

IUCN Statements
ISA 29th Session – First Part

Delivered on 27th March 2024 – Agenda Item 10

Thematic Discussion on “Intangible Cultural Heritage definition”

Thank you, Mr Facilitator.

IUCN wishes to thank the members of the inter-sessional working group for their work in the past year, and for your leadership, Mr Facilitator, in facilitating the work of the group.

We support the work of the intersessional working group and acknowledge the questions provided to guide the discussions on this very important matter.

IUCN recognizes the importance and intrinsic value of underwater cultural heritage and its significance as a repository of human history, knowledge, and identity. While tangible artifacts or sites are more easily recognizable, intangible cultural heritage associated with underwater artifacts or sites is equally important to consider and protect. Intangible cultural heritage can include traditional knowledge, customs, rituals, languages, stories, and other aspects of culture that are not physical objects but are deeply tied to a particular community or place. In the context of underwater cultural heritage, this might include oral histories, navigation techniques, traditional fishing practices, and spiritual beliefs associated with maritime environments. Deep seabed mining presents a threat to underwater cultural heritage and IUCN agrees that provisions within the exploitation regulations must recognize and safeguard both tangible and intangible underwater cultural heritage to ensure that the full richness of these sites is preserved and respected.

IUCN also agrees that the exploitation regulations must define the concept of "intangible" underwater cultural heritage to provide clarity and guidance for implementation. With regards to an appropriate definition and what would such regulatory language look like, IUCN assures its commitment to supporting the intersessional working group on underwater cultural heritage in developing the regulatory framework and would like to participate in the next round of the intersessional work.

To conclude, IUCN makes this intervention in the spirit of IUCN's Resolution 122 on the Protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining and stresses the need to include in the exploitation regulations the assessment of the cultural risks of deep-sea mining and the fundamental importance of respecting and obtaining of free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples and consent from potentially affected communities is achieved.

Thank you.