

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION 1

Creative Value of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development

Irina Bokova

Former Director-General of UNESCO

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants in today's forum, it is a pleasure to be with you here today for the opening of the 2021 World Forum for Intangible Cultural Heritage organized jointly by the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO, with the support of the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea.

From the beginning, let me share my fond memories of the 28th November 2011 for the inauguration of the center, which I had the honor to assist personally, and soon you will be celebrating your 10th anniversary. You should be proud of your achievements and contribution to a better understanding of the importance and value of intangible cultural heritage.

Now that the Republic of Korea has been elected for a third time as a member of the intergovernmental committee to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage for the period of 2020-2024, I'm confident that this purpose will be promoted and widely shared further on. I believe it also reflects the commitment of the Korean people to culture and heritage protection. It is through both the world heritage sites from the Jongmyo shrine to the Jeju

volcanic island and the historic villages of Hahoe and Yangdong. It is equally true for intangible cultural heritage. The Republic of Korea already has 21 intangible cultural assets such as the Royal ancestral ritual in the Jongmyo shrine and its music, the Gangneung Dano festival and Daemokjang traditional wooden architecture and many others. These are precious for the Korean people, but they are also part of the wider heritage of humanity.

Intangible cultural heritage is our bridge from the past to the future; it is how we understand the world and the means by which we shape it. Intangible cultural heritage is the precious possession of communities, groups and individuals. Only they can safeguard it and pass it on to generations to come. This is I believe the Convention's goal for safeguarding ICH provides the opportunity to discover living cultural expressions from across the world. But it is also a tool for social cohesion and the way to safeguard practices that are vital for achieving the United Nation's agenda for sustainable development 2030.

We have some dear friends a long way since the adoption of the Convention in 2003. Our starting point is quite clear. Intangible cultural heritage must be compatible with human rights. It should promote mutual respect among communities, and it should support human social-economic development and environmental protection. More than 180 states have rallied around these objectives, and I can express my deep satisfaction with the fact that this has been the fastest ratified convention adopted by UNESCO.

Robust in meaning, intangible cultural heritage is also vulnerable to the pressures of change. The United Nation's special reporter in the field of cultural rights emphasized already in 2019 the importance of documenting,

monitoring and analyzing risks of holistic impacts of disruption on ICH traditions. This makes safeguarding all the more vital the stakes are high, so we must set solid foundations now on which to build.

I believe this same vision is the inspiration of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The United Nations agreed on intangible cultural heritage, and for whose adoption, UNESCO worked so hard in the words of its declaration. This is an agenda of the people, by the people, for the people. For the first time at the global level, culture, cultural heritage and diversity were recognized as drivers and enablers of inclusive and sustainable development. It reflected the advocacy UNESCO has led with the champions support of member states, and I wish to express special thanks again to the Republic of Korea, which was and still is one of its greatest champions. This is how we can build more tolerant and more inclusive societies. This is how we can learn to live together in ever more diverse societies. This is how we will craft new solutions to eradicate poverty and hunger to create decent and green jobs in the culture sector, in arts and crafts, music and tourism. This is how we can overcome the dire consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic with its devastating impact on communities and people. This is also how we can tackle the challenges of climate change and natural disasters building on traditional practices and knowledge to protect biodiversity and manage natural resources. Our living heritage holds many answers to the questions we face today. It is our responsibility to defend it. It is our duty to make the most of it. I see the world forum on intangible cultural heritage is a unique opportunity to share best practices to strengthen policies and improve recognition of the heritage at the global level and its role in deepening social cohesion in advancing human dignity and progress.

Together UNESCO and member states have introduced international standards to stimulate and guide efforts. We have increased international cooperation for the exchange of experience and capacity building. We have created tools and lists to demonstrate the diversity of this heritage to mobilize the systems for its safeguarding to raise awareness about its vulnerability. Most fundamentally, we have helped to change minds. We have shaped a new global understanding of heritage beyond monuments, beyond artifacts to include living heritage, recognizing it as a force for innovation, social transformation and sustainable development. I think we should call this what it is. It is groundbreaking and revolutionary. Together we have shaped the radically new approach to protecting living heritage, putting communities and peoples first as custodians and as bearers of cultural expressions. Intangible cultural heritage must continue to be practiced and transmitted for humanity to create a more peaceful and sustainable future based on dignity and equal respect.

The International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO is important in all of these levels, and here I would like to make an emphasis on the new ambition of this information center on education because intangible cultural heritage is essential for understanding our own histories and cultures as well as those of our neighbors, fostering understanding empathy and better knowledge and understanding of our shared communities. Teachers, education managers, heritage practitioners and the general public now have new resources available in the recent survey report teaching and learning with and about intangible cultural heritage in Asia and the Pacific. A joint undertaking by UNESCO Bangkok office and ICHCAP, the publication presents for the first time a systemic overview of the current

state of ICH education in the region as well as the general issues and trends. The report indeed covers a wide variety of subjects and activities in which teachers integrate ICH and the types of ICH which are the most popular for using in schools and the most visible entry points. This impressive publication also details the challenges the teachers face, the support that is currently available to them, and the imperative to make practices more effective. Case studies give a deeper understanding of how teaching, learning and using ICH are currently taking place, serving as an inspiration for other teachers. What is very important is that the publication is a part of ongoing efforts to enhance the safeguarding of the regions' intangible cultural heritage and achieve quality inclusive education. Intangible cultural heritage is the purpose of the sustainable development agenda goal number 4 on inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all.

This is the immense opportunity of leveraging the potential of the intangible cultural heritage to build an inclusive, just, sustainable and peaceful world. I wish success to your forum and thank you for your attention.