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## Bid for French cuisine as UNESCO he to flop

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

PARIS - Agence France-Presse

France's bid, backed by famous chefs, to have its cuisine added to UNESCO's list of world cultural treasures is likely to flop, a representative from the U.N. body said Saturday.

"There is no category at UNESCO for gastronomy," said Cherif Khaznadar, President of the U.N. Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization assembly of states that have signed the convention to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.

Khaznadar said only the elements specifically identified in the convention can make the list of intangible heritage -- and gastronomy is not among them.

"I am afraid that the presentation of a dossier on gastronomy will not get far," said Khaznadar during a round table discussion at the first Gastronomy by the Seine festival held this weekend on Parisian yachts.

UNESCO started its list of "intangible" cultural treasures, such as dance, carnival or other rituals, in 2003.

In 2005 a UNESCO jury including several French members turned down a request by Mexico to have its culinary tradition recognized.

However, the head of the group campaigning to gain cultural heritage status for French food said it

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should fit UNESCO criteria because it is "a major element of French culture."

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President Nicolas Sarkozy said in February that France would lobby for its cuisine to be added to UNESCO's list of cultural treasures, calling it "the best gastronomy in the world."

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The French bid will be presented to the U.N. educational, scientific and cultural body next year, with a verdict due in 2010.

For Michelin-starred chef Gerard Cagna, UNESCO's recognition would "allow us to keep alive a fundamental part of our culture."

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Many in French food circles are still stinging from a blow delivered in 2003, when the New York Times ruled that Spain had overtaken its Gallic neighbour as the epicentre of the gourmet world.

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