



United Nations  
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la science et la culture

## UNESCO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE 8<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

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### **SUMMARY**

The present report outlines recent initiatives and activities undertaken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in response to the recommendations of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) under the three themes to be examined for follow-up at the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Forum: Economic and Social Development, Indigenous Women, and the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. It also highlights facilitating factors and obstacles encountered in implementing those recommendations, while providing other general information of interest to the Forum.

This year, UNESCO's response was marked by two significant developments: the first official visit of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the chairing of the Inter-agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, which raised awareness and understanding among all UNESCO's programme sectors for indigenous peoples' issues and led to the identification of areas for future collaboration with the UNPFII, including through joint UN interagency cooperation.

**(1) Follow-up to recommendations on:**

**a) Economic and Social Development**

1. UNESCO advocates for the integration of culture in development, notably the mainstreaming of cultural diversity principles and intercultural dialogue in policies and strategies at national, regional and international levels. In this regard, the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the related UNESCO conventions in the field of culture together with the newly adopted Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provide a sound internationally recognized normative framework in support of such efforts, especially at country level. UNESCO has developed methodological tools regarding the implementation of the UNESCO conventions as well as a more comprehensive tool for programmers and planners called the Cultural Diversity Programming Lens.<sup>1</sup> It is used for training government and UN staff, notably in the context of joint UN programming, with UNCTs involved in the UN initiative of “Delivering as One”.
2. Following recommendation 43 at the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the Permanent Forum, a concept paper entitled “Indigenous Peoples’ Self-Determined Development or Development with Identity and Culture” was prepared in 2008 for UNESCO’s Culture programme on indigenous peoples by Tebtebba (the Indigenous Peoples International Centre for Policy Research and Education) based on broad-based consultative process with indigenous leaders from around the world. The paper explains indigenous peoples’ rights and aspirations, linking them to the question of sustainable development and referring to relevant standard-setting instruments on enhancing cultural and/or biological diversity, notably those developed by UNESCO. Indigenous leaders presented and discussed the paper with various agencies and development partners, including UNESCO, during a Consultation and Dialogue Workshop held in Tivoli from 14 to 17 March 2008. Furthermore, in line with recommendation 64 at the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum, a policy paper on indigenous peoples, poverty and the Millennium Development Goals, commissioned by the UNESCO programme on Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS), is in the final stages of elaboration. It intends to raise awareness among decision makers and development planners for the need to revisit development strategies and indicators in light of indigenous peoples’ rights and aspirations for development.
3. At the operational level, UNESCO is implementing a number of projects linking indigenous peoples’ cultures and development. In Brazil, the project “Impacts of Development and Safeguarding regarding Indigenous Communities”, funded by Brazil’s FUNAI Institute, helps assess the impacts of 'external' development on indigenous cultures, outlines safeguarding plans for their intangible heritage, provides assistance to reinforce technical knowledge required for the safeguarding work and paves the way for a future monitoring and safeguarding system.
4. The UNESCO Communication and Information Sector in Latin America has also developed several ICTs projects with indigenous peoples, addressing issues of social and economic development. For instance, the project “Radio Oriente de Yurigamas” targeted to four indigenous groups from the Amazonian Region of Peru who live in impoverished

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<sup>1</sup> The cultural diversity programming lens is an interdisciplinary tool designed to raise awareness and open minds to new thinking on linking cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and sustainable development. Taking the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity as a starting point, it seeks to help policy-makers and planners to assess whether their programmes adequately take into account principles of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as agreed upon in international standard-setting instruments and as they are emerging on international and national policy agendas, within a larger human rights framework.

conditions and have low participation in the design and implementation of public policies. The radio station addresses issues of social justice, offering a space to discuss proposals for positive change and development.

5. UNESCO supports indigenous communities in developing tourism projects that contribute to their socio-economic development while respecting their cultures, values and environment. In Indonesia for example, a project entitled “Development of Ecological and Cultural Tourism in Indigenous Communities in South Nias”, supported training and capacity-building for indigenous communities on tourism issues, facilitated the elaboration of a code of conduct for local guides and tourists, and advised on the development of financial plans and strategies for local businesses as well as on the establishment of networks among local stakeholders. The project “Development of Heritage Tourism in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia: Contributing to the Millennium Development Goals” followed a similar approach.
6. In Vietnam, UNESCO is working with the local management board of the In Pu Mat National Park to develop guidelines for community participation in sustainable management and livelihood development. The project builds capacities of the site managers to better involve the local communities in the management of the site and to assist them in identifying and developing sustainable livelihood opportunities, thus responding to the UNPFII recommendations about the establishment of processes of meaningful participation with indigenous peoples in sustainable development.
7. UNESCO, with the support of the Japanese Funds in Trust, recently completed a project engaging indigenous communities from Niger, Kenya and the Central African Republic in a dialogue on the ways in which their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge can be applied to education for a sustainable future, within the framework of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). This Decade indeed provides an opportunity to mainstream the knowledge and concerns of indigenous peoples, and its international implementation scheme has identified indigenous peoples as an important stakeholder group.
8. Within the framework of “The San Development Programme - An Integrated Approach to Education”, UNESCO addresses both the educational and social needs of the San children in Namibia and Southern Africa. The main goal of the project is to provide quality early childhood education for San children and to enable them to access primary education to successfully complete primary and secondary education. A feeding programme was established as well as other amenities such as basic clothing and facilitating access to health facilities for the San children. Implemented in partnership with national stakeholders and international partners, the project also aims to assist in reducing poverty through capacity-building and providing vocational skills for adult San to enable them to develop income-generating activities.
9. The ‘Network of sites of excellence for the sustainable futures of the Congo Basin’ brings together local actors around designated and potential UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in Central Africa to address problems of unsustainable forest management, severe poverty, and the lack of local capacity to respond to these issues. The principal project beneficiaries are local and indigenous communities of the Biosphere Reserves. The project directly benefits women and children, and builds the capacities of local organizations. Local and regional organizations played an important role in developing this proposal (See also recommendation 76, 7<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Permanent Forum).
  - b) Indigenous Women
10. Promoting gender equality is part of UNESCO’s global priorities, as reflected in the Organization’s “Priority Gender Equality Action Plan for 2008-2013”. It includes both

gender-specific programmes and gender mainstreaming within all UNESCO's programmes, including programmes addressing indigenous peoples' issues.

11. UNESCO's regular programme for the 2008-2009 biennium specifically acknowledges the values of indigenous women's knowledge about the environment. Indeed the UNESCO-LINKS programme is highlighting and showcasing the value of indigenous and local knowledge held by women in relation to sustainable development, natural disaster preparedness and response, biodiversity conservation and climate change, specifically in Pacific small islands developing States:
  - A series of posters illustrating issues relating to local and indigenous knowledge was developed by the LINKS Programme to build public awareness and to serve as learning materials for use in schools; these included one specific focus on women's knowledge. The posters were launched and distributed in English, French and Bislama (Vanuatu, Pacific) languages in 2008.
  - A specific section on "Women and Navigation" has been included in the interactive CD-ROM learning tool entitled "The Canoe is the People: Indigenous Navigation in the Pacific" (original launched in 2005 by the LINKS Programme, with the Apia Office), used in schools in the Pacific region.
  - Gender and climate change will be discussed on the Internet-based Forum 'On the Frontlines of Climate Change: a forum for indigenous peoples, small islands and vulnerable communities' recently launched by the LINKS Programme in collaboration with partner UN agencies.
  - UNESCO supported research on women's knowledge of nature, medicinal plants and traditional medicine in the Mascarene Islands (Réunion, Mauritius, Rodrigues); a publication based on this work is planned for 2009/10.
12. In collaboration with the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the Borneo Research Council, the UNESCO Office in Jakarta supported the publication of a study on the interconnection between ecology, culture, and gender in Borneo, entitled *Longhouse of the Tarsier: Changing Landscape, Gender and Well-being in Borneo*.
13. UNESCO has identified the "lack of citizenship" as the greatest risk factor for highland girls and women in Thailand affected by human trafficking, or otherwise exploited. Consequently, the UNESCO Office in Bangkok in cooperation with the British Embassy initiated the Highland Birth and Citizenship Registration Promotion Project, which aims to address issues such as legal status and universal birth registration among highland communities.
14. UNESCO is pursuing dialogue with the International Forum of Indigenous Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop strategies to strengthen capacity-building for indigenous women in the areas of culturally sensitive, gender-aware and human rights-based development approaches. An informal reflection group at UNESCO is working on the issues of gender and cultural diversity and intends to take into account indigenous peoples' perspectives and issues related to gender and cultural diversity. Furthermore, UNESCO is in contact with the organizers of the next session of the International Indigenous Women's Forum, to be held in Colombia in 2011.

### c) Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

15. In line with Recommendation 103 of the Permanent Forum at its 7<sup>th</sup> session, UNESCO has contributed together with other UN agencies to the elaboration of a General Plan of Action for the rolling out and implementation of the UNGD Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues (five-year plan) and is involved in the newly created Management Committee in charge of monitoring the implementation of the guidelines. As Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues (IASG) for 2008/09, UNESCO also hosted a discussion during the annual meeting of the group on modalities for further advancing the General Plan of Action (main points and recommendations are summarized in the report submitted separately to the UNPFII).
16. UNESCO continued to implement the Programme of Action for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, which contains a number of recommendations in line with the Organizations' mandate and missions.
17. **In the area of Culture**, recent activities relevant to point 15 of the Programme of Action include the following:
  - Following UNESCO's multi-stakeholder mobilization campaign throughout the International Year of Languages, over 200 conferences, projects and initiatives were carried out in the world to foster and promote linguistic diversity and languages, notably indigenous languages. Projects undertaken with indigenous peoples included the following: Indigenous Nigerian languages; Inuit Language Protection (Canada); Maori language week: te wiki o te reo maori (New Zealand); Safeguarding the Yukagir language and oral traditions (Russia); Safeguarding and Revitalization of Sillanka (Burkina Faso); An inaugural indigenous languages revitalization and teaching conference in Mangatu, Gisborne; Local Knowledge Education Project (Vietnam), etc. A full list of projects with complete descriptions is available at [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=35835&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35835&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)
  - UNESCO participated in the first Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium held in Tromsø, Norway, 19-21 October 2008;
  - *The Third Edition of UNESCO's World Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* was published early 2009 as a digital interactive tool; it integrates latest methodological developments and updated data on endangered languages across the world;
  - A project entitled "Documentation of Brazilian Indigenous Cultures and Languages" has just been initiated with the aim to protect and enhance linguistic diversity and intangible heritage by helping to safeguard endangered indigenous languages in Brazil. In addition to registering and documenting several indigenous languages at risk, the project will establish a network of indigenous and non-indigenous researchers working on language documentation techniques and methods;
  - UNESCO is implementing a project for the revitalization of the Gong culture in the central highlands in Viet Nam. Under the project, Gong clubs have been established in local villages with three ethnic groups (Ma, Ede and M'Nong). Through the clubs, the older community members have the opportunity to transmit their skills to younger generations. Both men and women are involved in the clubs, and many of them are led by local women. The project is also identifying master artists, who are nominated by the communities themselves;

- In 2008, new inscriptions on the World Heritage List include sites which holding great significance for indigenous peoples such as the Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests, in Kenya ; the conservation of the cultural and natural resources associated with this site will integrate traditional management practices such as a council of elders.

**18. In the area of Education**, and in response to points 25, 26 and 28 of the programme of action, the following developments are worth mentioning:

- During the International Conference on Education (ICE) held under the theme of “Inclusive Education” in Geneva (November 2008), a young indigenous woman from Chad, former participant in the OHCHR/UNESCO Indigenous Fellowship Programme, was among the panellists of a roundtable of young people and Ministers of Education;
- The UNESCO Concept Paper “Inclusive Dimensions of the Right to Education” integrated the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples among the body of legal instruments to be taken into account. The paper was prepared for the ninth meeting of the Joint Expert Group UNESCO (CR)/ECOSOC (CESCR) on the Monitoring of the Right to Education;
- In consultation with the UNPFII about the choice of languages, a translation of the UNESCO publication *Mother Tongue Matters: Local Language as a Key to Effective Learning* is planned to promote the development of a mother-tongue-based multilingual education to reach the Education for All (EFA)goals;
- The UNESCO-LINKS programme has undertaken several initiatives aimed to integrate indigenous knowledge into school curricula. A learning resource pack was developed in 2008 to accompany the interactive LINKS CD-ROM learning tool entitled *The Canoe is the People: Indigenous Navigation in the Pacific* (original launched in 2005 with the Communication & Information Sector). It will be piloted in selected Pacific schools in 2009 and will eventually enhance the integration of indigenous knowledge and language content into Pacific school curricula. A series of posters illustrating issues relating to local and indigenous knowledge, aiming to build public awareness and to be used in schools, were launched and distributed in English, French and Bislama (Vanuatu, Pacific) languages in 2008; pilot development was instigated of a teacher manual to support the introduction to Solomon Islands schools of the LINKS publication *Reef and Rainforest: An environmental encyclopaedia of Marovo Lagoon, Solomon Islands* (UNESCO 2005);
- UNESCO Associated Schools in Canada are taking steps to connect with schools on First Nations reserves across the country. For instance, the Griffiths-Scott Middle School in Millet, situated close to a reserve of the First Nations tribe of the Cree, is involved in a three-year project to bring all the generations within the community together;
- In Vietnam, UNESCO is piloting the use of the Bahnar language in non-formal education settings through community learning centers (CLCs). Under the project, a curriculum and teaching materials have been developed for literacy programmes in Bahnar local language.

**19. In the area of Environment**, and in line with points 59 and 60 of the Programme of Action, the following activities were undertaken by the UNESCO Science Sector:

- An Internet-based activity ‘On the Frontlines of Climate Change: A global forum for indigenous peoples, small islands and vulnerable communities’ was launched by the LINKS Programme in July 2008. The Forum will promote the sharing and exchange of

community-level observations, concerns and innovations with respect to climate change;

- An international experts meeting “Sustainable development of the Arctic in the face of global climate change” will take place in Monaco (3-6 March 2009) and will examine in detail issues relating to circumpolar indigenous peoples, climate change and sustainable development. Circumpolar indigenous peoples will also be well represented at the meeting;
- Within the framework of the LINKS programme, several publications highlighting the value of indigenous and local knowledge in relation to sustainable development, natural disaster preparedness and response, biodiversity conservation and climate change, are under elaboration. Those include: two 500-page publications, one in Mayangna and one in Spanish, on indigenous Mayangna knowledge of the aquatic ecosystem in the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve (Nicaragua); a publication based on the 2007 international experts meeting entitled ‘Indigenous knowledge and changing environments’; a publication based on the 2005 conference entitled “Safeguarding the Transmission of Local and Indigenous Knowledge of Nature”; A dossier on the Jarawa People of the Andaman Islands, *The Jarawa Tribal Reserve, a priceless heritage*, has advanced to the final stages and will be printed and launched in 2009;
- Within the framework of the International Year of Planet Earth (2007-2009), a special effort was made to reach out to the different communities of the civil society and especially indigenous peoples, in order to further involve them in environmentally sound planning of the use of mineral resources;
- UNESCO Office in New Delhi produced a field guide manual on repair and retrofitting of earthquake damaged structures in Kashmir, North India, utilizing traditional knowledge systems of construction. The manual was a joint initiative with UNDP and Government of India and was advocated by UNESCO in various scientific forums;
- In Madhya Pradesh, Central India, an area that is periodically affected by drought, UNESCO, in collaboration with UNDP, was involved in producing educational materials that may enhance the level of information of the neo-literate tribes in the areas of prevention, preparedness, response and rehabilitation, during the occurrence of drought. The materials, produced in the local language, have simplified tips, in the form of a storybook, a resource book and an information flier on methods of how to prevent loss of human lives, livestock, house and property of the community;
- In the Siberut Island Biosphere Reserve in Indonesia, two activities were implemented in partnership with indigenous communities :“Strengthening Community Based Disaster Preparedness in Indonesia” with support from the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) to help reduce the vulnerability of indigenous communities to natural disasters, primarily earthquakes and tsunamis, through an integrated, community-based approach, combining indigenous and scientific knowledge systems; and “Empowerment of customary environmental management in Siberut Biosphere Reserve” to strengthen participation of indigenous communities in sustaining natural resources management in Siberut Biosphere Reserve.

## **(2) Obstacles to the implementation of the recommendations of the Forum**

20. Grass-roots indigenous organizations tend to be ill-equipped to comply with the increasingly complex financial and administrative regulations governing contractual

arrangements concluded by intergovernmental organizations such as UNESCO. These constraints make it more and more difficult to contract indigenous peoples' organizations as implementing partners for UNESCO projects.

21. As in previous years, UNESCO would like to suggest that the Permanent Forum's recommendations focus on a few priority issues, instead of listing countless individual activities. In order to ensure feasibility, recommendations shall also give further consideration to the specific mandates, financial and human resources of organizations concerned.

### **(3) Factors facilitating the implementation of the recommendations of the Forum**

22. In September 2008, UNESCO welcomed simultaneously the first official visit of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples' Issues and the Annual Meeting of the Inter-agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues (IASG). These two events reinforced a deeper understanding of indigenous peoples' views and issues across all UNESCO's programme sectors and built organization-wide commitment – including at the senior level - to further promote the mainstreaming of the principles reflected in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Organization's policy and programmes.

23. The official delegation of the UNPFII was composed of the following members: Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz from the Philippines, currently Chair of the UNPFII, Ms Margaret Lokawa from Uganda, Mr Carlos Mamani Condori from Bolivia. During their visit, they met with Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director-General, and with other senior staff members from various programme sectors. The exchanges provided an opportunity to share information on UNESCO's activities in support of indigenous peoples' issues and to discuss concrete proposals to deepen collaboration between the Permanent Forum and UNESCO.

### **(4) Other significant information on recent policies, programmes, budgetary allocations or projects/activities regarding indigenous peoples' issues within UNESCO**

24. UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (2008 to 2013), which guides the Organization's work for the coming six years, commits UNESCO to respond with priority to the needs of the most vulnerable segments of society, including indigenous peoples. The Strategy also aims at enhancing awareness about the cultural contribution of indigenous peoples to sustainable development, which is acknowledged in UNESCO's standard-setting instruments in the field of culture.

25. In line with the Medium-Term Strategy, indigenous peoples' issues are well reflected in UNESCO's Regular Programme for 2008-09 (34C/5). The term 'indigenous' is quoted approximately 300 times in the document and appears in each of the five Major Programmes (Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, Communication and Information).

26. In January 2009, UNESCO counted had over 20 programmes, implemented by Headquarters and field offices with regular budgetary allocations, which had an explicit focus on indigenous peoples' issues. It can be estimated that at least 100 activities were initiated under these programmes. Since the majority of UNESCO's programme areas are of relevance to the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples, actual numbers of activities related to indigenous peoples might be higher.

## **(5) Capacity-building on indigenous issues for staff within UNESCO**

27. UNESCO participates on a regular basis in the Indigenous Fellowship Programme (anglophone and francophone) in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The programme consists of a two-way exchange in which the fellows attend lectures and conferences to learn about UNESCO activities, while UNESCO staff members receive input from the fellows on their projects with indigenous people and learn about the situation and challenges of indigenous communities today.
28. The official visit of the Permanent Forum to UNESCO in September 2008 represented an excellent opportunity to raise awareness in-house on indigenous peoples' issues (see section **(3)** for further details).
29. Since the beginning of 2008, UNESCO has launched a series of training sessions for both colleagues at Headquarters and in the field on the Cultural Diversity Programming Lens. This interdisciplinary programming tool includes questions for analysis on indigenous rights and aspirations.
30. Through its collaboration with the UNDG Management Committee, UNESCO is contributing to the elaboration of a training programme for UN Country Teams staff, as planned in the General Plan of Action for the rolling out and implementation of the UNDG Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues.

## **(6) UNESCO Focal Point on Indigenous Peoples' Issues**

31. Mrs Katérina Sténou  
UNESCO Focal Point for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.  
Director, Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue  
1, rue Miollis  
75015 Paris  
France  
Tel: 00 33 1 45 68 42 75  
Fax: 00 33 1 45 68 55 97  
Email: [k.stenou@unesco.org](mailto:k.stenou@unesco.org)

## **(7) List of conferences and other meetings under UNESCO regarding indigenous issues in 2009**

32. UNESCO conferences and meetings regarding indigenous peoples' issues for 2009 are as follows:
  - International Mother Language Day, 21 February 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris. Within this framework, a roundtable under the theme "Indigenous Languages: Worldviews, Globalization, Development and Peace" will be held on 18 February;
  - International experts meeting 'Sustainable development of the Arctic in the face of global climate change', 3-6 March 2009, Monaco;
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 23-25 March 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris;
  - UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, 31 March-2 April 2009, Bonn;

- UNESCO Executive Board, 181<sup>st</sup> Session, 15-30 April 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris;
- 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Expert Group UNESCO (CR)/ECOSOC (CESCR) on monitoring of the Right to Education, May 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris;
- Meeting of the Subsidiary Body of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage on the Possible Procedures for the Participation of Communities, 11-14 May 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris;
- 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee, 22 –30 June 2009, Seville;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 15-18 June 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris;
- UNESCO Executive Board, 182<sup>nd</sup> Session, 7-23 September 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris;
- UNESCO General Conference, Thirty Fifth Session, 6-23 October 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris;
- XVII<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 6-23 October 2009, Paris, UNESCO Headquarters;
- Meeting of the Subsidiary Body of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage on the Possible Procedures for the Participation of Communities, 26-29 Nov 2009, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris.