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Item 9 (d) of the provisional agenda*

**National standardization: administrative structure of
national names authorities**

**The application to place names of the Convention for
the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
of 17 October 2003**

Submitted by France**

Summary***

Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 17 October 2003 states that the “intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, 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”. Article 2, paragraph 2 (a), states that it is manifested inter alia in “oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage”.

Geographical names are among the oldest and also, paradoxically, the most vulnerable cultural phenomena. Being one of the oldest cultural phenomena, today they are a synthesis of the principal factors in the collective identification of peoples, and they belong to the intangible cultural heritage. However, they are also one of the most vulnerable cultural phenomena because of their intangible and, very often, oral nature, and sometimes, paradoxically, because of the significance they hold in terms of identity, which may give rise to deliberate attacks on them — in other words, deliberate attempts to ensure that they remain forgotten or disused.

For this reason, it would be desirable for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to look favourably upon or

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encourage the submission by States Parties of geographical names as items of the intangible cultural heritage protected under the Convention of 17 October 2003, where this is justified by their particular situation. In any case, each of us can encourage our national authorities to move in that direction. In addition, it would be desirable to draw up and launch a programme for the safeguarding and promotion of this heritage, pursuant to article 2, paragraph 3, and article 18 of the Convention.
