



With breaking stories and  
newswire products from

**UN NEWS CENTRE**



## Senior UN official issues warning on list of world's intangible cultural heritage



UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova

22 November 2011 –

The United Nations-managed [Intangible Heritage List](#) shines a spotlight on the vast range of global traditions – from Korean dance to French gastronomy to Costa Rican ox-herding – but risks becoming a victim of its own success, a senior United Nations official warned today.

“Intangible cultural heritage is our bridge from the past to the future,” [said](#) Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), speaking at the opening ceremony of the Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage, held in Bali, Indonesia.

Intangible cultural heritage is our bridge from the past to the future

“It is the precious possession of communities, groups and individuals – only they can safeguard it and pass it on to generations to come,” she said, further noting that UNESCO and Member States should support all cultural preservation efforts “in every way we can.”

Seventy-nine nominations will be examined during the present session, including saman dance from Indonesia, fado music from Portugal and mariachi music from Mexico. Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire have presented a joint nomination for the balafon – an instrument prominent among their Senufo communities.

“This is an unmanageable workload,” Ms. Bokova said, “and is, inevitably, unsatisfactory for States Parties and the communities whose intangible heritage is concerned. They will be disappointed if the Convention is unable to meet their expectations.”

“States must now show restraint and everybody must understand that the system has reached, or even gone beyond, its own limits. A maximum of about 60 nominations only could be treated in each session under the present conditions,” she added, arguing that the inscriptions also had to be more geographically diverse for the List to remain credible.

Since its creation in 2008, the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List includes a swathe of global cultural expressions, ranging from Turkey’s Kirkpınar oil wrestling festival and the Mediterranean diet to the watertight-bulkhead technology of Chinese junks and the Peruvian scissor dance.

Meanwhile, while visiting Indonesia, Ms. Bokova met with the country’s Minister of Education and Culture Mohammad Nuh, who announced that his Government would contribute \$10 million to help support UNESCO’s activities and cover its recent budget shortfall.

Ms. Bokova thanked Mr. Nuh, describing the contribution as being “significant and timely.”

The United States – which contributes 22 per cent of UNESCO’s budget – suspended its dues after the agency admitted Palestine as a full member on 31 October.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Senior UN official pays tribute to South-East European music at culture summit](#)

