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**Panel on Home Affairs**

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 27 February 2017**

**Proposed Intangible Cultural Heritage Representative List for Hong Kong**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the promulgation of the first Intangible Cultural Heritage ("ICH") Representative List ("Representative List") for Hong Kong, and summarizes major views and concerns of members of the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") on the subject.

**Background**

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

2. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage ("the Convention") adopted in October 2003 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ("UNESCO") was extended to Hong Kong in December 2004. The Convention stipulates, among other things, that each State Party shall identify and define the various elements of ICH present in its territory with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations for the purpose of establishing an ICH inventory.

3. According to the Convention, ICH refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills (as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith) that communities, groups or individuals of the territory recognize as part of their cultural heritage. To qualify as an 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 also provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

4. ICH is manifested in the following domains under the Convention:

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

### The first intangible cultural heritage inventory of Hong Kong

5. In 2006, the Administration commissioned the Division of Humanities of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ("HKUST") to carry out a pilot study on Hong Kong's ICH. In July 2008, the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") set up the ICH Advisory Committee ("ICHAC") to steer and to advise on the territory-wide survey of ICH and measures to safeguard ICH. In August 2009, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") commissioned the South China Research Center ("SCRC") of HKUST to conduct a territory-wide survey of ICH in Hong Kong, with a view to collecting research data for compiling the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong. In March 2013, SCRC submitted detailed research data on nearly 800 survey cases and a Draft ICH Inventory of about 480 items to ICHAC. To involve the community in the drawing up of the ICH inventory of Hong Kong, LCSD launched a four-month public consultation exercise on the Draft ICH Inventory between July and November 2013.

6. In June 2014, after thorough examination of research information of the draft inventory by ICHAC and the completion of a four-month public consultation, the Government promulgated the inventory which consisted of 480 items. The survey results and the finalized ICH Inventory were reported to the Panel on 17 June 2014. Members may wish to note that the first ICH Inventory of Hong Kong was set out at Annex A to LC Paper No. CB(2)1719/13-14(04).

### **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong**

7. It was announced in the 2015 Policy Address that the Government would step up the safeguarding measures of ICH, one of which was to establish a Representative List based on the first ICH Inventory published in 2014. According to the Administration, the Representative List will provide a basis for the Government to prioritize resources and safeguarding measures for ICH items of high cultural value and those that require urgent preservation.

## **Members' views and concerns**

8. The Panel discussed the first territory-wide survey on ICH and the promulgation of the first ICH Inventory of Hong Kong at its meetings on 14 June 2013 and 17 June 2014 respectively. The major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Compilation and updating of the ICH inventory

9. Members expressed concern about the criteria for an item to be manifested as an ICH and considered for inclusion into the ICH inventory of Hong Kong, and whether there would be a limit on the number of items for inclusion into the ICH inventory. Concern was also raised about the Administration's follow-up plan on the first ICH inventory, in particular in respect of adding more information to ICH items already in the inventory and expanding the list to cover those items which lacked detailed information at the present stage and could only be submitted to ICHAC for consideration after further research and study.

10. The Administration advised that according to the Convention, to qualify as an ICH, an item must, among others, be transmitted from generation to generation and was constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history. From a historical perspective, "generation to generation" meant a considerably long period of time and ICHAC recommended that an ICH item should have passed down through two to three generations (i.e. around 70 to 80 years). The Administration would, in consultation with ICHAC, devise a mechanism for updating/enriching the content of individual items in the inventory and for the submission of proposals by the public for ICHAC's consideration of adding new items.

### Safeguarding and transmission of ICH items

11. Members stressed the importance of protecting and preserving endangered ICH items, and expressed deep concern about the safeguarding measures to be taken by the Administration for the promotion and transmission of the 480 items in the first ICH inventory, particularly those of high cultural value. The Administration was urged to consider prioritizing ICH items so that additional resources would be allocated to protect and promote those items of high heritage value as well as the items inscribed onto the national list of ICH<sup>1</sup>. There was

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<sup>1</sup> At the invitation of the Ministry of Culture, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region 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

also a view that the Administration should consider the need to legislate for the preservation and protection of ICH in Hong Kong. Some members suggested that the Administration should consider producing television Announcements of Public Interest on local ICH and partnering with District Councils in taking forward the various promotional initiatives.

12. The Administration advised that it had no plan to legislate for safeguarding ICH. However, having regard to the differences among various ICH items in terms of their importance, nature and urgency for immediate protection actions, a host of safeguarding measures which covered identification, documentation, in-depth research, preservation, promotion and transmission of the heritage would be devised and implemented. The ICH Office would also organize exhibitions, talks, field visits and demonstrations for promotion of local ICH to the public. Closer collaboration with local educational institutions, communities, as well as the individual bearers and bearer organizations of ICH items would also be strengthened. On the international front, the Administration would strengthen the cooperation with the tourism sector with a view to promoting traditional festivals and Hong Kong's ICH to overseas visitors.

#### Funding support to projects for preservation and promotion of ICH

13. Some members enquired whether the Administration would consider setting up a dedicated fund or special fund for the purpose of preserving and promoting ICH. Citing the "Colourful Band of Hakka Women's Cool Hat" and "Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow community" as examples, these members requested the Administration to consider allocating more resources to support the development and transmission of traditional craftsmanship and festive events lest some of the items in the ICH inventory might vanish in the near future. They opined that the Government should draw up a concrete plan to promote Hong Kong's representative items of ICH, such as the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, the Tai Hang fire dragon dance and the Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow community, as tourist attractions.

14. The Administration advised that the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust aimed to conserve and preserve the human heritage of Hong Kong by organizing activities and providing funding support to assist community organizations and individuals in implementing heritage-related activities and research projects, including those

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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 Hong Kong has a total of 10 local items on the national list. Among these items, Cantonese opera was inscribed onto UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, making it a world ICH.

related to ICH. This apart, the Home Affairs Bureau had set up the Cantonese Opera Development Fund to provide funding support to projects and activities relating to the study, promotion and sustainable development of Cantonese opera. In addition to financial support, the Administration would continue to encourage the participation and support of different sectors of the community with a view to achieving the objective of safeguarding local ICH. The Administration actively encouraged other organizations, including the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, to provide funding support to event organizers of ICH items. At present, the Administration had no plan to set up another trust fund to support the safeguarding work of ICH.

### **Recent developments**

15. The Administration will brief the Panel on the promulgation of the first Representative List for Hong Kong at the next meeting on 27 February 2017.

### **Relevant papers**

16. A list of the relevant papers on the website of the Legislative Council is in the **Appendix**.

**Relevant papers on  
Proposed intangible cultural heritage list for Hong Kong**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Home Affairs	14.6.2013 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	17.6.2014 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	11.5.2015 (Item VI)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>

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