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COUNTRY REPORT: UZBEKISTAN

The Role of the Government and of Communities on Safeguarding of Traditional Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan

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Statehood building in Uzbekistan includes the revitalisation of traditional spiritual values and the cultural legacy of the nation. One of the first joint activities of Uzbekistan with international organisations was the project on “Revitalisation of the Silk Road: Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Development of Cultural Tourism”, launched in 1994. In order to adopt international norms into the national legislations, the Republic of Uzbekistan recently ratified UNESCO’s conventions on the “Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” (30 November 2007). The ratification of the UNESCO convention was preceded by several nation-wide and international actions, such as research studies and inventory of ICH, organisation of folk festivals and exhibition of handicrafts, publication of books and multimedia.

The local community (makhalla), as a traditional neighbourhood institute of Uzbekistan, is playing a crucial role in the preservation and development of folklore and arts of the country. With regular internal (community leaders) and external (central and local government) supports the local community is actively participating in the safeguarding and transmitting to the future generations of values related to ICH. Local community involvement takes many forms: from traditional rituals (wedding, celebration of Navruz, etc.) in daily life to initiatives on organisation of special cultural events. Through the centuries the makhalla was the place where creative art and the cultural identity of people originated. All innovations in the daily life of the makhalla were introduced only on the basis of consensus and broad public acceptance. The spiritual traditions and world outlook system has generated originality and recognition of the national art school of music, theatre, painting and applied art.

The studies of the modern conditions of the ICH include new challenges for traditional culture, with which the makhalla is now facing. Scientific expeditions carried out in different local communities of Uzbekistan focused as much on the role of bearers (creators of a folk art) as on audiences (listeners). As a rule, the purpose of such expeditions is all-round coverage of local traditions with representative description (inventory making) and multidimensional analysis of the facts. One of the new forms of public-awareness activities on ICH is the organisation of the expedition «Ostonasi Tillodan» with the participation of scholars of the scientific research institute and the subsequent vivid demonstration on TV of the field study materials. It is stimulating the revival of interest among the population in folklore, musical traditions and crafts.

It has been discovered that the role of the local community in the preservation and development of ICH depends on various factors: economic (urban or rural type of

economy), social-cultural (way of life, such as settled or nomadic), structural (local public institutions) and external influences.

Activities of the local community were classified into the following groups of actions:

- Support for traditional ways of transmission of ICH, such as rituals, skills development projects «Ustoz-Shogird» (master-apprentice);
- Organisation of family-based folklore ensembles;
- Organisation of cultural folklore festivals, fairs of art crafts, show-competitions of entertainment art (traditional games, etc.);
- Attraction of youth to the non-formal learning programmes in cultural practices.

All government efforts were focused on innovative ways to preserve and develop traditional culture. For example, there is President's Degree on tax exemption for all activities in the field of handicrafts production (adopted in 1992), which created favourable conditions for broad development of traditional arts.

During 2002-2006 a team of experts from the Academy of Art, Ministry of Culture and Sports and Academy of Science of Uzbekistan organised several scientific expeditions to study cultural forms of Boysun and Shahsmaqom musical traditions in various regions of Uzbekistan (Fergana Valley, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm Region). The local municipalities, through various legal acts and support mechanism, paid great attention to ICH by establishing the so-called "Living Human Treasure" system (artisans, artists, etc.) within communities.

Outcomes of scientific expeditions were published in the form of books and multimedia CDs, such as "Atlas of Artistic Crafts of Boysun", "Traditional Musical Culture of Boysun", "Uzbek Notation", "Toshkent and Fergana Maqoms", "Uzbek Maqoms – Shashmaqom" and many other publications. About 30 multimedia CDs, DVD-movies and digital audio records collection have been issued since UNESCO's proclamation.

Based on recommendations of the scientific expeditions, festivals and conferences, the issues of traditional culture were included in the content of the curriculum of formal education of the country. All publications (both printing and digital) were distributed among educational institutions and libraries of Uzbekistan. Moreover, the "Yoshlar" (Youth) national channel of the Uzbekistan Teleradio State Company produced, with support of the National Commission of Uzbekistan for UNESCO, a series of documentary films on ICH ("Boysun", "Shashmaqom", "Lapar", "Fargona Askiyasi", "Bakhshi", "Navruz", "Katta Ashula"), which are regularly broadcast in Uzbekistan.

At the same time, it is important to outline, that due to the influence of globalisation, the life of communities is characterised by the introduction of innovations in traditional life. New forms of musical performances are appearing during cultural festivities in the local communities, which are affecting both repertoire and the manner of performance (for example, «Rapshi» and the dramatised representation «Mavrigi»).

Activities of the nation-wide NGO «Fund of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan» (established three years ago) have essentially increased interest among the younger generations in the traditional culture. The activities of the Foundation are connected within wide movement of local communities in the development of traditional culture as well as modern art among various age groups of youth - «Yangi avlod» (New Generation) and «Kelajak Ovozi» (Voices of the Future). Several thousand talented youths are attending the annual cultural

competitions in creativity in various fields of arts, starting from community level to national level.

The strategy and main line of actions of the governmental policy for preservation of traditional culture are based on the following:

1. Preparation and adoption of amendments to the existing law on safeguarding and utilisation of the cultural heritage;
2. Elaboration of support mechanisms for all forms of traditional culture;
3. Inventory of ICH by means of collecting information, recording and researching;
4. Inclusion of the various forms of ICH into the educational system curriculum;
5. Inviting NGOs and local communities for collaboration on safeguarding ICH and public awareness activity.