



Launch of the UNESCO Award “Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts” 2008 East Asia Programme

Excellent • Authentic • Innovative • Marketable

10 April 2008, Beijing. The *UNESCO Award “Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts” 2008 East Asia Programme (SEAL)* will be officially launched in April 2008 in Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the People’s Republic of China.

With an aim to promote Cultural Diversity, while fostering social and economic development through the promotion of arts and creativity, UNESCO launched the *UNESCO Award “Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts”* programme in 2002 in Southeast Asia, which was then expanded to South Asia and Central Asia. After the successful pilot in these sub-regions, the SEAL was introduced into East Asia for the first time in 2006. Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the People’s Republic of China are the participating countries, with China through the China Arts and Crafts Association as the sub-regional coordinator for the programme in 2008.

Since 2006 the *UNESCO Award “Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts”* has become a UNESCO flagship programme for handicrafts. The objectives of the programme are: 1) to establish rigorous standards of excellence for handicrafts; 2) to encourage innovativeness while seeking to promote continuation of traditional skills; 3) to offer training and support services to craft producers in the improvement of their product design, production and marketing, and protection of their intellectual property rights; and 4) to provide market opportunities to ensure sustainability of handicraft industries.

The programme undergoes changes starting this year. The programme is renamed to *UNESCO Award “Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts”* in order to better reflect its global status. Besides, the programme will be held only once every two years, which allows more efforts to be spent on the post-judging activities such as attend trade fairs and training for the producers.

In order to be qualified for the SEAL, handicraft products must satisfy ALL of the following 4 criteria: 1) Excellent: demonstrate standard-setting quality in craftsmanship, 2) Authentic: express cultural identity and traditional aesthetic values, 3) Innovative: utilize creativity in design and production, and 4) Marketable: show potential for the world market.

In addition to the 4 criteria, the products have to comply with 2 underlying conditions: 1) Eco-friendly: respect for the environment in materials and production techniques; and 2) Fair: no labour law was violated and no individual or group exploited unfairly in the production of the handicraft.

Upon its award to SEAL qualified products and/or product lines, the SEAL award will serve as a highly recognized quality guarantee for these products or product lines for a period of four years.

The China Arts and Crafts Association is the focal point of the SEAL in China, and will be responsible for coordinating the collection and submission of handicraft products from different craft producers in the country. The China Arts and Crafts Association is also the sub-regional coordinating partner for the SEAL award programme in East Asia for both 2007 and 2008.

Submission:

The deadline in China for the submission of products by the craft producers to the China Arts and Crafts Association is 31 May 2008.

Judging:

An international evaluation panel consisting of renowned crafts experts will meet in Beijing, China, in September 2008 to review all submissions and identify the products to be recognized with the SEAL.

Announcement:

The 2008 SEAL award products will be announced on 15 October 2008 in all participating countries in Asia, followed by press conferences and exhibitions.

Please visit the websites of the China Arts and Crafts Association (www.cnaca.net.cn) and UNESCO Office Beijing (www.unesco.org/beijing) (available in Chinese and English) for more information about the programme.

For more information on the application procedures, please contact:

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