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## Cultural traditions in China and Croatia put on UN heritage protection list



### Traditional Folk Long Song, Mongolia and China

15 November 2010 – Three cultural elements in China and one in Croatia were today inscribed on the United Nations list of cultural traditions in need of urgent protection at a [meeting](#) in Kenya of parties to the international convention designed to preserve the world's intangible cultural heritage.

Some 400 State delegates, representatives from civil society and observers are attending the 5th session of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Committee for the [Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, which is being held for the first time in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The new additions to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding include the Meshrep tradition found among the Uygur people in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. A complete Meshrep event includes a rich collection of traditions and performance arts, such as music, dance, drama, folk arts, acrobatics, oral literature and games.

Also added to the list are the watertight-bulkhead technology of Chinese junks developed in southern China's Fujian province. The technology permits the construction of ocean-going vessels with watertight compartments. Delegates also selected China's wooden movable-type printing for addition to the list. The technique is one the world's oldest and is practised in Rui'an county, Zhejiang province, where it is used in compiling and printing clan genealogies.

Croatia's Ojkanje singing also made it to the list. Found in the Croatian regions of the Dalmatian hinterland, the Ojkanje is performed by two or more singers using a distinctive voice-shaking technique created by the throat. Each song lasts as long as the lead singer can hold his or her breath.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which is administered by UNESCO), was adopted in 2003 and is ratified by 132 States.

It recommends the protection of elements such as oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and know-how related to traditional handicrafts.

"The Convention is one of the most innovative instruments that we have developed to address contemporary challenges," said Irina Bokova, UNESCO's Director General, in her opening address. "I see our commitment to intangible heritage as an act of solidarity, respect and understanding of others," she said.

During the five-day meeting, the Committee will also examine 47 elements for inscription to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Ms. Bokova lamented the absence at this year's session of inscription candidates from Africa.

"We should feel an obligation towards the African continent and to all those who have an extremely rich intangible heritage and who are not fittingly represented in the Convention's Lists," she said.

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