

**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

ONLINE MEETING WITH PROPOSED PARTNER COUNTRIES

**BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR SAFEGUARDING LIVING HERITAGE AND PREPARING
NOMINATIONS TO THE LISTS OF THE 2003 CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF
THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN AFRICA**

**17 March 2025
Online**

Concept note

Background and rationale

1. The listing mechanisms of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage have been successful in raising awareness and enhancing the safeguarding of living heritage of communities around the world. In particular, the Representative List, Urgent Safeguarding List and the Registry of Good Safeguarding Practices highlight the significance of intangible cultural heritage, encourage the involvement of a broad spectrum of national and international stakeholders for its safeguarding, and foster a positive recognition of its fundamental importance for sustainable development. After four years of an inclusive reflection process between 2018 and 2022, the global reflection on the listing mechanisms led to the creation and improvement of a number of procedures which are reflected in the 2003 Convention's Operational Directives ([2024 edition](#)) as amended by the General Assembly of States Parties at its ninth session in 2022 (Resolution [9.GA 9](#)). These new or improved procedures have a common thread, which is to make the Lists and Register of the Convention more dynamic and interconnected, and to bring the concerns and aspirations of communities to the forefront.
2. Nomination files are the outcome of an extensive process that result from the shared engagement of communities and other stakeholders who work jointly to ensure the continued practice of a living heritage element. This process requires a solid understanding of the principles and objectives of the 2003 Convention and its Lists and Register, as well as the necessary expertise to develop nomination files based on community-driven and participatory approaches. However, until today, geographical imbalances exist with regard to elements inscribed. Additionally, the multiple cycles of the Evaluation Body¹ have also highlighted recurring challenges for first-time nominations to the Convention's Lists and Register, which may not always be drafted in compliance with technical requirements, lacking information about the proposed element or not being fully aligned with the spirit of the Convention.
3. Some of the challenges may include the lack of technical and financial capacities to prepare nomination files that respond to the inscription/selection criteria, the limited budget of the national heritage sector in many African countries (especially regarding activities related to the process of elaborating nominations to the Lists and the Register of the 2003 Convention), and the lack of solid mechanisms for sustained communities' involvement. At the same time, a considerable number of African States have acquired strong experience and expertise in terms of nominations and safeguarding living heritage, but their accomplishments lack visibility. These trends point to the need to strengthen capacities and explore South-South cooperation that can support capacity building in African States to carry out successful nomination processes ensuring a better representation on the Lists, accounting for the rich and diverse living heritage across the continent. Countries are moreover expressing the need for support to elaborate multi-national nominations as a tool for enhanced dialogue and regional integration within Africa, but also for cooperation and mutual understanding with States Parties beyond Africa.
4. Against this background, the project is dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the rich diversity of intangible cultural heritage in Africa with a focus on countries that do not yet have any element of living heritage inscribed on the Lists of the 2003 Convention (the proposed project's partner countries are: Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Sao Tome and Principe and South Sudan). It aims to strengthen the skills and knowledge of States Parties in the region to prepare nomination files for the Lists and the Register of the 2003 Convention, ensuring that Africa's living heritage receives greater recognition and representation. Through a combination of capacity-building initiatives, peer learning and experience-sharing opportunities among stakeholders, the project encourages South-South cooperation for intangible cultural heritage safeguarding. By facilitating dialogue between States Parties in Africa, it aims to create a supportive environment where expertise and good practices can be shared to strengthen nomination processes. Furthermore, by encouraging the integration

¹ The Evaluation Body is in charge of evaluating nomination files and making recommendations to the Committee for its decision as regards the inscription of an element.

of living heritage into broader culture sector policies, the project seeks to embed intangible cultural heritage into national and regional sustainable development frameworks.

5. In summary, the project includes an inception phase with three key objectives:
 - a) To establish a solid knowledge base through consultations and needs assessments, ensuring an implementation strategy tailored to the needs of the project countries.
 - b) To provide a platform for proposed partner countries to discuss the project, share their needs, aspirations and future plans related to nominations, and articulate their expectations and interest in the project.
 - c) To conduct an initial mapping of key stakeholders, at the national and regional level, to facilitate sustained engagement throughout the project's implementation.

Meeting objectives

6. As part of the project's inception phase, this online meeting aims to:
 - a) Present the project, its rationale, scope and objectives to the proposed partner countries.
 - b) Gather feedback from proposed project countries about their needs, aspirations and priorities for nominations to the Lists of the 2003 Convention, as well as their expectations and interest in the project.
 - c) Share information and address questions on the practical implications of the key outcomes of the global reflection on the Convention's listing mechanisms (2018 – 2022), including the simplified or newly created forms.
 - d) Present the preliminary results of a desk-based study on inventories in Africa, conducted within the framework of the project. The study assesses inventory status and needs, highlighting inventories of intangible cultural heritage as part of safeguarding and as a requirement for nominations on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (criterion R.5) and on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (criterion U.5).

Languages

7. The meeting will be held with English and French interpretation.