

Opening Remarks

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ICHCAP upholds the value of intellectual exchange on living heritage for heritage practitioners, policy leaders, scholars, members of cultural institutions and traditional communities, NGO workers, and the general public. On this occasion, a meeting designed for experts to be able to commune and know each other is quite significant for network building and exploration of works being done in the field of intangible cultural heritage. In our history of collaborating with experts, we first had the chance to develop ties with them in 2018 at the 1st expert meeting in Seoul, Korea and this continued at the 2nd expert meeting held in Hoi An, Vietnam. Now, we have another opportunity to build a strong partnership and linkage with experts. At this point, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the UNESCO Office in Apia, particularly their Director, Ms. Nisha, as well as their staff members. This is an incredibly important opportunity for all of us to share our insights and take a more intimate look into the evolution of maritime living heritage in the region.

This webinar series is as a part of the Expert Meeting for Building Network on Maritime ICH, which has been a crucial networking activity of ICHCAP since 2018. Although we cannot get together physically due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that we continue our efforts and bring in as much people as possible from different places all over the world. As a UNESCO Category 2 Centre that intends to strengthen networking and information production and dissemination around topics and issues on living heritage, we have had to resort to alternative operational strategies, shifting planned face-to-face events into virtual activities in order to carry out our mission and along the way inspire communities, groups, individuals, and other organizations to continue their mandated tasks despite the isolation, great unrest, and limited mobility caused by the pandemic. This has been completely challenging to all of us and I can't thank our experts enough for giving us the opportunity to hear from them and know the results of their research and studies.

In contemporary discourse, maritime intangible cultural heritage is viewed by looking into human interactions with the sea and how this compels us to think about the social structures that have emerged through such interactions with a historical dimension and various cultural resources, practices, and symbolisms. As we traverse a world that is essentially constrained by an unpredictably changing climate and

rapid urbanization, maritime heritage safeguarding needs to be revisited time and time again in order for us not only to see the trends in thinking about it, but also in looking for sustainable development methods and approaches that we could integrate into heritage work at the community and (inter-)regional levels.

This year is especially significant as we are heading into the UN's Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Now is the time to go beyond simply studying heritage itself, into safeguarding efforts for the sustainability of the community. For coastal communities, maritime heritage is life itself. Goal 14 of the UN SDGs is on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and maritime resources, with emphasis on how traditional knowledge from coastal communities may be used as a framework for sustainability. This is a huge task to do, but possible nonetheless if we work together.

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