

MEDIA RELEASE

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HAWKER CULTURE IN SINGAPORE SUBMITTED FOR INSCRIPTION ON UNESCO'S REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

Singapore, 28 March 2019 – On 27 March, Singapore officially submitted its nomination to inscribe ***Hawker Culture in Singapore*** on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The nomination documents were jointly submitted by the three organisations co-driving the UNESCO nomination bid, namely the National Heritage Board (NHB), the National Environment Agency (NEA), and The Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore (FMAS). The Nomination Committee that has been formed comprises representatives and stakeholders from various sectors, including hawker representatives, academics, community partners, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other government agencies. The Committee has given valuable advice and inputs to the nomination documents. (Please refer to **Annex A** for the characteristics of Hawker Culture in Singapore.)

2 According to a joint statement from NHB, NEA and FMAS, “The overwhelming support from Singaporeans since we first announced Singapore’s intention to inscribe Hawker Culture in Singapore on UNESCO’s Representative List shows how much Hawker Culture, as it has come to be manifested in Singapore, means to us. The submission of the nomination documents is a milestone in Singapore’s UNESCO inscription journey to better recognise and protect our intangible cultural heritage. A successful nomination will demonstrate to the world how proud we are of Hawker Culture in Singapore, encourage greater appreciation for our hawkers, and show our commitment as a nation to safeguard Hawker Culture for generations to come.”

3 Mr Yeo Hiang Meng, President of FMAS, said, “Since the announcement of the nomination, FMAS has been working closely with NEA and NHB in this journey. We worked together to conduct focus group discussions involving hawkers, publicise the nomination efforts and contribute our ideas to the nomination. Our hawkers have been very supportive. Many displayed *Our SG Hawker Culture* decals on their stalls and encouraged their customers to pledge their support for the nomination. Many members of the hawker community have expressed that this nomination is a recognition of the years of effort and service they have put into perfecting their craft, and that a successful inscription will be the best form of acknowledgement to their tireless dedication to providing good and affordable food for Singaporeans.”

Singapore’s Nomination Documents

4 The nomination documents submitted to UNESCO will be available for viewing on UNESCO’s website and the websites of the three organisations by July 2019. They comprise:

- the official nomination form,
- letters and videos showing community support,
- a set of photographs that include contributions by Singaporeans through social media and entries to the #OurHawkerCulture photography contest held by National Geographic and the Ministry of Communications and Information, and
- a 10-minute video produced to give the Evaluation Body and the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which will be assessing our submission, a better understanding of Hawker Culture in Singapore. (Please refer to **Annex B** for the photographs and links to the videos.)

UNESCO Evaluation Criteria for Hawker Culture in Singapore

5 Following the submission of Singapore’s nomination, a 24-member Intergovernmental Committee, who are elected by the State Parties of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, will decide on the suitability of Hawker Culture in Singapore for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List. The Intergovernmental Committee’s decision will be guided by the assessment and recommendation of the 12-member Evaluation Body appointed by the Intergovernmental Committee consisting of: six experts qualified in various fields of the intangible cultural heritage from States Parties to the Convention that are not members of the Committee, and six representatives of accredited NGOs. The decision on the nomination will be reached in end 2020. (Please refer to **Annex C** for the timeline of Singapore’s UNESCO inscription journey for Hawker Culture.)

6 UNESCO’s evaluation of the nomination of Hawker Culture in Singapore will be based on five criteria:

- A) How it meets UNESCO’s definition of intangible cultural heritage;
- B) How the potential inscription of Hawker Culture in Singapore increases visibility, awareness and dialogue of intangible cultural heritage;
- C) How existing and future safeguarding measures ensure the promotion and continued practice and transmission of the element;
- D) How the nomination effort has involved the widespread participation of the community; and
- E) The inclusion of this element in our intangible cultural heritage inventory.

7 Singapore’s nomination form sets out the points to demonstrate how Hawker Culture in Singapore fulfils the abovementioned five criteria:

A) How Hawker Culture in Singapore Meets UNESCO’s Definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage

8 Hawker Culture is an important element of Singapore’s intangible cultural heritage (also known as “living heritage”), as defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention. The Convention defines intangible cultural heritage 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 recognise as part of their cultural heritage.” Hawker Culture, as it has evolved in Singapore, is a reflection

of our living heritage and has been transmitted from generation to generation. It has evolved in tandem with and adapted to the socio-economic development of Singapore over the decades, from street hawkers of the past, to hawkers based in hawker centres, which have become important community spaces.

B) How the Nomination or Potential Inscription of Hawker Culture Increases Visibility, Awareness and Dialogue of Intangible Cultural Heritage

9 Food is a theme that is easily relatable and well-loved by Singaporeans. The announcement of Singapore's intention to inscribe Hawker Culture in Singapore on UNESCO's Representative List has generated considerable discussion and awareness of the importance of Hawker Culture among Singaporeans. The successful inscription of Hawker Culture in Singapore would further contribute to raising awareness and appreciation among Singaporeans of the presence, pertinence and role of intangible cultural heritage in our daily lives.

10 At the international level, the successful inscription of Hawker Culture, as it has come to manifest itself in Singapore, would be a meaningful acknowledgement, and reinforce the visibility and prevalence of intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts. In a world of ever-expanding globalisation and urbanisation, Hawker Culture in Singapore is a concrete and living illustration of how an intangible cultural heritage has evolved and can continue to thrive in a culturally diverse, rapidly developing and highly urbanised environment.

C) How the Existing and Future Safeguarding Measures Ensure the Promotion and Transmission of the Practice

11 The future viability of Hawker Culture in Singapore is ensured by a diverse group of stakeholders including hawkers, training institutions, schools, community organisations, academia, government, NGOs and individuals, amongst others, through the transmission of culinary practices, as well as research, documentation and promotion of various aspects of Hawker Culture. Some examples of safeguarding measures that have been elaborated in the nomination documents are:

- Hawkers who pass on culinary practices through on-the-job training to younger family members or apprentices who learn to prepare food and manage the stalls. Some hawkers have led apprenticeship programmes, where experienced hawkers are paired with aspiring hawkers to transmit recipes, culinary practices and offer mentorship on the management of a hawker stall.
- Culinary and training institutions which organise field trips at hawker centres for students, allowing them to learn about the dynamics of operating a hawker stall and fostering their interest to join the practice; as well as schools and educational institutions which help promote awareness and understanding of Hawker Culture in Singapore to students through projects and outreach initiatives.

- Local food advocates, community organisations and academia who contribute to documenting Hawker Culture in Singapore, including producing publications and video documentaries detailing culinary practices of Hawker Culture.
- FMAS, hawkers' associations and representatives who safeguard interests of the hawkers and monitor issues at the hawker centres. For instance, FMAS organises meetings and networking sessions with hawkers to support the planning of safeguarding measures. It has also partnered NEA and NHB to conduct focus group discussions involving hawkers, experts and stakeholders, to share information about the nomination and gather feedback on safeguarding measures.

D) How the Nomination Effort Has Involved the Widespread Participation of the Community

12 For the nomination of Hawker Culture in Singapore to be successful, strong support from the community is crucial. To date, more than 850,000 pledges of support and over 31,000 messages have been registered across various platforms including a website (Oursgheritage.sg), a travelling exhibition and mobile pledging stations – all in support of Hawker Culture in Singapore to be inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List. A social media movement, #OurHawkerCulture, invited Singaporeans to express support for the nomination by submitting personal stories and photographs of their experiences of Hawker Culture in Singapore through Facebook and Instagram (@SGHawkerCulture), generating over 810,000 “likes” and “comments”.

13 Over 200 letters of support for the nomination have also been received from hawkers' associations, schools, community groups, NGOs and private organisations across different sectors ranging from food and hospitality, to education.

14 Corporations, organisations, community groups and individuals have stepped forward to work on projects on Hawker Culture to raise greater awareness of its importance in Singapore, and contribute towards its safeguarding. Examples include Eat Shop Play, a digital platform to share information and stories of hawker stalls and centres island-wide. The group will also be declaring the last Friday of March “Hawkers’ Day” to recognise the contributions of hawkers to society.

15 Youths have also enthusiastically rallied to demonstrate their love for Hawker Culture through artistic expressions – writing poems and letters, drawing commonly observed scenes at hawker centres, and even filming a short video which shares the importance of Hawker Culture to Singapore. (Please refer to **Annex D** for examples of the community's contributions and comments.)

E) Inclusion of Hawker Culture, as Practised in Singapore, in an Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory

16 NHB launched an intangible cultural heritage inventory in 2018 comprising elements of our intangible cultural heritage currently practised in multicultural Singapore. These include Hawker Culture, as well as various forms of performing arts, traditional crafts, social practices

and festivals, as practices in Singapore. More information and elements will be added to the inventory progressively.

Singaporeans' Continuous Support for Hawker Culture Is Important

17 Following the official submission of the nomination, Singaporeans are encouraged to continue to show their support for Hawker Culture as the results will only be announced in end 2020. They can do so by pledging their support online and at mobile pledging stations in public spaces, as well as through various ground-up projects covering different aspects of Hawker Culture in Singapore.

18 For more information, please refer to:

- **Annex A:** Characteristics of Hawker Culture in Singapore
- **Annex B:** Photographs and links to videos (part of Singapore's nomination documents)
- **Annex C:** Timeline of Singapore's UNESCO inscription journey for Hawker Culture
- **Annex D:** Examples of the community's contributions and comments
- **Annex E:** About the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- **Webpage (www.oursgheritage.sg/hawker-culture-unesco-submission):**
Summary of the nomination documents
- **Webpage (www.oursgheritage.sg/hawker-culture-public-support):**
Information on public contributions and community support

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit. NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the National Collection.

Through the National Collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

About the National Environment Agency

Formed on 1 July 2002, the National Environment Agency (NEA) is the leading public organisation responsible for ensuring a clean and green environment, and the sustainable development of Singapore. Its key roles are to protect Singapore's resources from pollution, maintain a high level of public health and provide timely meteorological information. NEA also develops and spearheads environmental initiatives and programmes through its partnership with the People, Public and Private sectors. It is committed to motivating every individual to care for the environment as a way of life, in order to sustain a quality living environment for present and future generations.

About The Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore

Registered as an association in 1989, The Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore (FMAS) is a non-profit organisation formed to represent interest of merchants operating in the Housing and Development Board (HDB) neighbourhood and town centres, as well as stallholders selling in the National Environmental Agency (NEA) hawker centres and markets. Its vision is to be the champion for the heartland business community, and the bridge between the government and heartland retailers and hawkers.

Characteristics of Hawker Culture in Singapore

Singapore's nomination documents highlight the following key characteristics of Hawker Culture in Singapore:



- Hawker centres as **community dining** spaces for everyone
- Mastery of skills by hawkers, who are the bearers of **hawker culinary practices**
- A reflection of Singapore's **multicultural society**
- A thriving culture in a highly **urban environment**

Hawker Culture, as practised in Singapore, is a form of living heritage that is an integral part of everyday Singapore life, and a reflection of our multicultural society. With more than 80% of the population visiting hawker centres at least once a week, our hawker centres have become “community dining rooms” – vibrant social and community spaces where Singaporeans of all backgrounds gather at and bond over their shared love for affordable and good quality hawker fare.

Our hawkers and their repertoire of skills are also central to the continued evolution of Hawker Culture in Singapore. Over the years, our hawkers have taken inspiration from our multicultural heritage, adapting dishes to local tastes and context. These culinary traditions and practices have been transmitted across generations, and are testament to how Hawker Culture is truly a living, evolving heritage in Singapore. Such key characteristics make Hawker Culture an important part of our nation's intangible cultural heritage, and are also aligned with both the objective and spirit of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage¹.

¹ Refer to <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention> for details on the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which Singapore ratified in February 2018.

Photographs and Links to Videos (Part of Singapore’s Nomination Documents)

Some of the Photographs Submitted	Description & Credit Line
	<p>An Indian Muslim hawker cooking <i>biryani</i> (rice dish).</p> <p>Credit: Brian Teo, @bt_photography.sg</p>
	<p>People from diverse age groups, genders, ethnicities and religions dine in and socialise at a hawker centre.</p> <p>Credit: @fawterencetan, contestant of Ministry of Communications and Information-National Geographic #OurHawkerCulture Photography Contest 2019</p>



A father enjoying *cendol*, a local dessert, with his children at a hawker centre.

Credit: @doting_dad, contestant of Ministry of Communications and Information-National Geographic #OurHawkerCulture Photography Contest 2019



A hawker demonstrates techniques for making chicken rice. This is part of the “Hawker Fare Series”, where experienced hawkers share their culinary skills and knowledge with aspiring hawkers.

Credit: National Environment Agency

Links to Videos Submitted

UNESCO Nomination Video – Hawker Culture in Singapore

<https://youtu.be/PcSEBDCRt-I>



Video of Support – Hawkers of Singapore

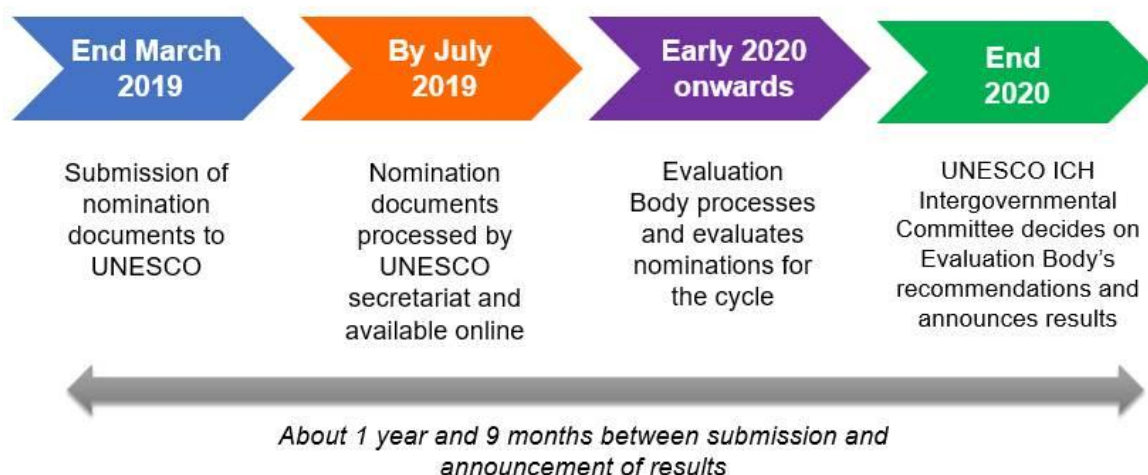
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewZDszn545Y>



Timeline of Singapore's UNESCO Inscription Journey for Hawker Culture

- **February 2018: Singapore ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**, as part of the country's ongoing efforts to safeguard, promote and commemorate Singapore's intangible cultural heritage under Our SG Heritage Plan, the first master plan for the future of Singapore's heritage and museum sector.
 - Ratifying, or consenting to be bound by, the convention signals a country's commitment to safeguarding and promoting its intangible cultural heritage. Following the ratification of the convention, Singapore joins the other 177 countries which are signatories to the convention.
 - As a signatory to the convention, Singapore will be allowed to submit nomination(s) to inscribe intangible cultural heritage elements onto the UNESCO Representative List.
- **April 2018: National Heritage Board co-created an intangible cultural heritage inventory with Singaporeans.**
 - Singapore's intangible cultural heritage inventory exists as a repository to showcase the diverse elements of intangible cultural heritage that are present and practised in multicultural Singapore, and includes the contributions of many Singaporeans.
 - The establishment of such an inventory is the first step towards, and a criterion for the nomination of an intangible cultural heritage element for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List.
- **August 2018: Singapore announced its intention to nominate Hawker Culture in Singapore for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**
 - Hawker Culture was identified as the element to be nominated for the UNESCO Representative List, during focus group discussions conducted from April to July 2018. More than 140 participants discussed aspects of our diverse intangible cultural heritage and possible elements to be nominated for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List. Hawker Culture was consistently highlighted as an intangible cultural heritage that best represents Singapore's multicultural heritage, with hawker centres viewed as important community spaces.
 - The successful nomination of an element from Singapore will allow us to profile and share the rich and multicultural aspects of our heritage with the international community.

- The successful listing of an element on UNESCO’s Representative List by a country does not imply that this element belongs exclusively to, originates from, or exists only in the submitting country.
- **March 2019: Singapore submitted the nomination documents to UNESCO for evaluation and decision on the inscription.**
- **March 2019 to End 2020: Evaluation by UNESCO**
 - Following the submission of the nomination documents to UNESCO, the UNESCO Secretariat will process the documents and invite the submitting state to submit any missing information by September 2019.
 - Thereafter, the documents will be assessed by the 12-member Evaluation Body (EB), a panel of experts appointed by the 24-member Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The EB will put forth their recommendations to the IGC, which comprises representatives from different countries which are States Parties to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
 - The UNESCO IGC will deliberate on whether to endorse the recommendations of the EB during its annual meeting in November/December 2020 and announce the result of all nominations of submitting states.
 - The evaluation process will take place over a period of about one year and nine months.



- **End 2020: Announcement of results of Singapore’s nomination of Hawker Culture in Singapore for UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**
 - If successful, Hawker Culture in Singapore will be listed on the said list, and be internationally recognised together with the diverse intangible cultural heritage around the world.

Examples of the Community’s Contributions and Comments



A drawing by a student from **Riverside Secondary School**, depicting the variety of food and common terms heard at hawker centres.



A creative expression by a teacher from **Jurong Pioneer Junior College**, highlighting various characteristics and descriptions associated with Hawker Culture in Singapore.



People’s Association Youth Movement and Teens Network (T-Net) Advisory Council, in collaboration with students of various clubs and societies from the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University, expressed their support for the nomination through a video that shares youths’ sentiments towards Hawker Culture in Singapore, including the importance of Hawker Culture to them. The video can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/144244285634285/posts/2191537790904914/>



The students and faculty of **At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy** put together a video showing the academy’s support for Hawker Culture. At the academy, students go out to hawker centres to learn about the trade, the cooking techniques, and the variety of dishes. It also teaches the cooking of hawker dishes to both amateurs as well as professionals. Many of its students and alumni have chosen to join their parents and grandparents in operating their family-run hawker stalls.

The video can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/atsunrice-hawker-culture-nomination>

Messages of support penned by visitors to the <i>Our SG Hawker Culture</i> travelling exhibition	Translation
<p style="text-align: center;">I SUPPORT THE NOMINATION BECAUSE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">小販中心成为一个聚集与享用美食的场地。它提供多元种族,如华人,印度人及马来人的美食。</p>	<p>I support the nomination because hawker centres are spaces where we can enjoy delicious food and a variety of multicultural cuisines under one roof.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SAYA SOKONG PENCALONAN INI KERANA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">di tem pusat penjajah adalah salah satu tempat dimana rakyat berlainan bangsa be-kumpul untuk makan bersamalah</p>	<p>I support the nomination because hawker centres are one of the places where people of all races gather to eat together</p>

I SUPPORT
THE NOMINATION
BECAUSE

உணவகத்தில் பல
விதமான உணவு
கிடைப்பதோடு சேரும்படி
உறப்பினர்களை
உறியாட ஆடு
வாய்ப்பாக
இருக்கிறது.

I support the nomination because
**hawker centres present an
opportunity to bond with family
members, besides offering a
wide variety of food.**

About the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

The UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity comprises the diverse cultural practices and expressions of humanity, and seeks to raise awareness of the importance of such practices and expressions, encourage dialogue that respects cultural diversity, as well as give due recognition to the practices and expressions of communities worldwide.

The successful listing of an element on UNESCO's Representative List by a country does not imply that this element is unique, superior to another, belongs exclusively to, originates from, or exists only in the submitting country.

Since the Representative List was developed in 2008, a total of 429 intangible cultural heritage elements have been inscribed as of 2018. Some of the well-known intangible cultural heritage elements on UNESCO's Representative List include the Gastronomic Meal of the French (France, 2010), Indonesian Angklung (Indonesia, 2010), Chinese Shadow Puppetry (China, 2011), Kimjang, or the making and sharing of Kimchi (South Korea, 2013), Washoku (Japan, 2013), Bagpipe Culture (Slovakia, 2015), Beer Culture in Belgium (Belgium, 2016) and Yoga (India, 2016).