia-Pacific Region (<http://www2.ichcap.org/>).

1. Purpose

This report summarises the findings of an evaluation of the Centre. The main objectives of this evaluation are to assess the Centre’s performance with respect to its objectives and functions, as specified in the Agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (hereinafter “the Iranian Government”) and UNESCO regarding the establishment, in Tehran, of a Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding ICH in West and Central Asia under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2) (hereinafter “the Agreement”), and its contribution to the achievement of UNESCO’s strategic programme objectives, and sectoral or intersectoral programme priorities and themes (as defined in UNESCO’s Medium-Term Strategy (C/4)), and the attainment

of programme results at the Main Lines of Action (MLA) level of the UNESCO Approved Programme and Budget for 2014-2017 (37 C/5) (please refer to the Main Lines of Action in the 37 C/5), whether through individual action, joint action with other C2Cs or through joint implementation with the Secretariat.

The findings of the evaluation will serve as the basis for the Sector Review Committee's recommendation to the Director-General as to whether the Agreement should be renewed.

The results of this evaluation will be shared with the Iranian Government and the Centre, and will also be presented to the UNESCO Executive Board (hereinafter "Executive Board"), as specified in the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO contained in document 37 C/18 Part I and its annex, as approved by the 37th session of the General Conference (37 C/Resolution 93) (hereinafter "Integrated Comprehensive Strategy"). They will also be made available on the website of UNESCO's ICH Section.

2. Context and background

As per UNESCO's guidelines for review of C2Cs, provided in the revised Integrated Comprehensive Strategy, the Agreement for C2Cs, such as that of the Centre, may be renewed by the Director-General, after a definite time period not exceeding six years, with the approval of the Executive Board, in light of an evaluation of the activities of the Centre and its contribution to the strategic programme objectives of UNESCO and its conformity with the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy.

During the 1st Ordinary Executive Board Meeting (hereinafter "1st Executive Board Meeting") of the Centre held in Tehran, Iran, on 10 – 11 September 2016 and attended by representatives from Iran, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, it was understood by the Executive Board, based on available correspondence between UNESCO and the Iranian Government, that 2018 would be the year designated for the Centre's evaluation and that the Agreement would only be renewed upon a positive evaluation of the Centre accompanied by recommendations to that effect by the evaluators. In preparation for the evaluation, the Executive Board decided that the Centre would prepare the required documents to be delivered to UNESCO in 2018 and would follow UNESCO's advice and guidelines on preparing for the evaluation and also the guidelines, advice and recommendations, as proposed by Mr Rustam Muzafarov at the 1st Executive Board meeting, on the steps to be taken by the Centre before, and during the course of, the 2018 evaluation. These included a careful review of the available documentation in order for the Centre to prepare "proper answers" to questions posed by interviewers during the evaluation and also to justifications for the Centre's activities in relation to the Centre's mandate (refer to Minutes of 1st Executive Board (EB) Meeting p.7).

Individual Specialists Dr Lucas Lixinski and Dr Benedetta Ubertaini were commissioned by the UNESCO Culture Sector in October 2018 to carry out the independent evaluation of the Centre covering the period 2012-2018. A copy of the complete terms of reference is provided as Annex 11.

3. Scope and methodology

The methodology for evaluating the Centre has employed several strands of simultaneous enquiry in order to gather insights into the function of the Centre and its effectiveness in achieving its agreed objectives and function. The evaluation has involved a participatory process with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders. In accordance with the terms of reference, the evaluation consisted of four stages:

- A desk study of relevant documents, provided by the Centre and UNESCO (see Annex 4 for list of documents reviewed) in order to draft questionnaires for the interviews and to establish the list of interviewees, the Centre's communication through its website and other documents available on the web.
- The collection of primary data through a 5-day visit to the Centre, including semi-structured onsite interviews with the Centre's management, staff and relevant government representatives, and direct observation of the Centre's operation and management. The complete list of interviewees is provided in Annex 1. A specific questionnaire had been developed for each category of stakeholders. All questionnaires are available in Annex 2. This visit was led by Individual Specialist Ubertaini.
- Semi-structured interviews with the Centre's stakeholders including representatives of member States in the region that had previously worked with the Centre, collaborators, and beneficiaries as well as UNESCO staff concerned. The evaluators have received six out of ten email questionnaires sent, either through direct email response or through a subsequent Skype interview.

- Preparation of the joint draft evaluation report in accordance with the structure proposed in the terms of reference, feedback from UNESCO, and then finalization of the evaluation report.

The main criteria adopted for the evaluation were relevance, efficiency, quality and effectiveness, including:

- Relevance of the Centre's programmes and activities to achieving UNESCO's priorities
- Effectiveness of the Centre's programmes
- Quality of interaction and collaboration between the Centre and relevant stakeholders
- Efficiency and effectiveness of Institutional arrangements
- Efficiency and effectiveness of organizational management
- Effectiveness of results-based management
- Conformity with UNESCO's Integrated Comprehensive Strategy.

Given the nature and objectives of the evaluation, there are two main constraints. Firstly, feedback from relevant stakeholders was impacted by time constraints. As it was necessary to adapt to the availability of the parties, the methodically differentiated stages of evaluation were, on occasion, conducted simultaneously. Secondly, there was a lack of sources outside qualitative interviews. Thirdly, the evaluators lacked evidence and quantitative sources concerning the involvement of community representatives and the effectiveness of the action of the Centre in this area. The evaluators have tried to offset these constraints through a validation process based on the principle of triangulation of information from various sources, and reinforced by feedback received from the review of the draft report disseminated to UNESCO, the Iranian Government, the Centre, and all interview participants. The final report was then finalized taking into consideration the feedback received, in accordance with the principles of independence, impartiality and transparency, and the other principles as set out in the 2016 UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation.

The methodology employed for the review generated a large amount of information comprising a broad range of verbal and interview inputs from individuals within the Centre, UNESCO, Iranian Government agencies, and members of the Governing Board, in addition to the data from more formal official documents and reports. While every attempt has been made to appropriately include this information in an anonymous way, it is noted that not every viewpoint or comment can be cross-checked for accuracy. Nevertheless, it is considered that reliable and sufficient information has been gathered to fulfil the specific objectives of the evaluation and for it to be deemed comprehensive, fair and unbiased.

4. Overview of the Centre

As noted in Article 1 of the Constitution of the Centre (hereinafter "Constitution"), adopted by the 1st Ordinary Meeting of the Governing Council in November 2012 (hereinafter "1st Governing Council Meeting"), West and Central Asia (hereinafter "the Region") constitutes a geographical territory that encompasses rich shared historical and cultural backgrounds, offering a multitude of opportunities for the promotion of, and collaboration in relation to, the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter "2003 Convention"; "the Convention"). As such, by Resolution 34C/DR12, the Iranian Government was granted permission by the 34th session of the General Conference of UNESCO to establish, on its territory, the Centre. The establishment of the Centre was then approved, and the conclusion of the Agreement between the Iranian Government and UNESCO for the establishment of the Centre was authorized, by the General Conference at its 35th session, in its 35 C/Resolution 57. The Agreement between the Iranian Government and UNESCO was signed on 28 April 2010 and came into effect for a period of six years. On 13 June 2011, the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran (hereinafter "Iran") approved the signed Agreement, which resulted in the official inauguration of the activities of the Centre on 10 November 2012. The first director of the Centre, Dr Yadollah Parmoun, was appointed on 6 November 2012.

According to Article 6(1) of the Agreement (and also replicated in Article 2 of the Constitution of the Centre in largely the same terms), the objectives of the Centre are:

- a) to promote the 2003 Convention and its implementation in West and Central Asia;
- b) to strengthen capacities and cooperation in the Region for identifying, inventorying, documenting and studying intangible cultural heritage in order to contribute to its safeguarding;
- c) to further and coordinate scientific and technical studies aimed at developing, managing and evaluating safeguarding measures for intangible cultural heritage present in the Region;

- d) to reinforce capacities in States of the Region that are Parties to the 2003 Convention for actively participating in its implementation on the regional and international level, in particular concerning shared intangible cultural heritage elements present in the territories of two or more of the States concerned.

5. Findings

5.1 Relevance to UNESCO's priorities

This section considers the relevance of the Centre's programmes and activities to achieving UNESCO's strategic programme objectives and sectoral or intersectoral programme priorities and themes, as defined in UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (C/4), and to attaining programme results at the Main Lines of Action (MLA) level, as defined in UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget (C/5).

The Centre suffers from some issues common to other C2Cs in terms of the relevance of its programmes and activities to achieving UNESCO's priorities. On the one hand, while the Centre is legally independent from UNESCO, as stipulated in Article 3(1) of the Agreement, the Centre as a C2C under the auspices of UNESCO is expected to contribute to UNESCO's objectives and results as indicated in the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy at paragraph B.2 on the required "contribution to UNESCO's programmes". On the other hand, the Centre is fully financed by the Iranian Government. Until recently it was financed through the intermediary of the ICHHTO so it is constantly under the supervision of, and accountable to, this Governmental institution in spite of Article 3(2) of the Agreement specifying that while the Centre is associated with the ICHHTO, it is to have legal and functional autonomy from the ICHHTO. Yet, this situation seems to have improved since very recently the Centre received its proper budget line directly by the Government rather than through the ICHHTO, as confirmed also by the Correspondence received on the 26th November 2018 (please see paragraph 5.5.2. below, as well as Annex 5).

Further, based on the desk review of key material, we note that the Centre's documentation refers exclusively to the Agreement. There is no direct reference to UNESCO's C/5 Approved Programme and Budget, even if it mentions in multiple points the missions of C2Cs and the necessity of building a strategic cooperation between UNESCO and C2Cs. The Centre is advised to make greater reference to the document C/5 in the future and to contribute to it directly through its actions, as evidence of its consideration of the relationship to UNESCO, and not only to the ICHHTO.

In terms of UNESCO's agenda for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage as provided for in the 2003 Convention, Article 1 states that the purposes of the Convention are:

- a) to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage;
- b) to ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned;
- c) to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof;
- d) to provide for international cooperation and assistance.

The objectives of the Centre, as outlined in Article 6(1) of the Agreement and replicated in similar terms in Article 2 of the Constitution, and noted above in section 4, are aligned with the objectives of the 2003 Convention, particularly in terms of safeguarding and cooperation with respect to intangible cultural heritage. In terms of the Centre's activities and programmes, subsection (a) explicitly provides that they should promote the 2003 Convention and its implementation in West and Central Asia, and subsection (b) sets cooperation in the Region to safeguard intangible cultural heritage as another objective of the Centre.

The Centre's documents, mainly work plans, are formulated to be fully aligned to the Agreement, with the terms of the Agreement often being cited. However, the Agreement is generic on some points and only implies the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy, the 2003 Convention and the Operational Directives without directly recalling these texts. As a consequence, even if the Centre's documents mention the Agreement (which implies a host of essential UNESCO documents), the action of the Centre is often not aligned to the other essential documents that should guide its work. Indeed, the evaluation process revealed that a majority of the Centre's staff members are not sufficiently familiar with the content of these documents. In the long-term it will be desirable for the Centre to implement more training programs for its staff to improve their knowledge of the 2003 Convention and UNESCO priorities. In the short term, though, to allow for the continued operation of the Centre in line with the Agreement, the 2003 Convention and UNESCO themes and priorities (particularly those set out in the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for C2Cs), the evaluators are of

the view that more experts with broad expertise in intangible cultural heritage and the international context, particularly relating to UNESCO, are required. Yet, this situation seemed to have improved since very recently the Centre elected a director, Dr Janet Blake, who fulfils these requirements. However, it should be noted that the incoming elected Director cannot commence in the role, therefore the Centre still remains without an elected Director and a new election of a Director is needed. Thus, the evaluators are of the opinion that the renewal of the Centre should be contingent upon the election and appointment of a Director who graduated in social and human science, has extensive knowledge of and professional experience at least of 5 years in the field of ICH, has excellent knowledge of English and/or French, has extensive experience of working in an international context and in particular of the workings of UNESCO and has a professional experience with managerial tasks. In addition, further work can be done in this area, and, should Iranian employment law pose too great an obstacle, and always in line with Article 5(5) of the Centre's Constitution (according to which "the majority of the technical and executive commitments of the Centre shall be performed in line with the overall 'out-sourcing strategy'"), expertise from outside Iran could be obtained through internship programs directed at recruiting personnel from other countries in the region, for instance. UNESCO's global network of facilitators in the area of ICH is a valuable resource the Centre may wish to use.¹

5.2 Effectiveness of The Centre's programmes

This section focuses on the effectiveness of the Centre's programmes and activities to achieving its stated objectives, as defined in the Agreement and also the conformity of such programmes and activities with the Centre's functions as specified in the Agreement.

Since its establishment, the Centre has been conducting various activities to facilitate bilateral or multilateral cooperation for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage among numerous participating States in West and Central Asia.

5.2.1 Capacity Building

In terms of capacity building, as outlined in Article 6(2) of the Agreement (and also replicated in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Centre in largely the same terms), the agreed functions of the Centre are:

- i) to organize workshops and seminars to identify and promote good safeguarding practices, and assist States Parties to the 2003 Convention that participate in the Centre to build their capacity to prepare files proposing such practices to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage established under the 2003 Convention (hereinafter "the Intergovernmental Committee") for selection and further dissemination, as provided by Article 18 of the Convention;
- j) while maintaining a network of representatives of cultural communities, to coordinate activities aimed at awareness-raising and capacity-building among holders and practitioners of intangible cultural heritage, as advocated in the Operational Directives for the implementation of the Convention, so as to allow them to participate actively, in the sense of Articles 2, 11 and 15 of the Convention, in the identification, inventorying and management of their intangible cultural heritage;
- k) to organize workshops and seminars focusing on building capacities, in States Parties to the 2003 Convention that participate in the Centre, for drafting nomination files for inscription on the two lists of the 2003 Convention and for drafting requests and reports for submission to the Intergovernmental Committee, in particular concerning shared intangible cultural heritage elements present in the territories of two or more of the States participating in the Centre;

The Centre has made visible efforts to fulfil its mandate in relation to capacity building in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The desk review of the Centre's 2015 Draft Action Plan adopted during the 2nd Ordinary Meeting of the Governing Council (hereinafter "2nd Governing Council Meeting", Annex 6) revealed that the Centre had proposed three capacity building workshops including one in Iran (at the Centre-level) to promote the implementation of the 2003 Convention by the Centre's staff and core collaborators

¹ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/facilitator>

from the ICHHTO and the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, and two workshops in Turkmenistan and Iraq with the objective of building the capacity for community-based inventorying of intangible cultural heritage in each country and raising awareness about the implementation of the 2003 Convention. These activities faced significant obstacles in their implementation, were not undertaken within the originally proposed timeline, and sometimes postponed and not implemented (such as the workshop in Iraq). These obstacles refer to the difficulty of recruiting qualified facilitators, access to host countries, and conflict in the region. While some of these reasons are clearly outside the control of the Centre, it is apparent that the Centre still needed to perfect their approach to organizing said events.

We also note that the report indicating that 2015 action plan items had been postponed until 2016 were published as annexes to 2017 meetings of the Governing Council (Annex 9), thus lending the impression that the activities had not been successfully undertaken by then, nearly a year after the proposed extended deadline. This additional delay can be read to indicate ongoing issues in capacity-building across the region, a key objective of the Centre.

For the 2016 year, the Centre anticipated a number of inventorying, implementation and nomination workshops throughout the region, in Armenia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan. While the 2016 Action Plan provided the following activities: “Activity 1.1 Organizing capacity-building workshops on ICH for 6 countries on the Region. Nomination Workshop for Armenia Inventorying Workshop for Turkmenistan, Implementation Workshop for Afghanistan, Implementation Workshop for Pakistan, Inventorying Workshop for Iraq, Two implementation Workshops for Iran”, the only ones that were carried out were: Capacity Building Workshop in Armenia, on May 2017”, as it results from the Report of the 4th Ordinary Meeting of the Governing Council – hereinafter “4th GC Report”. There are ongoing security issues in some of these countries which pose significant hurdles for implementation of activities, though, so there are greater factors at play beyond the Centre’s control. Nonetheless, more coordination with regional UNESCO offices and National Commissions could help circumvent some of these obstacles.

The Draft Action Plan 2018-spring 2019 for Submission to the 4th Governing Council Meeting in September 2018 (hereinafter “2018 Action Plan”, Annex 8), published only in September of that same year, indicates capacity-building workshops in Armenia, Iran, and Lebanon. We note that Armenia has already been covered in the 2016/2017 activities (“Capacity Building Workshop in Armenia”, on May 2017). Also, with respect to Iran, it is noteworthy that each one of the Action Plans includes capacity building in Iran, and we express our concern with the possibility that activities in Iran are being undertaken at the expense of capacity-building activities in other countries covered by the Centre’s scope that are still to benefit from such activities. We therefore recommend that the Centre reconsider the frequency of capacity-building activities in Iran. For instance, among the proposed activities provided in 2018 Action Plan there are the following ones: “Activity 1.2. Organizing a national Forum for the Iranian National ICH Policy makers and parliamentarians for better implementation of the 2003 Convention; Activity 1.3 Participation of Centre’s staff in national/regional/international workshops, meetings, sessions, and conferences; Activity 3.1. Tehran ICH Centre’s 4th International Expert Meeting on “Safeguarding of the ICH: A Response to Climate Change in West and Central Asia?” towards a research project on ICH-related policy-making in response to climate change; Activity 4.1. Tehran ICH Centre’s 3rd Promotional Regional/International Competition; Activity 5.1 Organizing 1 research project across the region, to follow up the effectiveness of ICH Capacity-building Workshops in three designated countries”.

Yet, even if State Parties have recognized the good work of the Centre in organizing and facilitating capacity building workshops, it has to be noted that the actions of the Centre are not always in line with the Centre’s functions and what is established by the 2003 Convention. Although the Centre is legally and functionally autonomous from the ICHHTO, either due to (or in addition to) its financial dependence on the ICHHTO, the Centre has on multiple occasions indirectly supported the activities of the ICHHTO. For example, in its 1st Year Programme of the Centre (hereinafter “1st Year Programme”), submitted to and adopted during the 1st Ordinary Meeting of the Governing Council (hereinafter “1st Governing Council Meeting”) in 2012 on an interim basis, the Centre proposed in Article 4.4 that it would contribute to initiatives by the ICHHTO in commemorating the 10th anniversary of the 2003 Convention. Moreover, notably in the 2015 Draft Action Plan, in relation to other proposed activities of the Centre that do not directly correlate with the objectives or functions of the Centre, it provided that the Centre would collaborate “as an advisory body, with the Office for Inscriptions and Preservation and Revitalization of Intangible and Natural heritage, affiliated to the Deputy for

Cultural Heritage, ICHHTO, on inventorying, nomination, and implementation of affairs related to ICH”. It emerged from the interviews that key staff from the Centre were actually involved in the drafting of nominations, even though for just some of them only indirectly as private consultants in their personal capacity. Despite mention in the 2015 Draft Action Plan that the budget for these additional activities “shall be provided from a separate source”, as clearly stated in Chapter III of the Operational Directives, State Parties should be primarily in charge of drawing up inventories and preparing nomination files with community participation. This kind of task should not be undertaken by the Centre. Several interviewees indicated that they were aware of this as they had been told by UNESCO not to participate, not even in their personal capacity, in drafting nomination files. The evaluators are of the view that the Centre should limit its actions to building the capacity of State Parties and community representatives to safeguard their intangible cultural heritage and to develop good safeguarding practice rather than to participate - directly or indirectly through the Centre’s staff in personal capacity- in assisting or even completing safeguarding activities, such as inventorying or nomination files, on behalf of (or in conjunction with) those stakeholders. The Centre’s staff also seem to support this viewpoint. The evaluators are therefore glad that these additional activities were removed from the Action Plans of the following years.

In terms of capacity building the Centre may also consider ‘a larger approach’ by developing longer-term full-fledged projects rather than stand-alone activities. Full-fledged projects combining a series of trainings in their logical order are more likely to have a better impact in terms of sustainability of capacity building interventions. Further, to the extent possible, the Centre may wish to consider a needs-assessments modality, especially in cases where the Centre plans its very first activity in a host country. Such modality can be introduced as an alternative to capacity building workshops in work plans to give a choice for those countries that are interested. Needs assessments allow for better planning of subsequent capacity building activities and are important in case the Centre longer-term engagement with a beneficiary country. Lastly, the 2018-2021 funding priorities “Strengthening capacities to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and contribute to sustainable development” and “Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in formal and non-formal education” need to be presented to the Centre and its governing bodies and taken onboard.

5.2.2 Research and Policy Development

Regarding research and policy development, as outlined in Article 6(2)(h) of the Agreement (and also replicated in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Centre in largely the same terms), the agreed function of the Centre is:

- h) to organize workshops and conferences in order to develop research methodologies and further studies concerning the safeguarding on intangible cultural heritage as advocated in Article 13 of the 2003 Convention, including studies concerning the development of tourism that does not impair the viability of the intangible heritage, while being respectful of customary practices governing the access to this heritage;

In Article 4.1 of the 1st Year Programme, the Centre had proposed a workshop to not only promote intangible cultural heritage and the 2003 Convention in West and Central Asia but also to facilitate the development of future research programmes on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the Region. Furthermore, in Article 4.2 of the 1st Year Programme, the Centre proposed a major, long-term project to map the intangible cultural heritage existing in the Region which was viewed as a crucial first step to set the funds for future activities related to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. It is unclear from a perusal of the 2nd GC meeting report on the 1st Year Programme whether this prong of the Centre’s work bore any fruit in the early years of the Centre’s existence.

For the 2015 Action Plan, activities in the area of research and policy development mainly focused on the creation of an open-access journal, then titled *ICH Inquirer: Journal of West and Central Asian Intangible Cultural Heritage Studies*. The report on the action plan indicated that rules of procedure for the functioning of the board and journal had been drafted. It is noteworthy, however, that only in March 2018 was a call for submissions to their journal published (under the new name of *Miras-e Iran Zamin*). This journal, while having the potential to reach a broad readership and raise the visibility of safeguarding in the region not only for the region but also beyond, could have imposed a disproportionate burden on Centre staff, taking time away from other activities that may be of greater importance within this prong, particularly policy-making. Therefore, this activity was not mentioned in the 2018 Action Plan.

In the 2016 Action Plan, this prong of the Centre's activities took the form of expert meetings and "international research festivals" on West and Central Asian ICH ("Activity 3.5 Tehran ICH Centre's 1st International Research Festival on West and Central Asian ICH, on the Occasion of Nowrouz of 2016; Activity 3.6 Tehran ICH Centre's 2nd International Research Festival on West and Central Asian ICH" from the 2016 Action Plan), as well as the continuing development of a calendar of ICH in the region. As it results from the 3rd GC Meeting Report, Tehran ICH Centre's 1st International Research Festival on West and Central Asian ICH, on the Occasion of Nowrouz of 2016 was held in March 2016 and the theme was "West and Central Asian Ethnic Dolls and Puppets"; while the Tehran ICH Centre's 2nd International Research Festival on West and Central Asian ICH was held in November 2016 and the theme was "West and Central Asian Traditional Puzzle and Board Games".

Lastly, the 2018 Action Plan proposes organizing an international expert meeting on climate change and ICH (activity 3.1), as well as a research project on ICH policy-making related to sustainable development in the region (activity 5.1), and a research project on community-based ICH inventorying, specifically for evaluating the effectiveness of capacity-building workshops in this area (activity 5.2). Yet, the research project on ICH policy-making related to sustainable development in the region (5.1) was abandoned by the Executive Board, since it could have imposed a disproportionate burden on Centre staff. Therefore, the research project on community-based ICH inventorying became activity 5.1. It is worth noting also that an impressive ICH Photo Exhibition of the Tehran ICH Centre was held in occasion of the annual ICH IGC Meeting held in Mauritius in November 2018, showing photos submitted to the 2016 Photography Competition. The 2018 Action Plan proposes organizing another similar competition for 2018-19. These projects, if executed, will help realign the Centre's priorities with the needs of the region, and we consider them to be an important step in promoting research of value for the countries covered by the Centre's mandate.

5.2.3 Publications and Dissemination

In relation to publications and dissemination of information, as outlined in Article 6(2) of the Agreement (and also replicated in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Centre in largely the same terms), the agreed functions of the Centre are:

f) to gather and disseminate information on legal, administrative, financial and other measures taken by the States participating in the Centre with a view to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage present in their territory;

g) to gather and disseminate information on safeguarding activities in the States participating in the Centre;

In Article 4.3 of the 1st Year Programme, the Centre proposed the publication of a specialized international bilingual quarterly journal, which sought to gather and disseminate research on the topic of intangible cultural heritage in the Region by practitioners and experts as a means to promote the relatively new field of intangible cultural heritage and to raise the profile of intangible cultural heritage in the Region. This journal was discussed above, as a research activity. Further, as a means of sharing information and raising awareness about ICH in West and Central Asia, the Centre's 2015 Draft Action Plan proposed the establishment of an Interactive Virtual Calendar for Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia and a regional contest on designing the logo the Centre. Despite raising awareness generally about intangible cultural heritage per se not being a function of the Centre, it is still of relevance to the Centre's overall objective of promoting the 2003 Convention and its implementation, and the Centre itself sees all of its activities as contributing, even if only indirectly, to awareness-raising. This situation reveals a discrepancy between the Centre's understanding of its functions as compared to its required functions as stipulated in the Agreement. In fact,

in the evaluators' view, raising awareness about ICH per se, despite being a core activity in the early days of the Centre, should now only be an incidental part of the mandate of the Centre, and its staff should dedicate themselves primarily to capacity-building, research, and policy-making. We do note the view espoused by the Centre and its staff that awareness-raising leads to better connections to local communities, and enhances awareness of the Convention, all of which contribute in worthwhile ways to advancing the Centre's mission. They are also activities which have led to clear "wins" for the Centre in their reporting on activities, and as such are important for the Centre's own perception of their success. Lastly, the connection between the Centre and tourism, particularly via the ICHHTO, leads to a natural alignment with ICH visibility as a goal to be pursued. That said, the Centre staff's efforts in awareness-raising, while laudable, seem to deploy finite

resources in areas that are not as clearly aligned with the core mission of the Centre, which should not directly have to do with the visibility of ICH per se.

The 2016 Action Plan contains a range of activities in the area of awareness-raising, notably the Virtual Calendar (completed) and the logo for the Centre (also completed). These activities do not seem particularly connected to the Centre's core objectives or functions spelled out in its Constitution, beyond promoting connections among stakeholders in the region. That said, in the evaluators' view these goals can be achieved through other activities. In the 2018 Action Plan, we note that activities whose primary purpose is awareness-raising do not feature in the proposed activities, and welcome that change.

The Centre does not presently have any mechanism or database which gathers and is able to disseminate information on legal, administrative, financial and other measures taken by States participating in the Centre for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, in spite of research projects to gather policies in the region, discussed in the previous section. The evaluators are of the view that it would be useful for the Centre to implement such mechanism, and it emerged from the desk review and the interviews that as part of the Centre's redesign of their website as an activity in its 2018 Draft Action Plan, the Centre plans to gather from State Parties, and disseminate, data on intangible cultural heritage through a page on its website.

One of the more important issues connected to the publication and dissemination mission is related to the language diversity in the Region. The Centre's publications, for the most part, are in English and then translated into Persian. This is not representation of the language diversity in West and Central Asia. Other major languages in the region include at least Arabic, Hebrew, Russian, Turkish, as well as languages in the Turkic family. Although some key texts such as the 2003 Convention and its Operational Directives have been published in Russian and Arabic, official languages of UNESCO, and while this was pointed out as overcoming the Centre's lack of publications in languages other than Persian of the 2003 Convention and its Operational Directives, it should be noted that a majority of other documents relevant to the operation of the Centre have not been translated by the Centre into any languages other than Persian. The evaluators are of the view that in order for the Centre to be inclusive and representative of the Region, more efforts should firstly be placed on dissemination of publications in the major languages of participating States to the Centre, and then on dissemination of publications in other languages that are understood in non-participating States in the Region so as to foster participation in the future.

During the interviews, a key reason expressed for the inability of the Centre to translate the relevant texts into other languages of the Region was the lack of financial resources to do so. While the Centre is in theory legally and functionally autonomous from the ICHHTO, due to its financial dependence on the ICHHTO to provide its budget on an activity by activity basis (as opposed to receiving a lump sum of the Centre's total allocated budget), the autonomy and activities of the Centre are limited by the existing financing system in Iran (see section 5.5.2 for the discussion on the Centre's financial resources). Another factor, in the evaluators' view, is the lack of staff with broad expertise in intangible cultural heritage and the international context, particularly relating to UNESCO, to be discussed further below.

5.2.4 Network of experts/institutions

In terms of the establishment of networks, As outlined in Article 6(2) of the Agreement (and also replicated in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Centre in largely the same terms), the agreed functions of the Centre are:

- e) to create and keep up to date an automated information system registering and linking governmental and non-governmental institutions, research, educational and information institutions, community organizations and individual experts involved in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the States of the Region that have expressed the wish to cooperate through the Centre;
- j) while maintaining a network of representatives of cultural communities...to allow them to participate actively, in the sense of Articles 2, 11 and 15 of the Convention, in the identification, inventorying and managing of their intangible cultural heritage;
- l) to cooperate and exchange information with category 2 centres in and beyond Asia that are active in the field of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

In order to accomplish these functions, the Centre organized several activities in the last few years. In the 2015 Draft Action Plan, the Centre proposed two activities. Firstly, in proposed information sharing on

intangible cultural heritage both regionally and internationally, and the promotion of effective networking and cooperation amongst C2Cs in Asia, through the launch of the Centre's website. Secondly, the Centre proposed the holding of its 1st International Expert Meeting on Safeguarding West and Central Asian Intangible Cultural Heritage in order to discuss concrete measures for safeguarding and to disseminate such information through the publication of articles and discussions arising from such meeting. These activities were successfully completed, pointing to the Centre's effectiveness in promoting networking among stakeholders in the region. Further, the Centre successfully co-organized and hosted a meeting of C2Cs in September 2017 in Shiraz, which enhances not only the Centre's visibility, but also the network upon which stakeholders in the region can connect to.

In terms of maintaining a network of representatives of cultural communities, despite the involvement of the community being a priority of the 2003 Convention, the Centre has undertaken limited activities in relation to establishing and maintaining such networks so as foster community involvement in the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of communities. Some important weaknesses have emerged. Perhaps due to the fact there currently is no functioning network of representatives of cultural communities, the Centre's action generally does not directly involve community representatives of intangible cultural heritage but rather only representatives of the State Parties, experts and in very limited cases community associations as observers of Governing Council meetings. Proper methods have to be implemented to increase the involvement of community representatives of intangible cultural heritage and community associations.

While the Centre does not currently have an automated information system registering and linking governmental and non-governmental institutions, research, educational and information institutions, community organizations and individual experts involved in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the States of the Region, several interviewees indicated that the Centre does have a list of regular institutions, organizations and experts sought out by the Centre. The evaluators are of the view that this list offers a very good starting point for the development of a database of such information to facilitate networking, and that it should be made accessible to all stakeholders of the Centre.

5.2.5 Conclusion: Implementation of Action Plans

According to Article 6(1) of the Agreement (and also replicated in Article 2 of the Constitution of the Centre in largely the same terms), the Centres has a very broad mandate which spans across capacity building, research, information networking, and promotion. However, the Centre has not entirely performed its action plans, as indicated in the following Table 1.

<u>Action plans</u>	<u>Implementations</u>
2015	
Minutes of the 2nd Ordinary Meeting of the GC of Tehran ICH Centre. 4-6 May 2015, Tehran-Iran. Annex IV: Period Action Plan 2015 (p. 30 ff.)	Report Of the 3rd GC Meeting of Tehran ICH Centre. 28-29 May 2017, Tehran. Annex 03: Working Document 02.A, Report on Activities of Tehran ICH Centre (p. 30 ff.)
OUTPUT 1: CAPACITY BUILDING	
1. Capacity-building (Centre Level). 1 st Workshop on the implementation of the ICH Convention, Tehran. (p. 32)	Not implemented in 2015. (p. 35)
2. Capacity-building (Turkmenistan). Two Implementation/Community-based Inventorying Workshops on ICH. (p. 33)	1 st Workshop implemented in 15-20 June 2015 (p. 36). 2 nd Workshop not implemented. (p. 36)
3. Capacity-building (Iraq). Implementation Workshop on ICH. (p. 34)	Not implemented in 2015. (p.36)
OUTPUT 2: NETWORKING	
1. Virtual Networking (Regional and International Levels): Tehran ICH Centre Website (p. 36)	Implemented. (p. 37)
2. International Expert Meeting on ICH: 1 st International Expert Meeting on Safeguarding West and Central Asian ICH. (p. 37)	Implemented in 10-15 October 2015. (p. 38)
OUTPUT 3: INFORMATION SHARED	

1. Overcoming “language issue” in West and Central Asia (Phase 1: Persian-speaking countries): Publication of Persian translations of UNESCO texts on ICH. (p. 39)	Implemented. (p. 40)
2. Knowledge and information sharing across West and Central Asia: Publication of Tehran ICH Centre’s specialized quarterly. (p.41)	Not implemented in 2015 (p. 41)
OUTPUT 4: PROMOTING ICH	
1. Encouraging public cooperation in raising awareness on the ICH in West and Central Asia (Phase 1: Programming). (p.44)	Implemented. (p. 43)
2. Encouraging public cooperation in raising awareness on the ICH in West and Central Asia (Phase 3: Attracting Public Attention towards Tehran ICH Centre): Regional Contest on the Permanent Logo of Tehran ICH) (p. 46)	Implemented. (p. 44)
OTHER ACTIVITIES	
1. Preparation for the Centre’s report for the 2015 evaluation. (p. 48)	Implemented (p. 45)
2. Holding a meeting of the ambassadors of the West and Central Asian States in the Islamic Republic of Iran. (p. 48)	Implemented (p. 46)
3. Completing the list of states participating in the Centre’s activities as its members. (p. 48)	Implemented (p. 46)
4. Constant negotiation and cooperation with the states participating in the Centre’s activities. (p. 48)	Implemented (p. 46)
5. Collaboration, as an advisory body, with the Office for Inscriptions and Preservation and Revitalization of Intangible and Natural Heritage, affiliated to the Deputy for Cultural Heritage, ICHHTO, on inventorying, nomination, and implementation affairs related to ICH. (p. 48)	Implemented (p. 46)
6. Collaboration, as an advisory body, with the Municipality of Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the other active sides and organizers, in continuing cooperation through ICCN (Inter-city Intangible Cultural Cooperation Network),in Isfahan. (p. 48)	Implemented (p. 46)
7. Collaboration with ISESCO, the World Society of Islamic City, and ICCN (Inter-city Intangible Cultural Cooperation Network), among the other regional and international organizations. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 46)
8. Collaboration with universities, research organizations, and cultural institutes over the region to promote cultural cooperation in the field of ICH. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 46)
9. Holding the 2 nd Ordinary Meeting of the Centre’s GC in 2015, Tehran. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 46)
10. Celebrating the 70 th Anniversary of UNESCO. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 46)
11. Participation in the 10 th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the States Members to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Namibia. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 46)
12. Participation in the 2015 Meeting of the World C2C on ICH, China. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 46)
13. Holding the 3 rd Ordinary Meeting of the Centre’s GC in 2015, Tehran. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 47)
14. Participation in expert meetings organized by UNESCO in 2014 and 2015. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 47)
15. Production of promotional materials of the Centre. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 47)

16. Holding regular capacity-building workshops in the Islamic Republic of Iran. (p. 49)	Implemented (p. 47)
17. Performing or participation in regular awareness-raising activities within the Islamic Republic of Iran. (p. 50)	Implemented (p. 47)
18. Delivering lectures on ICH for secondary school children and high school students in Iran (5 schools). (p. 50)	Implemented (p. 47)
19. Holding photo exhibitions in Iran on the ICH over the Region (5 exhibitions). (p. 50)	Implemented (p. 47)
20. Regular updating of a permanent space in “Paarse”, the official Newsletter of the ICHHTO. (p. 50)	Implemented (p. 47)
21. Delivering lectures to MA students at Shahid Beheshti University, for the course titled “Intangible Cultural Heritage”. (p. 50)	Implemented (p. 47)
22. Active collaboration with the other C2C, worldwide, to materialize the supreme goal of establishing and promoting a “Network of the World’s C2C on ICH” (p. 50)	Implemented (p. 47)
23. Collaboration with the Permanent Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran to UNESCO in preparing the content of the Nowrouz Festival of 2015 at UNESCO Headquarters, including the ceremony and the documentary video on Nowrouz, as well as procurement of one-third of the estimated budget through negotiation with the ICHHTO, and doing the related follow up. (p. 50)	Implemented (p. 47)

2016

Report Of the 3rd GC Meeting of Tehran ICH Centre. 28-29 May 2017, Tehran. Annex 09, Working Document 08 (p.163 ff.)	Report of the 4th Ordinary Meeting of the GC, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 3-4 September 2018. Budget Report 2016-2018. (p. 94 ff.)
OUTPUT 1: CAPACITY BUILDING	
Activity 1, Output 1, of the Action Plan 2015.	Implemented in June 2016. (pp. 81 and 95)
Activity 1.1. Organizing capacity-building workshops on ICH for 6 countries on the Region: Activity 1.1.1. Nomination Workshop for Armenia. (p. 171)	Six-day Workshop on “NOM” in Armenia, implemented in 22-24 May 2017 (pp. 86 and 96).
Activity 1.1.2. Inventorying Workshop for Turkmenistan. (p. 173)	Not implemented.
Activity 1.1.3. Implementation Workshop for Afghanistan. (p. 175)	Not implemented.
Activity 1.1.4. Implementation Workshop for Pakistan. (p. 177)	Not implemented.
Activity 1.1.5. Inventorying Workshop for Iraq. (p. 179)	Not implemented.
Activity 1.1.6. Two implementation Workshops for Iran. (p. 181)	Not implemented.
Activity 1.2. Organizing minor awareness-raising programmes on ICH, the 2003 Convention and its implementation, ICH safeguarding, and the role of local communities (lectures, meetings, gatherings, round-table discussion sessions ...) to prepare the ground for future capacity-building workshops. (p. 183)	1. Implemented with Rituals of Winter Gathering , completed on 15 th February 2017. (p. 83) “Holding the ceremonies for winter rituals and festivities” (p. 95).
Activity 1.3. Participation of Centre’s staff in regional and international meetings, sessions, conferences and workshops. (p. 186)	1. Attendee of the Centre representative in the UNESCO Capacity Building Strategy Workshop in Bangkok, February 2017. (p. 95)
OUTPUT 2: NETWORKING	

Activity 2.1. Contacts with countries over the Region that have not joined Tehran ICH Centre to encourage them to participate in its implementation, safeguarding, awareness-raising, capacity-building, research, and networking activities. (p.189)	Implemented.
Activity 2.2. Identification and implementation of methods of cooperation between Tehran ICH Centre, on the one hand, and UNESCO, or World C2Cs on ICH, on the other including, among other methods, exchanges of experiences and expertise for short-term training courses, to guarantee better functioning of the Centre and promote the related networking goals. (p. 192)	Implemented with The Fifth Annual Coordination Meeting of the World Category 2 Centres Active in the Field of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Shiraz, Islamic Republic of Iran, 10-11 September 2017. (p. 87)
Activity 2.3. Improving methods of cooperation of the Centre with Participating States to guarantee regular updating of the Centre's virtual spaces (Website, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) with original, reliable, and valid data, through effective involvement of local communities of bearers and practitioners. (p. 194)	Not implemented.
Activity 2.4. Cooperation with the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Asia-Pacific Region, Under the Auspices of UNESCO (Category 2) (IRCI) on the project titled "Mapping Research on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region" (2016 phase: "Mapping of publications on ICH Safeguarding" in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan). First half, Year 2016. (p. 197)	Implemented. The Centre participated to the "IRCI Mapping Project" (p. 16-17-19-24 of the Minutes).
OUTPUT 3: INFORMATION SHARED	
Activity 3.1. Publication of the 1 st Quadrennial Report of Tehran ICH Centre's Activities (Period 2012-2016). Year 2016. (p. 201)	Not implemented.
Activity 3.2 2nd International Expert Meeting on Safeguarding West and Central Asian ICH, titled "Successful Safeguarding Practices and Methods of Encouraging Community Involvement". (p. 204)	Implemented in March 2016. ("Report of Tehran ICH Centre's Expert Panel on Ethnic and Nowrouz Dolls and Puppets of West and Central Asia) (p. 16 of the Minutes).
Activity 3.3 3rd International Expert Meeting on Safeguarding West and Central Asian ICH. 2 days. (p. 208)	Implemented in April 2017. (p. 96) ("Safeguarding Intangible Cultural heritage for Environmental Sustainability, towards Concrete Proposals on Harnessing Cultural Heritage for Environmental Sustainability - Shahid Beheshti University, 23-24 April 2017" (p. 84)
Activity 3.4. Virtual Calendar of the West and Central Asian ICH (Phase 2: Data-gathering). (p. 212)	Not implemented.
Activity 3.5. Tehran ICH Centre's 1 st International Research Festival on West and Central Asian ICH, on the Occasion of Nowrouz of 2016. 3 days. Location: National Museum of Iran, Tehran, Iran (Islamic Republic of). (p. 215)	Implemented in March 2016.
Activity 3.6. Tehran ICH Centre's 2 nd International Research Festival on West and Central Asian ICH, titled "West and Central Asian Puzzle and Board Games". (p. 219)	Implemented in November 2016.
OUTPUT 4: PROMOTING ICH	
Activity 4.1. Organizing sub-regional public events in Iran, or other Member States upon their interest, on special occasions, or in the name of the countries over the Region, to facilitate familiarization with the Region's ICH, in order to promote research on safeguarding and prepare the ground for such research. (p.224)	Not implemented.
Activity 4.2. Tehran ICH Centre's Promotional Regional Networking Project, titled "Establishing Kinship Relations among ICH Elements/Local Communities over the West and Central Asia" (Phase 1: Feasibility study of the subject over the Region and programming for a pilot	Not implemented.

project. (p. 228)	
Activity 4.3. Tehran ICH Centre's 2 nd Promotional Regional / International Competition. (p. 232)	Implemented with The First International Photography Competition of Tehran ICH Centre "Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Context", 2016-2017. (p. 90)
Activity 4.4. Promotion of the pilot project "Learning with Intangible Heritage for a Sustainable Future (Guidelines for Educators in the Asia-Pacific Region)" on the West and Central Asia (Phase 1). (p. 236)	Not implemented.
OUTPUT 5: OTHERS ACTIVITIES.	
5.1. Holding Tehran ICH Centre's 3rd Ordinary Governing Council Meeting (May 2016).	Implemented on 28-30 May 2016 (pp. 80 and 95)
5.2. Preparation for the 2017 GC Meeting.	Implemented on 28-29 May 2017.
5.3. Holding two meetings of Centre's Executive Board.	1 st Meeting implemented on 10-11 September 2016. (pp. 82 and 95). 2 nd Meeting implemented on 24-25 July 2018. (pp. 93 and 97)

Thus, the Centre has only partially fulfilled its action plans for a range of reasons, which are mainly related to the Centre's current human and financial resource situation, as discussed respectively in sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2 below. The evaluators are of the view that the Centre's focus must be narrowed and, consequently, its functions must be reduced. The Centre also supports this viewpoint, since it significantly limited its activities for 2018 and the early 2019, focusing on capacity-building and research. In light of the achieved results of the Centre (and in light of the need to avoid overlapping with other mandates of other C2C in the Region, as discussed in section 5.3.1 below) it seems advisable to propose that the mandate shall be reduced in the sense of restricting it to capacity building or transmission, both of a formal and non-formal nature.

5.3 Quality of interaction and collaboration

5.3.1 Relationships with UNESCO

This section addresses the quality of coordination and interaction of the Centre with UNESCO, both at Headquarters and in the field, as well as with other thematically-related C2Cs, with regard to the planning and implementation of programmes.

a) UNESCO Headquarters

Article 10 of the Agreement, replicated in Article 7.1 of the Constitution, provides that

1. UNESCO shall provide assistance in the form of technical contributions for the activities of the Centre in accordance with the strategic goals and objectives of UNESCO.

2. UNESCO undertakes to:

- (a) provide the assistance of its experts in the specialized fields of the Centre;
- (b) include the Centre in various programmes that it implements and in which the participation of the latter seems beneficial to UNESCO's and the Centre's objectives;
- (c) engage in temporary staff exchanges when appropriate, whereby the staff concerned will remain on the payroll of the dispatching organizations;
- (d) provide the Centre with relevant information on its programmes related to intangible cultural heritage.

3. In the cases listed above, such assistance shall not be undertaken except within the provisions of UNESCO's programmes and budget.

During the interviews, it was indicated that UNESCO Headquarters are highly responsive to technical assistance requests from the Centre. Several staff of the Centre expressed their appreciation of the efforts of UNESCO Headquarters staff for taking care and effort in providing the Centre with useful responses to their email enquiries.

Since 2013, Annual Coordination meetings of C2Cs have been organized by UNESCO headquarters. These meetings take place at UNESCO headquarters in even years, and at different C2Cs in odd years. In 2017, the Centre co-organized a meeting in Shiraz.

Article 6(2)(i) of the Agreement (and also replicated in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Centre in largely the same terms), provides that an agreed function of the Centre is:

- a) to inform the Intergovernmental Committee and the Secretariat of the 2003 Convention about relevant activities in the Region and to assist as appropriate in the implementation of the 2003 Convention.

Several interviewees expressed that there is not enough feedback received by UNESCO from the Centre, leading to UNESCO often being not fully aware of the Centre's activities. The quality of coordination and interaction of the Centre with UNESCO, particularly at Headquarters and also in the field, with regard to planning and implementation of programmes, can be improved. The evaluators are of the view that there should be more feedback from the Centre to UNESCO in terms of planning the Centre's programmes in line with UNESCO's priorities and there should be more communication following the Centre's implementation of its programmes and activities. Interviewees also expressed a desire to implement more reporting mechanisms to UNESCO from the Centre with regard to its programmes and activities.

b) UNESCO Cluster Office in Tehran and UNESCO's Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran

Regarding the interaction and collaboration with the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office (hereinafter "UTCO") it is generally project-based and related to the organization of particular workshops or events. The Centre had interacted and collaborated with the UTCO in the organization of a capacity-building workshop in Turkmenistan in 2015. In relation to other countries, the UTCO did not have any relevant collaboration with the Centre. Several interviewees expressed their views that the UTCO could have done more to help organising the capacity building events in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The evaluators are of the view that there should be more support from the UTCO to the Centre with regard to the implementation of its activities.

c) UNESCO Field Offices

Chiefs of the Culture Unit at UNESCO's Bangkok Office have visited the Centre in Tehran representing the Director-General. But that seems to be largely the extent of activity, with communication lines being unclear. In the evaluators' view, clearer communication lines between the Centre and UNESCO field offices, going both ways and beyond just representation of the Director-General, need to be established, including a clear outline of expectations and deadlines for reporting on activities and consultation on design of programs, benefitting from the local experience of Field Offices.

d) Category II Centres

In terms of the Centre's interaction and coordination with other intangible cultural heritage-related C2Cs, the Centre does collaborate with them with regard to planning and implementation of programmes. For example, as one form of cooperation, in 2017 the Centre organised the 5th C2C meeting in Shiraz by writing to all the C2C in the region and inviting them to the meeting. In 2015, the former director (Dr Parmoun) cooperated with other C2C through the Centre mapping project about mapping research and studies on the safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region. The Centre conducted a statistical study for this project.

In 2016, the Centre participated in the advisory committee of the International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (CRIHAP; China ICH Centre). Moreover, cooperation occurred through the 5th C2C meeting in Shiraz organised by the Centre.

Eventually, in 2018, Mr Farid Tolou Parsa (assistant programme specialist for research) participated in the 6th Annual Coordination Meeting of C2C Centres Active in the Field of ICH (6th C2C meeting) held at UNESCO's Paris HQ.

It should be recalled that it is necessary for the Centre, as a C2C, to accomplish the mission of C2Cs, notably to have a regional focus, without overlapping and duplicating the action of other C2Cs (C.1 of the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy: "The Director-General shall undertake every two years a mapping exercise of all category 2 institutes and centres, drawing on information provided by sectoral focal points in liaison with the directors and staff of category 2 institutes and centres. This information shall include the thematic specialization and geographic coverage of all category 2 institutes and centres; information on the contribution of each entity to UNESCO's programme results at the MLA level (see B.4.1. and B.4.2. above); information

on all costs incurred as a result of interaction with category 2 entities; and the identification of best practices in promoting South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation. This exercise shall not only help to provide information about longer-term trends, but also help avoid redundancies and overlaps with other centres by United Nations-affiliated institutes or centres, such as those of the United Nations University”). In Asia, there are three other C2Cs that work on ICH, as listed in the introduction above. The CRIHAP, IRCI and ICHCAP, covering the Asia-Pacific region, have different mandates, namely capacity building, research, and information and networking, respectively. However, the Centre which covers the geographical scope of West and Central Asia has a very broad mandate which spans across all three of the aforementioned mandated areas of the other C2Cs in the Asia-Pacific region. Some representatives of UNESCO and the Centre, when interviewed, were aware that overlaps have emerged between the programmes and activities of these C2Cs since all centres may be influenced by their funding sources and the demands of participating States in order to set their agenda and carry out their activities, and have noted that this is a systemic issue across all C2Cs.

The Centre’s focus must be narrowed and, consequently, its functions must be reduced. Based on the Centre’s current human and financial resource situation, as discussed respectively in sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2 below, this would also prove to be the most practical situation.

5.3.2 National Commissions for UNESCO.

There have been interactions between the Centre and National Commissions for UNESCO. The Centre issues letters to the National Commissions, for instance. During the evaluation mission, when questioned on the current participation of member states in the centre and the division in five categories of countries in the operations of the centre, the officials answered that it was discussed that the ICH sections of national commissions should establish reliable communication channels with its counterparts in all five operational groups, however it seems not to be followed. It was mentioned by ICH representatives that the correspondence goes through the embassies of the member countries concerned. This may lead to late communication and then result in lack of participation. After late receiving of the letter National Commissions may not have adequate time for selection of the participant, which is why the representative comes either from National Commissions or the Embassy, and the person may not necessarily represent the ICH community. Normally the delegates come to Tehran 1-2 times per year, the attendance is linked to ICH governance body sessions or expert meetings. As a positive note, during the interviews, the official pointed out that they have started to communicate with other member states’ representatives by email and other electronic means (such as ‘WhatsApp’). Easier and faster communications contribute to participation of member states increasing over time.

5.4 Institutional Arrangements

5.4.1 Governing Council

The Centre has a dual governing structure, as set out in the Agreement, consisting of a Governing Council and an Executive Board, assisted by the Secretariat of the Centre. Article 7(1) provides that the Governing Board is to be composed of:

- a) a representative of the ICHHTO;
- b) a representative of two Member States that have sent a notification, in accordance with the stipulations of Article 5, paragraph 2, above;
- c) a representative of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO;
- d) a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO;
- e) three specialists in the field of intangible cultural heritage (see Annex 9 for list of Governing Council members).

The Governing Council is required by Article 7(3) of the Agreement to meet in ordinary session at least annually and since the Centre’s inception it has held four Governing Council meetings in ordinary session on 6-7 November 2012, 4-6 May 2015, 28-30 May 2016 and 3-4 September 2018, and one meeting in extraordinary session in 21-22 May 2013. The purpose of the Governing Council is to guide and supervise the Centre as per Article 7(1) of the Agreement, and one of the main goals of the Governing Council meetings is to approve the work plans and budget of the Centre as provided in Article 7(2)(a) and (b).

The evaluators agree with certain comments made during the interviews which noted that including all States participating in the Centre as member States of the Governing Council would be problematic because it would

be impossible, in practice, to guarantee meaningful representation or participation by all States. It would not only be highly difficult at the current level of participation by States in the Region (12 countries at present), but would give rise to an increased level of difficulty if all 24 countries in the Region participated in the Centre's Governing Council. Yet, currently membership of two States in the Governing Council (or three, under a minor amendment adopted on 28 May 2016, by Decision 05/TICH Ct/GC-O-003/05-16) does not offer sufficient representation of the Region. Thus, as has been suggested by several interviewees, the evaluators also agree that it is necessary to increase the representation of participating States in the governing body of the Centre.

5.4.2 Executive Board

The Executive Board, as provided for in Article 8 of the Agreement, exists to ensure the effective running of activities of the Centre between Governing Council sessions. The Executive Board has met twice, once in September 2016 and another time in July 2018, and is comprised of Chairperson of the Council, three representatives from the States Members to the Centre, with one representative from each of the three electoral groups (namely, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Arab States) and three of the Expert Members of the Council.

5.4.3 Leadership

From the date that Dr Parmoun resigned until the 4th Ordinary Meeting of the Governing Council (hereinafter "4th Governing Council Meeting") held on 3-4 September 2018 with the election of Dr Janet Blake as the new Director of the Centre, the Centre did not have a Director elected by any Governing Council, even though it had two Acting Directors, one of whom still in charge. It should be noted that the incoming elected Director had not yet commenced in the role as of January 2019, and as this evaluation was underway, the Cultural Heritage Deputy of the ICCHTO, advised the evaluators that the elected Director cannot commence in the role, therefore the Centre still remains without an elected Director and a new election of a Director is needed .

Despite the fact that Acting Directors have the full capacity proper of elected Directors, the absence of a truly elected Director, lasted for almost 2 years, has given rise to deficiencies in the Centre's detailed comprehension of ICH matters and its capacity to design and implement the Centre's operational strategies; this is particularly evident in relation to long term planning and achievements. The absence of an elected Director led to Dr Janet Blake, in a consultant role, assuming the main responsibility to assist the Centre in delivering the Centre's 4th Governing Council Report and the Draft Action Plan 2018-2019, as expressed by several interviewees. In practice, it appears that the leadership component for direction of ICH at present has been provided by inputs from Dr Janet Blake, in addition to Mr Rahul Goswami and Mr Gaura Mancacarita Dipura, account for the 3 Expert Members of the Governing Council, and assumed Sub-Director roles in attempting to bridge the lack of leadership of an elected nature. These three individuals are highly respected professionals of international renown amongst their peers and with a substantial track record in ICH in their own right. Yet, while their role may seem to be in line with Article 5(5) of the Centre's Constitution on the overall 'out-sourcing strategy' and while they add value to the Centre through their association with it, they were not resourced or appointed to 'direct' the Centre and their advice is not always openly acknowledged, mediated or negotiated. This is related to a structural governance issue and has resulted in delays to projects which have been approved by the Governing Board as part of the Centre work programme, due to uncertainty on the part of the Director-General and staff about which advice to preference.

In addition to lacking clear direction and a nuanced understanding of ICH expertise, the absence of a notable and distinguished elected Director has the potential to reduce the Centre's international standing and recognition.

The evaluators believe that the renewal of the Centre should be contingent upon the election and appointment of a Director who graduated in social and human science, has extensive knowledge of and professional experience at least of 5 years in the field of cultural heritage (with at least half of this experience specific to ICH), has excellent knowledge of English and/or French, has extensive experience of working in an international context and in particular of the workings of UNESCO and has a professional experience with managerial tasks.

5.5 Organisational Management

5.5.1 Human resources

Part 2 of the Centre's Book of Rules & Regulations, adopted by the 1st Extraordinary Meeting of the Governing Council, on the Administrative and Employment By Law for Tehran ICH Centre (hereinafter "Administrative and Employment By Law") provides in Article 15-1 that the general conditions for hiring employees include:

1. Iranian nationality,
2. Follower of Islam or any of the official religions of the country,
3. Physical and psychological competence for the position, verified by the medical experts of Tehran Health Office,
4. Minimum Grade Point Average of 14,
5. Having completed military service or possessing exemption certificate for men,
6. Enjoying good reputation, having no criminal record or drug addiction,
7. Not being employed in other organizations/ departments, etc.

Special conditions for hiring employees provided in Article 15-2 state that new employees "should also possess the special qualifications required for that position, such as academic degree, experience or other conditions set by the Centre."

The Centre currently consists of 11 staff (excluding the newly elected director) and is organised in three sections: financial & administrative affairs section, external relations & public information section and intangible cultural heritage section (see Annex 10 for list of staff at the Centre). The Centre's staff members have wide-ranging backgrounds related to cultural heritage, including linguistics, English translation, and one staff with a background in anthropology, but very few of them have specialized in intangible cultural heritage or the specific mechanisms of the 2003 Convention.

Moreover, based on interviews and consideration of a chart indicating the Centre's staff and their positions, provided to the evaluator by the Centre's staff (included in Annex 3 and also page 106 of the 4th GC Report"), several weaknesses have been identified in relation to the human resources base at the Centre.

- 1) From the date that Dr Parmoun resigned until the 4th Governing Council Meeting held on 3-4 September 2018 with the election of Dr Janet Blake as the new Director of the Centre, the Centre did not have an elected Director. It should be noted that the incoming elected Director cannot commence in the role, therefore the Centre remains without an elected Director and a new election of a Director is needed.
- 2) The Centre seems too segmented and dispersive with only a few staff members for, and some vacant positions within, each section of the Centre. It also seems to employ staff in areas in which their skillset is only needed sporadically, and that could be better used with staff whose expertise is deployed full-time in the running of the Centre.
- 3) Whilst acknowledging that the language in Article 15-2 of the Administrative and Employment By Law is permissive rather than mandatory and acknowledging that the Centre's staff have worked hard on organizing and facilitating the programmes and activities of the Centre, their lack of knowledge, for most of the members, of the 2003 Convention seems to generate misunderstandings about the required activities of the Centre. During the interviews, it was indicated that capacity-building workshops conducted at the Centre-level in Iran and participation of some of its staff members in the Centre's capacity-building workshops for other State Parties has served as a means to fill in the gaps in Centre staff member's own knowledge.
- 4) The Centre's staff members do not seem to possess the competencies to define and plan the programmes and activities for the Centre. This was corroborated by several interviewees who indicated, particularly in relation to the past two years when the Centre did not have an elected Director, that it was the consultant to the Centre (Dr Blake prior to her election as Director of the Centre), who was largely responsible for preparing the 2018 Action Plan. In addition, after Dr Parmoun's departure some members of staff with the most competency in ICH felt sidelined to non-managerial positions and several interviewees suggested that this has limited affected staff members' ability to contribute to the key work of the Centre. Staff currently occupying the core managerial positions do not seem to have the required expertise in intangible cultural heritage and the international context, particularly relating to UNESCO.

The evaluators consider that these weaknesses in the human resources of the Centre can explain the difficulties of the Centre in defining long-term strategy and annual work plans. This situation may improve

with the recent election of a director who has a broad expertise in intangible cultural heritage and the international context, particularly relating to UNESCO. Yet, it is imperative, in our view, that the organizational and staffing structure of the Centre be reconsidered. To this effect, some guidelines for consideration are:

- 1) That new staff be recruited with a solid understanding of ICH and its intricacies; good language skills in English and / or French, as well as regional languages; and good understanding of the international context, in particular that related to UNESCO and how UNESCO operates;
- 2) That staff's current levels of appointment be reconsidered in relation to their job descriptions and skillset, so as to enable the Centre to redirect its energies to effectively fulfilling its mandate, in line with other recommendations by this evaluation.

5.5.2. Financial Resources

As previously mentioned in section 5.1 and as stated in Article 11 of the Agreement, the Centre's budget is financed exclusively by the Iranian Government, through the intermediary of the ICHHTO, who is to provide "all the resources, either financial or in kind, needed for the administration and proper functioning of the Centre, including the resources needed for the staff of the Centre, for its premises, for the organization of activities of the Centre and for the organization of the meetings of the Governing Council and Executive Board." It is also provided that in terms of financial resources, "for the initial years an amount equivalent to at least US \$500,000 will be made available per year" to the Centre. Furthermore, a maximum of 20% of the funds are to be allocated towards salaries.

The interviewees indicated that the levels of financing from the ICHHTO had not remained constant, particularly from 2016 onwards, and that the value of the Centre's budget had decreased because the exchange rate of one Iranian Rial was only equivalent to a quarter of a US dollar. The budget has therefore shrunk, while participation by State Parties has increased, and the number of staff and activities of the Centre have also grown over time. Despite such increases, the budget has not kept up with such growth. A majority of the interviewees agreed on the fact that the Centre lacks financial resources, and had consistently cited this as a justification for why the Centre was unable to conduct certain mandatory activities, such as the 4th Governing Council Meeting in 2017.

It also emerged from the interviews that although the Centre does not have any additional sources of finance or income, the Centre has received assistance on an ad hoc basis in the form of direct subsidies for its activities. For instance, on the occasion of the 5th C2C Meeting in Shiraz, the municipality of Shiraz made a contribution to cover part of the cost of the Meeting and paid for accommodation and excursions for participants to the Meeting; as per the 3rd Expert Meeting conducted by the Centre and Shahid Beheshti University, the University sponsored part of the Meeting; also Armenia paid for the accommodation and other expenses of the facilitators in occasion of the capacity building workshop held in Armenia. The evaluators are of the view that such financing system also entails key risks:

- 1) Potential diversion of the Centre's resources away from its mandated objectives as established in the Integrated Comprehensive Plan towards fundraising activities to supplement the insufficient budget actually received by the Centre;
- 2) If the Centre relies on subsidies or sponsorships from additional sources, in particular from other participating States in the Centre, then its programmes and activities will likely be undertaken to meet the requests of other States rather than to fulfil its function as stipulated in Article 6(2) of the Agreement;
- 3) If the Centre's activities favour certain countries because those activities are subsidised in full or in part, then the Centre will not be truly regional in scope.

The language of Article 11 of the Agreement permits the interpretation that "for the initial years an amount equivalent to at least US \$500,000" to be made available to the Centre can be "either financial or in kind". Indeed, it has emerged from the interviews that this has been the understanding of the ICHHTO and the Centre. The interviewees indicated that the Centre's budget in large part is paid in kind, for example, through the provision and maintenance of the Centre's premises by the ICHHTO. It was also indicated that the cost of providing and maintaining the Centre's premises is expensive and has been increasing. While it is acknowledged that the payment of the Centre's budget, partially in kind, has assisted the Centre in its ability to conduct its programmes and activities, as Article 11 requires that the Iranian Government should provide "all the resources....needed for the administration and proper functioning of the Centre", with an initial

budget of “at least” US \$500,000, it indicates that US \$500,000 is merely the minimum starting amount, and it implies that resources should not be viewed as competing for a fixed and limited pool of funds in the sense that spending on one type of resource should not permit the encroachment of spending on another resource. Spending on the Centre’s “premises” should not encroach on the Centre’s ability to receive and use its budget for the “organization of activities of the Centre” and for the “organization of the meetings of the Governing Council and Executive Board”. Given that the cost of providing and maintaining the Centre’s premises is increasing and that the cost of staff salaries is increasing (by virtue of the fact that new staff have recently joined the Centre and due to the mandatory salary increases required by Iranian law). In addition to the fact that the Centre is no longer in its infancy and conducts an expanded programme compared to its initial years, the evaluators are of the view that the Centre’s budget should be increased above the minimum amount of US \$500,000.

Thus, the current budget total is less than US \$500,000, the Centre’s full entitlement. Compared to other C2Cs, this is somewhat less than the annual budget of the CRIHAP (approximately US \$912,000) and significantly less than the ICHCAP (US \$2.5 million). During the evaluation mission, officials were asked about the funds received from the Iranian Government and confirmed that the Centre appears to under-spend as it receives less money than their full entitlement. The staff highlighted that US \$500,000, in any case, is too small an amount for the needs of the Centre and given the economic fluctuations in Iran, it seems they will need more money in the future in order for the Centre to operate properly. Interviewees from the Centre noted that they would need at least US \$1 million or US \$1.5 million yearly. Moreover, they confirmed that the Centre has not generated income autonomously.

As this evaluation was underway, the Government of Iran sent a letter to ICHHTO, which was transmitted to the evaluators. This correspondence noted that the ICHHTO recognises the commitment to maintain the Centre’s budget pursuant to article 11 of the Agreement, and that the “*ICHHTO succeeded to obtain preliminary positive confirmation for increasing the Centre’s budget [with the Iranian Organization for Planning and Budget]*”. Additionally, the ICHHTO recognised the importance on providing the Centre’s budget in “*US dollars, when possible*” (Correspondence received 26/11/2018). The payment in US dollars is centrally important for the functioning of the Centre, given the fluctuation in exchange rates, and particularly the difference in the official and market exchange rates between the US dollar and the Iranian Rial. Therefore, in our view payment should always be done in US dollars.

5.5.3. Accommodation

Another predominant resourcing issue concerns the premises and facilities provided to the Centre. Whereas the location itself is spacious, the evaluators pointed out that some rooms on the premises were assigned to other entities and institutions, unrelated to ICH. As a result, the Centre encounters difficulties in organizing specific events, such as ‘cultural nights’ and exhibitions. During the evaluation mission, officials were asked about opportunities for increased or improved facilities for the Centre, and it was identified that future plans for the Centre are dependent on the ICHHTO and the Iranian Government. Although, in correspondence received since the evaluation mission, the ICHHTO noted that it is attempting to secure a new premise to accommodate the other entities’ staff: “*ICHHTO is trying to find another building for the staff of other [entities located within the Centre’s premises]*” (Correspondence received 26/11/2018). In the evaluators’ view, it is important that the activities of the ICHHTO and the Centre be physically separate, not only for logistical reasons, but also so as to support the independence of the Centre.

5.6 Results-based Management

The Centre regularly conducts self-assessment as required for all UNESCO C2C. However, more efforts are to be made to align its programme cycle management with the results-based approach. While the programme documents refer to the objectives and expected outcomes, the reports often list the activities organized as outputs, and are not analytical enough so as to evaluate the outcomes of the implemented activities. It would be useful for the Centre to improve its overall programme objectives (not only against the projects and activities), on the basis of the existing tools such as a mid-term strategy, self-assessment scheme, questionnaires for partners (e.g. workshop participants). In developing performance indicators, it would be appropriate to include the gender dimension, which would help better streamlining the Centre’s approach to gender equity and equality in its strategic planning and implementation.

5.7 Conformity with UNESCO Strategy for Category 2 Centres

The Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for C2 Institutes and Centres under the Auspices of UNESCO (37 C/18 Part I) includes a range of stipulations that all C2Cs, including the Centre, are expected to meet. A summary of the key stipulations and an assessment of the extent to which each is met is summarised in Table 2 below.

<u>Stipulation in Revised Strategy</u>	<u>Assessment</u>
Legal status – Each category institute or centre must be independent of UNESCO and have the legal capacity necessary for it to function under the laws of the country in which it is located.	During the evaluation mission, officials pointed out that, due to bureaucratic issues, the Centre has faced several difficulties to reach the level of autonomy that it should have according to the Agreement with UNESCO. Nevertheless, 2 months before the mission the Centre eventually obtained a VAT number from the Iranian Government.
Governance – Each C2 institute and centre must have a governing body or a similar supervisory and decision-making mechanism, which shall meet annually. Such body shall appoint the director and approve the budget and the programme of activities. UNESCO must be represented as a full member in the governing body.	An independent governing body of the Centre, its Governing Council, was established according to UNESCO's Integrated Comprehensive Strategy. UNESCO is represented in the Board. The term of the Board members is 4 years. Since the Centre's inception it has held four Governing Council meetings in ordinary session on 6-7 November 2012, 4-6 May 2015, 28-30 May 2016 and 3-4 September 2018, and one meeting in extraordinary session in 21-22 May 2013.
Geographical scope – The activities and operations of C2 institutes and centres must be global, regional, sub-regional or interregional in scope. Entities with a national scope only do not qualify for designation as C2 institutes and centres.	The geographical scope of the Centre's activities is the West and Central Asian region as provided for in Article 8 of the Constitution. The Centre's geographical scope is further defined and enumerated in the Document on the Geographical Domain of the Centre submitted to, and adopted by, the 1 st Ordinary Meeting of the Governing Council. The evaluators noted that the Centre has actively engaged partners in Asia since its inception. Despite well-known political tensions, 12 countries currently participate in the Centre including Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iraq, Armenia, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iran.
Contribution to UNESCO's programmes – Each C2 entity shall contribute to the achievement of UNESCO's strategic programme objectives and global priorities of the Organisation, as well as sectoral or intersectoral programme priorities or themes.	From the interviews, the evaluators are led to believe that the Centre does not directly contribute to UNESCO's programs, and is free to set its own programming, as long as it broadly conforms to UNESCO priorities. Therefore, the contribution is indirect, but the Centre's programmes and activities are aligned with UNESCO's strategic programme objectives and priorities, in spite of the lack of specific knowledge of UNESCO and its functioning among staff.
Reporting – Directors of all C2 institutes and centres shall be required to submit to UNESCO a biennial report with information on the contribution of the activities of the institutes or centres to UNESCO's strategic programme objectives, global and sector priorities as well as sectoral expected results.	From the interviews, the evaluators are led to believe that the Centre complies with the rules on reporting to UNESCO. Nevertheless, they also believe that communication lines could be improved.

6. Recommendations

As set out in the Terms of Reference, this evaluation provides recommendations to be considered by the Centre. The recommendations have been organized as follows:

- A) A general recommendation on whether renewal of the Centre's status as a C2C should be warranted and whether the Centre's work conforms to the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy and to the Agreement;
- B) Specific recommendations to the Centre for improving the effectiveness of its operations, in the event it is to continue operations as a C2C;
- C) Specific recommendations to UNESCO for improving the effectiveness of its coordination and interaction with the Centre, should the Centre's status be renewed;
- D) Specific recommendations for possible amendments to the Agreement, in the event it is to be renewed.

A) General Recommendation to renew the Centre's status as a C2C

Based on the results of the evaluation, despite the Centre facing a variety of human resources and financial difficulties, the Centre has worked hard in to deliver on its agreed functions, and the Centre is generally appreciated by State Parties, particularly for the capacity-building programming. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Centre complied partially with the objectives and functions set under the Agreement and to the mandate of C2Cs. The Centre's programmes and activities were effective in:

- Enhancing the visibility of the Convention in the West and Central Asia Region
- Increasing the capacities of participating States of the Centre to safeguarding their intangible cultural heritage through workshops
- Providing the medium for dialogue, discussion and cooperation amongst State Parties and experts at the regional and international levels in relation to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage

Therefore, it is recommended that the Agreement for the Centre be renewed between UNESCO and the Iranian Government, subject to the adoption of the following key recommendations:

1. The Centre evaluates the range of its functions, and narrows them down to make its activities more realistically achievable, with a view to enhancing its contribution to UNESCO's priorities. In particular, that the renewed Agreement allows the Centre to refocus its activities towards capacity-building, with less resources spent on awareness-raising;
2. The Centre undertakes its programmes and activities as set out in the 2018 Action Plan, and continues to develop those in full consideration of the Agreement's provisions on the functions and objectives of the Centre;
3. The Centre elects and appoints a Director who graduated in social and human science, has extensive knowledge of and professional experience at least of 5 years in the field of cultural heritage (with at least half of this experience specific to ICH), has excellent knowledge of English and/or French, has extensive experience of working in an international context and in particular of the workings of UNESCO and has a professional experience with managerial tasks.; and
4. Provision to the Centre by the Iranian Government through its intermediary the ICHHTO of at least the mandatory budget of US \$500,000 (or the remaining balance for the 2018 work year until April 2019). The total value of the budget to be provided to the Centre should not be reduced by contributions already made in kind, e.g. the cost of rent and repairing the premises. Payment should be made promptly, as a lump sum in US Dollars and not in kind, for the purpose of allowing the Centre to undertake its programmes and activities as provided for in the 2018 Action Plan.

B) Specific Recommendations for improving performance of the Centre

This evaluation process has identified various strengths of the Centre such as capacity-building and connecting stakeholders in the region, as well as noted the successful impact of services activities in the Region. Yet, as described in the findings, a number of challenges should be addressed by the Centre. The evaluators provide their specific recommendations in order to assist the Centre to improve the effectiveness of its operations.

• Capacity Building

The Centre should work in cooperation with the other C2Cs, by convening more meetings either by distance or in person (in addition to the yearly meeting organized by UNESCO) so as to enable the director to share activities implemented and planned in order to avoid overlaps. Given that the programmes and activities of the C2Cs can easily overlap, it is also strongly recommended to increase joint activities and, when the activity is not co-organised, promote the participation of a representative from other C2C as an observer.

Based on the desk review and interviews, the evaluators strongly recommend reducing the functions of the Centre to those mandated in the Agreement and the Constitution.

• Publication and Dissemination

We recommend more publications, and in more regional languages, e.g. through multimedia production, e-newsletter, website and meetings for presenting the Convention and disseminating good practices.

• Human resources

The evaluation revealed a lack of knowledge and understanding of the 2003 Convention, and in general, intangible cultural heritage by the Centre's staff. It is strongly recommended that the Centre take relevant measures in order to fill these gaps. The Centre should be able to count on staff members, in every section of the Centre, to not only have expertise in their specialised area of work but, more importantly, to know the features and mechanisms of the 2003 Convention. Further, as the scope of intervention of the Centre in the region is broad, the staff should have the capacities to understand the region. In order to do so, the Centre should hire international staff from the region, and the conditions for employment in the Centre should be reviewed accordingly.

- **Financial resources & Programme cycle management**

The evaluation has shown that the Centre's expenditure has grown exponentially due to the way in which payments are currently processed. As such, we recommend that the Iranian Government cooperate fully in the payment of its dues to the Centre, as set out in the Agreement. Further, it is important that the Centre develop its own sources of funding, particularly philanthropic support.

- **Accommodation**

The evaluation has shown that some rooms of the premises, where the Centre is located, are assigned to other entities and institutions, unrelated to ICH. As a result, the Centre faces difficulties in organizing specific events. As such, we recommend that the activities of the ICHHTO and the Centre be physically separate, not only for logistical reasons, but also so as to support the independence of the Centre.

- **Relations with UNESCO entities**

The Centre should submit periodic reports or updates to UNESCO on the progress of their main programmes and activities by email. These reports could simply be based on weekly staff meetings of the Centre and be truly informative and transparent.

- **Global Outreach**

The Centre should engage in activities across the region and beyond that showcase the region's safeguarding programs (and not just its heritage). To that effect, outreach needs to be carefully planned in close collaboration with UNESCO (Headquarters and regional offices) and other C2Cs to ensure advance preparation, coherence in approaches and a strong contextualization of the actions proposed.

That said, in the evaluators' view global outreach should be a second phase of the activities of the Centre, after it has consolidated its position in relation to the states covered within its geographical scope.

C) Specific Recommendations for improving performance of UNESCO with regard to the Centre

Until now the relationships between UNESCO field Offices, in particular UTCO and UNESCO's Bangkok Office, and the Centre have not been fully maximized. Some challenges that concern all C2Cs have to be taken into account.

- **Coordination**

Given the geographical scope overlaps between the Centre and other relevant C2Cs, UNESCO field Offices, in particular UTCO and UNESCO's Bangkok Office, stand to play an important role in coordinating possible joint action involving two or more C2Cs in the region. UNESCO field Offices, in particular UTCO and UNESCO's Bangkok Office, could also play a role in supporting the Centre's primary role, which is in relation to UNESCO goals.

- **Interaction with the Centre**

The evaluators deem it important that lines of communication between the Centre and UNESCO HQ be kept open by the Centre, and a way to ensure that is to have regular communications between the two.

- **Global Outreach**

In the evaluators' view, closer interaction between UNESCO field Offices, in particular UTCO and UNESCO's Bangkok Office, and the Centre, as well as UNESCO regional Offices playing an active role in facilitating the exchange of experiences among C2Cs will greatly support the work of the Centre in its global outreach.

D) Specific Recommendations for possible amendments to the Agreement establishing the Centre

In consideration of the above, we recommend that the following minor changes to the Agreement be pursued:

First, that Article 7(1)(b) be amended to reflect the participation of four Member States from the region in the Centre's Governing Council. We note that such a minor amendment has already been undertaken in 2016 to expand the number from two to three, but, for the reasons stated above, we recommend a larger expansion to at least four countries from the region in addition to Iran.

Second, we recommend that the last sentence of Article 11 be amended thusly: "For the duration of this agreement an amount equivalent to at least US \$1,000,000, paid in US Dollars and in addition to in kind contributions, will be made available per year." This minor amendment will provide the Centre with stronger financial footing to pursue its activities.

Third, we recommend that Article 6(1) of the Agreement be amended thusly: "The objectives of the Centre will be: (a) to strengthen capacities and cooperation in the Region for transmitting, in a formal and non-formal way, intangible cultural heritage in order to contribute to its safeguarding." This amendment will allow the Centre to achieve its plans more fully and will help to avoid overlapping with other C2Cs in the Region.

Fourth, we recommend that Articles 6(2)(i) and 6(2)(k) of the Agreement be reconsidered and perhaps deleted, so as to focus the Centre's mandate and narrow its field of competence, in line with the recommendations in this evaluation.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, in spite of multiple difficulties, the Centre still is a valuable asset for the pursuance of UNESCO priorities in the region. However, the Centre's activities and structures require changing so as to ensure its independence, and that it serves UNESCO more clearly. Steps are recommended so as to enhance and protect the Centre's independence, and to redirect its efforts towards capacity building as a key priority. We also recommend that the Centre hires staff, including directors, with a broad expertise in ICH and the international context, particularly relating to UNESCO, and with capacities to understand the relevant region.

Annexes

- 1) List of Interviewees
- 2) Questionnaires
- 3) Organizational Chart
- 4) List of Provided Documents
- 5) Correspondence 26th November 2018
- 6) Minutes 2nd Ordinary Meeting GC - Action Plan 2015
- 7) Draft Action Plan 2016
- 8) Draft Action Plan 2018
- 9) Minutes 3rd Ordinary Meeting GC
- 10) Minutes 4th Ordinary Meeting GC
- 11) Terms of Reference

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

AND

**THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)**

**REGARDING THE CONTINUATION, IN TEHRAN, OF A REGIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE FOR
SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO (CATEGORY 2)**

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (hereinafter referred to as “the Government”)

and

the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereinafter referred to as “UNESCO”),

Recalling the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter referred to as “the 2003 Convention”), which was adopted in 2003 by the 32nd session of UNESCO’s General Conference and entered into force in April 2006,

Acknowledging the importance of applying the guidelines and criteria for Category 2 Centres adopted by the General Conference in the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO in November 2013 (ref. 37 C/Resolution 93),

Further recalling that the General Conference at its 35th session in 2009 approved the establishment of the Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia under the auspices of UNESCO (ref. 35 C/Resolution 57),

Further recalling the 207 EX/Decision [...] by which UNESCO’s Executive Board decided to renew the status of the Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2),

Desirous of defining the terms and conditions governing the framework for cooperation with UNESCO that shall be granted to the said Centre in this Agreement,

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

**Article 1
Continuation**

The Government shall agree to take, in the course of the years 2019 and 2020 (equal to the Persian calendar 1398 and 1399), any measures that may be required for assuring the functioning in Tehran (Islamic Republic of Iran), as provided for under this Agreement, of the Regional Research Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia, hereinafter called the “Centre”.

**Article 2
Purpose of the Agreement**

The purpose of this Agreement is to define the terms and conditions governing collaboration between UNESCO and the Government and also the rights and obligations stemming therefrom for the Government and UNESCO, hereafter referred to as the ‘Parties’.

**Article 3
Legal Status**

1. The Centre shall be independent of UNESCO.
2. The Government shall ensure that the Centre, while being associated to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has an autonomous legal status and that it enjoys in the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran the functional autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and the legal capacity:
 - (a) to contract;
 - (b) to institute legal proceedings;
 - (c) to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

Article 4 Constitutive Act

The constitutive act of the Centre must include provisions describing precisely:

- (a) the legal status granted to the Centre, within the national legal system, the legal capacity necessary to exercise its functions and to receive funds, obtain payments for services rendered, and acquire all means necessary for its functioning;
- (b) a governing structure for the Centre allowing UNESCO representation within its governing body.

Article 5 Participation

1. The Centre shall encourage the participation of Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO that, by their common interest in the objectives of the Centre, desire to cooperate with the Centre.
2. Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO wishing to participate in the Centre's activities, as provided for under this Agreement, shall send to the Centre notification to this effect. The Director of the Centre shall inform the Parties to the Agreement and other Member States of the receipt of such notifications.

Article 6 Objectives and Functions

1. The objectives of the Centre will be:
 - (a) to promote the 2003 Convention and its implementation in West and Central Asia (hereinafter referred to as the "Region");
 - (b) to strengthen the capacity of the UNESCO Member States in the Region to safeguard intangible cultural heritage;
 - (c) to further cooperation and knowledge exchange for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage present in the Region, including shared intangible cultural heritage present in the territories of two or more of the States concerned.
2. The functions of the Centre will be:
 - (a) to organize long-term and short-term training workshops and field-based training activities, in accordance with the UNESCO global strategy in this field;

- (b) to create and keep up to date an automated information system registering and linking governmental and non-governmental institutions, research, educational and information institutions, community organizations and individual experts involved in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the States of the Region that have expressed the wish to cooperate through the Centre;
- (c) to gather and disseminate information on legal, administrative, financial and other measures taken by the States participating in the Centre with a view to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage present in their territory;
- (d) to cooperate and exchange information with other Category 2 Centres in and beyond Asia that are active in the field of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage;
- (e) to inform the Secretariat of the 2003 Convention about relevant activities in the Region and to assist as appropriate in the implementation of the 2003 Convention.

Article 7

Governing Council

1. The Centre shall be guided and supervised by a Governing Council, to be renewed every three years, and composed of:

- (a) a representative of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- (b) representatives of up to four Member States that have sent a notification, in accordance with the stipulations of Article 5, paragraph 2, above;
- (c) a representative of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO;
- (d) a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO;
- (e) three specialists in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

2. The Governing Council shall:

- (a) approve the long-term and medium-term programmes of the Centre;
- (b) approve the annual work plan of the Centre, including the staffing table;
- (c) examine the annual reports submitted by the Director of the Centre, including biennial self-assessment reports of the Centre's contribution to UNESCO's programme objectives;
- (d) examine the periodic independent audit reports of the financial statements of the Centre and monitor the provision of such accounting records necessary for the preparation of financial statements;
- (e) elect the members of the Centre's Executive Board and appoint the Director of the Centre;
- (f) adopt the rules and regulations and determine the financial, administrative and personnel management procedures for the Centre in accordance with the laws of the country
- (g) decide on the participation of regional intergovernmental organizations and international organizations in the work of the Centre.

3. The Governing Council shall meet in ordinary session at regular intervals, at least once every calendar year; it shall meet in extraordinary session if summoned by its Chairperson, either on his/her own initiative or at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO or of two thirds of its members.

4. All the working documents of the Governing Council, including the draft work plan and budget, need to be proposed by the Director of the Centre to UNESCO at least six weeks before the Governing Council meeting. UNESCO will provide feedback within two weeks of receiving them. Finally, the Centre will submit to the Governing Council a final version of those documents at least two weeks before the meeting;

5. The Governing Council shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure.

Article 8 Executive Board

1. In order to ensure the effective running of the Centre between the sessions of the Governing Council, a standing Executive Board shall:

- (a) supervise the execution of the Centre's programmes and activities;
- (b) make recommendations to the Governing Council concerning the strategy and the long-term and mid-term programmes of the Centre;

2. The Executive Board shall meet at least twice a year and adopt its own Rules of Procedure.

Article 9 Secretariat

1. The Centre's Secretariat shall consist of a Director and such staff as is necessary for the proper functioning of the Centre.

2. Decisions concerning the structure and the human resources of the Secretariat shall be taken by the Governing Council.

3. The Governing Council shall appoint the Director of the Centre, in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO, who should have recognized academic standing and professional experience in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

Article 10 UNESCO's contribution

1. UNESCO may provide assistance, as needed, in the form of technical assistance for the programme activities of the Centre, in accordance with the strategic goals and objectives of UNESCO by:

- (a) providing the assistance of its experts in the specialized fields of the Centre;
- (b) engaging in temporary staff exchanges when appropriate, whereby the staff concerned will remain on the payroll of the dispatching organizations; and,
- (c) seconding members of its staff temporarily, as may be decided by the Director-General of UNESCO on an exceptional basis if justified by the implementation of a joint activity/project within a strategic programme priority area.

2. In all the cases listed above, such assistance shall not be undertaken except within the provisions of UNESCO's programme and budget, and UNESCO will provide Member States with accounts relating to the use of its staff and associated costs.

Article 11

Contribution of the Government

In the National Annual Budget Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran a separate budget index shall be created for the Centre. The Government shall provide, through the intermediary of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Iran, all the resources, either financial or in kind, needed for the administration and proper functioning of the Centre, including the resources needed for the staff of the Centre, for its premises, for the organization of activities of the Centre and for the organization of the meetings of the Governing Council and Executive Board. For the duration of this Agreement, an amount equivalent to at least US \$500,000, in addition to in kind contributions, will be made available per year.

Article 12

Responsibility

As the Centre is legally separate from UNESCO, the latter shall not be legally responsible for the acts or omissions of the Centre, and shall also not be subject to any legal process, and/or bear no liabilities of any kind, be they financial or otherwise, with the exception of the provisions expressly laid down in this Agreement.

Article 13

Evaluation

1. UNESCO may, at any time, carry out an evaluation of the activities of the Centre in order to ascertain:
 - (a) whether the Centre makes a significant contribution to the UNESCO's strategic programme objectives and expected results aligned with the four-year programmatic period of C/5 document (Programme and Budget), including the two global priorities of UNESCO, and related sectoral or programme priorities and themes; and,
 - (b) whether the activities effectively pursued by the Centre are in conformity with those set out in this Agreement.
2. UNESCO shall, for the purpose of the review of this Agreement, conduct an evaluation of the contribution of the Category 2 Centre to UNESCO strategic programme objectives, to be funded by the host country or the Centre.
3. UNESCO undertakes to submit to the Government, at the earliest opportunity, a report on any evaluation conducted.
4. Following the results of an evaluation, each of the contracting Parties shall have the option of requesting a revision of its contents or of denouncing the Agreement, as envisaged in Articles 17 and 18.

Article 14

Use of UNESCO's name and logo

1. The Centre may mention its affiliation with UNESCO. It may therefore use after its title the mention "under the auspices of UNESCO".
2. The Centre is authorized to use the UNESCO logo or a version thereof on its letterheaded paper and documents including electronic documents and web pages in accordance with the conditions established by the governing bodies of UNESCO.

Article 15

Entry into force

This Agreement shall enter into force following its signature by the Parties. The Agreement between UNESCO and the Government regarding the establishment of the Centre signed on 28 April 2010 is superseded by this Agreement.

Article 16 **Duration**

This Agreement is concluded for a period of six years as from its entry into force. The Agreement shall be renewed upon common agreement between the Parties once UNESCO's Executive Board has made its comments based on the results of the renewal assessment provided by the Director-General of UNESCO.

Article 17 **Revision**

The present Agreement may be revised by written consent between the Government and UNESCO.

Article 18 **Denunciation**

1. Each of the contracting Parties shall be entitled to denounce this Agreement. The Parties undertake, however, in conformity with Article 19, to settle any dispute that may arise between them and to make every effort to avoid denunciation.
2. A denunciation shall take effect sixty days following receipt of the notification sent by one of the contracting Parties to the other.

Article 19 **Settlement of disputes**

1. Any dispute between UNESCO and the Government concerning the interpretation or application of this Agreement, if it is not settled by negotiation or any other appropriate method agreed to by the Parties, shall be submitted for final decision to an arbitration tribunal composed of three members, one of whom shall be appointed by the Government, another by the Director-General of UNESCO, and the third, who shall preside over the tribunal, chosen by the first two. If the two arbitrators cannot agree on the choice of the third, the appointment shall be made by the President of the International Court of Justice.
2. The Tribunal's decision shall be final.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned have signed this Agreement.

DONE in two copies in the English and Persian languages, both versions being equally authentic. In case of divergence between the English and Persian versions, the English version shall prevail.

For the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

For the Government

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General