

ANNEX 1

REMARKS AND CONGRATULATORY SPEECHES

OPENING REMARKS

IWAMOTO Wataru

Director-General

International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI)

Mr TOKURA Shunichi, Commissioner for Cultural Affairs,

Mr NAGAFUJI Hideki, Mayor of Sakai City,

Mr MATSUURA Koïchiro, Former Director-General of UNESCO,

Mr SHIMATANI Hiroyuki, President of National Institutes for Cultural Heritage,

Dear Facilitators, Presenters, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to say a few words on behalf of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI). First, I would like to extend my hearty welcome to all of you participating in the IRCI Researchers Forum on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region “Progress and Challenges in the Research for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage—Towards a Sustainable Future—”. We are very grateful to receive so many registrations for this event, numbering more than 110 participants, in spite of these difficult times.

In particular, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Mr Nagafuji, the Mayor of Sakai City, and Mr Matsuura, the Honorary Advisor of IRCI and former Director-General of UNESCO, for kindly delivering their congratulatory speeches. I also heartily welcome Ms Himalchuli GURUNG, the Programme Specialist for Culture at the UNESCO Beijing Office. I would like to express my great appreciation to Mr Tokura, the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs. Further, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this event is commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan as an international collaborative project for the safeguarding of cultural properties.

In 2011, IRCI was established in Sakai City as a UNESCO category 2 centre, based upon an agreement between the Japanese Government and UNESCO, and this year is our 10th anniversary. Since the centre’s establishment, we have been conducting various research activities to promote the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (the 2003 Convention) and its implementation, and, of course, to enhance the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the Asia-Pacific region.

As you know, ICH is familiar to us in the form of oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship.

In the 2003 Convention, research and its promotion are positioned as measures to ensure the safeguarding of ICH, and this highlights the importance of research in this area. Session 1 of the forum will address the major issues in ICH safeguarding such as the safeguarding of endangered ICH, disaster risk management and research data collection. Then, Session 2 will debate on the theme of international trends and scope for the safeguarding of ICH. Finally, in the panel discussion, all the presenters and facilitators will discuss ICH research and its challenges. I look forward to active discussions on the various topics, and I hope that the ideas that emerge will inspire IRCI's future research activities.

The outcome of this forum will be published as forum proceedings by March 2022.

I sincerely hope your active involvement and participation in the discussion will bring this forum success. It will surely contribute to the promotion of research on the safeguarding of ICH.

Thank you for your attention.

OPENING REMARKS

TOKURA Shunichi

Commissioner for Cultural Affairs, Japan

I am Shunichi Tokura, the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs. I would like to say a few words upon the opening of the IRCI Researchers Forum on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region “Progress and Challenges in the Research for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage –Towards a Sustainable Future–”.

In 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted at the UNESCO General Conference. The Convention was revolutionary within the framework of international cultural heritage protection, which had been focusing on tangible cultural heritage, such as World Heritage sites. I would like to express my deepest respect for Mr MATSUURA Koïchiro, who worked hard towards the adoption of this convention as the then Director-General of UNESCO.

Japan has also made a contribution to the promotion of the Convention. One of the important pillars is the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI), which was established in collaboration with UNESCO. Since its opening in 2011, the IRCI has been promoting the safeguarding of rich intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region mainly from the aspect of research, and it commemorates its 10th anniversary this year. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the efforts of all those involved in the establishment and operation of this centre and for the great support of Sakai City, where the IRCI is located.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, many festival events and various art performances have been forced to be cancelled throughout the entire world. As a result, intangible cultural heritage faces big challenges. In this unexpected situation, we once again have become strongly aware that intangible cultural heritage firmly connects people and provides us with much emotional support.

Today, we are facing a major challenge in how to pass on the priceless intangible cultural heritage to the next generation in the upcoming post-COVID-19 world.

From this point of view, I think that the results of the research that the IRCI has accumulated over the past decade have new significance now, as shown by the “Research for the Safeguarding of Endangered Intangible Cultural Heritage”.

I believe that it is very meaningful to have many experts today at this forum from all over the world to review IRCI's activities until now.

In closing, I hope that this forum will be helpful in ensuring a sustainable future for intangible cultural heritage. Thank you very much.

CONGRATULATORY SPEECH

NAGAFUJI Hideki

Mayor of Sakai City

Hello, everyone. I am Hideki Nagafuji, the Mayor of Sakai City.

I would like to congratulate you on the 10th anniversary of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI).

In 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted at the UNESCO General Conference. In 2009, the establishment of the IRCI in Japan was approved, and subsequently in 2011, it opened in the Sakai City Museum. I am really pleased that the efforts made through cooperation between Sakai City and the IRCI are still underway to promote an understanding of intangible cultural heritage.

Sakai, which has been open to the sea since ancient times, has developed as a maritime trade hub. During the Warring States Period in Japan, it prospered as a major hub for trade with foreign countries, such as the Ming Dynasty of China, Spain, and Portugal. There used to be a popular historical drama series titled “Golden Days”, which depicted the golden age of Sakai City.

The sophisticated culture of the tea ceremony, which was established by Sen no Rikyu around that time, and traditional industries such as blades and incense sticks have been inherited by the local people.

In 2019, the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The kofun tumuli are tangible, but the sentiments of the local people who have protected them carefully for many years are intangible. The tangible and intangible have come together for 1,600 years, turning the treasure of the region into a treasure of humanity.

Meanwhile, we will hold a symposium tomorrow to discuss the safeguarding of Sakai’s intangible cultural heritage in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the IRCI. Sakai City will continue to cooperate with the IRCI to preserve the precious history and culture that we have inherited. Sakai is known by the saying “everything begins in Sakai”. In order to pass on the thoughts of our predecessors to the next generation, we will take on the challenge of creating a new future.

Lastly, I am aware that there are currently various restrictions on the activities to safeguard intangible cultural heritage due to the lingering COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to express my deepest respect for everyone's continued efforts even under such circumstances.

I would like to conclude by sincerely wishing for the success of today's forum and the further development of the IRCI. And again, congratulations on your 10th anniversary.

CONGRATULATORY SPEECH

MATSUURA Koichiro

Honorary Advisor of IRCI

Former Director-General of UNESCO

Good afternoon everybody. I am very happy to have the occasion to say a few words at the opening of the meeting organised by IRCI. Thank you very much for inviting me to join you.

I would like to pay tribute to the City of Sakai for having given very strong support to IRCI and its activities in the last 10 years. Thank you very much indeed.

Also, I would like to pay tribute to Mr Iwamoto, Director-General of IRCI, who has been managing IRCI very skillfully and also very productively. And thanks to him, we are able to celebrate the 10th anniversary today.

As Mr Tokura has said, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted in 2003. Therefore, 18 years ago. I clearly remember the moment when the Convention was almost unanimously adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO in 2003. I said, almost unanimously. Unfortunately, there were eight countries which abstained, but no opposition at all. Mostly Group 1 countries (Western European and North American states), but unfortunately, there were two countries in the Asia-Pacific region, which abstained, namely Australia and New Zealand. These two countries are the key countries in the Asia-Pacific region, so I do hope they will eventually, if possible in the near future, ratify the Convention to join us. In that context, I would like to pay tribute to many Island nations in the Pacific region which have joined the Convention, which have become active members of the Convention. Nevertheless, I continue to regret Australia and New Zealand are not members yet, but I do hope they will join us in the near future.

Nevertheless, if we are to analyse the progress of ratification in the last 18 years for the Intangible Cultural Heritage, we must congratulate ourselves because we now have 180 members which have ratified the Convention. One hundred eighty members, that is almost comparable to the membership of the famous World Heritage Convention, which has 194 members, that means we still have a bit more than 10 countries, which are the members of the World Heritage Convention, but which are not the members of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention.

Nevertheless, I must stress the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention is now one of the two major conventions to safeguard the diversity of the cultural heritage of humanity, namely immovable cultural heritage and intangible heritage. These are two key areas in humanity's cultural diversities, and I am very happy that we now have 180 countries joining us, and we now have quite a few category 2 centres for intangible heritage all over the world.

In East Asia, we have category 2 centres in China, Korea and Japan, and I am very happy the UNESCO office in Beijing is always in a very profound manner involved in managing these three centres' activities. I would like to express my thanks to the Beijing office for their assistance to the management of activities of these category 2 centres.

I do hope today's discussion will make a further contribution to research activities by IRCI in the coming years, and I would like to express my appreciation once more for the positive outcomes which will come out.

Thank you very much indeed. Thank you very much for your attention.

CLOSING REMARKS

SHIMATANI Hiroyuki

President, National Institutes for Cultural Heritage, Japan

I would like to thank all of you for participating today in the IRCI Researchers Forum on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region “Progress and Challenges in the Research for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage—Towards a Sustainable Future—”. The Forum was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was rather fortunate that we could receive many participants online from various parts of the world. I would also like to thank Mr TOKURA Shunichi, the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs; Mr NAGAFUJI Hideki, the Mayor of Sakai City; and Mr MATSUURA Koïchiro, the Honorary Advisor of IRCI and former Director-General of UNESCO, for taking the time to provide greetings for this forum despite their busy schedule. Furthermore, I would like to thank the presenters and panellists for sharing their interesting insights today. I am also grateful to receive opinions from UNESCO’s perspective on this valuable occasion.

The International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) was established in 2011 in Sakai City, Osaka Prefecture, as an organisation operated under the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage. It celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. The National Institutes for Cultural Heritage comprises four museums, two research institutes, and the IRCI. Since its opening, the IRCI has been enthusiastically promoting research that will lead to the development of knowledge for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region.

As part of such efforts, the IRCI conducts research on SDGs, which was featured in today’s presentation and discussion. Moreover, the IRCI is promoting a research project on intangible cultural heritage and disaster risk management in the Asia-Pacific region. As the Cultural Heritage Disaster Risk Management Center was established under the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage in October last year, we are paying close attention to the project of the IRCI.

When talking about the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), I feel that we often hear about subjects such as climate change, poverty, and gender equality. However, in terms of culture, sustainable development is also an important issue. The IRCI has been working from various perspectives on the theme of “contribution of intangible cultural heritage to sustainable development”. In this light, it is conducting a survey on intangible cultural heritage affected by the COVID-19

pandemic and a survey on the contribution of intangible cultural heritage to SDGs. As shown in the title of this forum, I hope that this forum will be a good opportunity to disseminate the importance of research on intangible cultural heritage for ensuring a sustainable society.

Before closing my speech, I would like to thank all of you for your valuable exchange of views on the safeguarding of and research on intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region. To all participants as well, I would like to ask for your continuous support for the future development of the IRCI.

Thank you very much.