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UN kicks off Year of the Dragon with celebration of Chinese cultural heritage



Young dancers from Guangdong Province performed at UN Headquarters to celebrate China's intangible cultural heritage and ring in the Year of the Dragon. UN Photo/E. Schneider

1 February 2012 –

Hundreds of performers took to the stage at United Nations Headquarters in New York this evening to ring in the Chinese New Year with a showcase of traditional dance, music, theatre, painting and calligraphy.

“Tonight’s event is an early treat in the Year of the Dragon,” Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro told those in attendance in the General Assembly Hall.

“I hope you can come away with a new appreciation for the world’s astonishing cultural diversity – and a sense of urgency about safeguarding it, not just for its own sake, but for the contribution it can make to building a peaceful, harmonious future for all.”

Ms. Migiro stressed the importance of intangible cultural heritage, noting the relevance not only of monuments, sites and objects, but also of activities such as storytelling, traditional lore and rituals.

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The event, which is sponsored by the Chinese Mission in partnership with the China Literature and Art Foundation, will also have on display the work of well-known artists of the ancient Chinese cultural practice of calligraphy.

Ms. Migiro said Mr. Ban greatly enjoys this tradition and has been taking lessons from Professor Zhou Bin, a renowned calligrapher, as it gives him peace of mind when he writes.

“And to learn his brushstrokes, the Secretary-General chose to use the characters that stand for a word that lies at the heart of the United Nations: peace,” she noted.

Since 2003, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), adopted the landmark [Convention](#) for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which aims to ensure that endangered cultural practices are preserved and transmitted from one generation to another. Elements that are considered to be in need of urgent safeguarding include traditional weaving in the United Arab Emirates, sung prayers among Peru’s indigenous people, traditional Indonesian dances, and Chinese shadow puppetry.

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