

For information on  
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## **Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs**

### **Progress Update on the Work of Safeguarding and Promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides Members with progress update on the work of safeguarding and promoting local intangible cultural heritage (ICH) subsequent to the promulgation of the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong.

#### **Background**

2. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (the Convention) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines ICH as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith, that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. To qualify as ICH, the item must be transmitted from generation to generation and is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. ICH is manifested in the following five domains:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the ICH;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and
- (e) traditional craftsmanship.

3. According to the Convention, each State Party has to identify and define the various elements of ICH present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental

organizations to draw up ICH inventories as the basis for the safeguarding of ICH. After the Convention came into effect in 2006, the Government planned to conduct a territory-wide survey on ICH in Hong Kong to collect research data for drawing up the first inventory of Hong Kong's ICH. In 2008, the Government set up the Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (ICHAC) to steer the conduct of the territory-wide survey. In August 2009, the Government commissioned the South China Research Center (SCRC) of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to conduct a territory-wide survey of ICH in Hong Kong.

4. The SCRC completed the final draft survey report in early 2013 and submitted detailed research data on nearly 800 survey cases and a draft inventory of about 480 items to the ICHAC in March 2013. After thorough examination of relevant information by the ICHAC and public consultation conducted on the draft inventory, the Government promulgated the inventory which consists of 480 items in June 2014. The survey results and the finalised inventory were reported to the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs on 17 June 2014 (vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1719/13-14(04)).

5. At the invitation of the Ministry of Culture (MoC), the HKSAR Government submitted applications on three occasions for inscription of local items onto the national list of ICH. The State Council announced in December 2014 that four items (including the arts of the Guqin, Quanzhen temples Taoist ritual music, Hakka unicorn dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung and Wong Tai Sin belief and customs) from Hong Kong had been successfully inscribed onto the latest (fourth) national list of ICH. Together with the six items inscribed earlier (viz. Cantonese opera, herbal tea, the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, the Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow community and the Tai Hang fire dragon dance), currently we have a total of ten local items on the national list. Among these items, Cantonese opera was inscribed onto the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, making it a world ICH.

### **Follow-up Actions**

6. The 2015 Policy Address announced that the Government would enhance the safeguarding measures of ICH, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, promotion and transmission of such heritage. Based on the findings of the territory-wide survey and the first inventory of ICH, the Government will devise and implement

safeguarding measures after consulting the ICHAC. In terms of resources, extra resources are provided to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) for strengthening the manpower designated for ICH as well as supporting the work on safeguarding and promoting ICH. The progress on respective actions is detailed below.

#### Setting up of a Dedicated Office and Resource Centre

7. In 2015-16, the LCSD will upgrade the Intangible Cultural Heritage Unit currently under the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (HKHM) to an Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (ICHO) to heighten its endeavours on the identification, documentation, research, preservation, promotion and transmission of ICH.

8. The LCSD is also planning to make use of the Sam Tung Uk Museum in Tsuen Wan to house an exhibition and resource centre dedicated to ICH-related exhibitions and associated educational/promotional activities such as talks, seminars, workshops, bearer demonstrations and international conferences. A room will also be set aside for students and the public to access reference materials on local ICH.

#### Drawing up of the ICH Representative List

9. The Government will select items of higher cultural value which require urgent preservation from the inventory for more in-depth study and drawing up the first representative list of ICH of Hong Kong. The Government will consult the ICHAC in the middle of this year on the criteria of selection and expert groups will be formed under the ICHAC to follow up on the related work. In-depth studies and assessments will be conducted on individual items while representative items will be selected in batches from the inventory for drawing up the first representative list of local ICH. It is expected that the above work can be completed within 2016. The representative list will provide the Government with a basis for prioritising resources and safeguarding measures for ICH items, especially those with high cultural value and require urgent preservation. In the long run, after establishing the representative list of ICH of Hong Kong, the Government will continue selecting suitable items on the representative list in consultation with the ICHAC to respond to invitations from the MoC to apply for inscription onto the national list of ICH.

## Online ICH Database

10. At the end of 2014, the LCSD launched a preliminary online ICH database<sup>1</sup> via the Multimedia Information System of Hong Kong Public Libraries to provide information including brief descriptions and photos of the 480 inventory items for public access. The database will be updated regularly, with the addition of new information gathered from ICH studies and researches. The LCSD is in the process of developing a comprehensive online ICH database to provide more information on local ICH items in order to raise public awareness of ICH.

## In-depth Research

11. In addition to the in-depth research conducted for the drawing up of the representative list for Hong Kong, the LCSD will also engage tertiary institutes and scholars to conduct in-depth research on important ICH items. For example, the HKHM commissioned the Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct an oral history research project on the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival. The research involves in-depth interviews with the organizing committees and elderly participants of the Festival as well as the major transmitters of folk art to document their memories. The research findings will be compiled and published for public information. Also, the Kwan Fong Cultural Research and Development Programme of the Lingnan University has been engaged to conduct in-depth research and study on the transmission and development of traditional Chinese opera including Cantonese opera, Chiu Chow opera, Zhengzi opera, Baizi opera, Yue opera, Peking opera and Kunqu opera in Hong Kong. Separately, we are planning to engage academics to conduct detailed research and study on Hong Kong's martial arts history. Results of these research projects can be made available to the public through exhibitions or online database.

## Education and Promotion

12. The ICHO will strengthen collaboration with local educational institutions, communities as well as bearer organizations and individual bearers of ICH items in organizing different types of educational and promotional activities. For instance, the ICHO will join hands with the Education Bureau to organize tailor-made training workshops, seminars and field studies for teachers to enhance their knowledge on local ICH so that they can arrange teaching and extension activities to tie in with the

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<sup>1</sup> The online ICH database can be accessed at <https://mmis.hkpl.gov.hk/en/ich>.

curriculum, in particular the New Senior Secondary School Curriculum. Large lantern artworks made by local masters will continue to be displayed during Lunar New Year Lantern Carnival at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui and Mid-Autumn Lantern Carnival at the Victoria Park for the transmission and promotion of the traditional craftsmanship of lantern-making. The ICHO will also organize talks, demonstrations, field trips and exhibitions on a regular basis with a view to enhancing the public's understanding and awareness of ICH as well as encouraging the participation of the community in the safeguarding of ICH.

13. At present, the HKHM under the LCSD will continue its efforts in the promotion and transmission of ICH with a focus on the collection, preservation, research and display of Cantonese opera artefacts. To tie in with the work of the ICHO, the HKHM will organize major thematic exhibitions on ICH on a regular basis to share with the public the research results on different types of ICH items and enhance their knowledge of local and Mainland ICH. For example, the LCSD will co-organize "Genesis and Spirit: A Showcase of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Gansu" with the Department of Culture of Gansu Province in June 2015 to showcase items selected from eight major types of representative ICH items of Gansu Province including traditional craftsmanship, music, drama, etc. Local audience will have the opportunities to admire the cultural gems passed down from generation to generation among different ethnic groups of Gansu Province. In addition, as mentioned in paragraph 8 above, the LCSD is planning to present exhibitions in relation to Hong Kong's ICH in the Sam Tung Uk Museum, Tsuen Wan. The exhibitions will showcase those local items on the national list and the first inventory to feature the indigenous customs and culture of Hong Kong, including herbal tea, the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, Tai Hang fire dragon dance, Guqin making technique, Hakka unicorn dance, Wong Tai Sin belief and customs, paper crafting, Hong Kong style milk tea, etc.

#### The Lord Wilson Heritage Trust

14. In addition to the work of the LCSD mentioned above, the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust (the Trust) under the Home Affairs Bureau also provides funding support annually for the implementation of activities and research projects relating to the preservation and conservation of Hong Kong's heritage. The funded projects cover programmes to preserve and record the ICH items in Hong Kong. Examples of these items are local festive events and ceremonies of making offerings to deities, fishermen's laments and music, the dialects of Hong Kong's

indigenous inhabitants, the sewing techniques of traditional Chinese costumes, the history and culture of the “Hung Kuen” and the Hakka martial arts, etc. Educational and promotional projects supported include the preservation and promotion of fishermen’s culture, the promotion of the bamboo shed Cantonese opera and the hand puppet Cantonese opera, etc. On supporting the national ICH items in Hong Kong, the Trust funded the building of dragon boats and deity boats and the filming of a documentary on the Guqin making technique in 2011 and 2014 respectively, with a view to supporting the preservation of two national ICH items, namely Tai O dragon boat water parade and the arts of the Guqin.

### **Advice Sought**

15. Members are invited to note the work on the safeguarding and promotion of ICH as detailed above.

Home Affairs Bureau  
Leisure and Cultural Services Department  
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