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Round table on the theme: “Culture and Development: the role of culture for sustainable development and economic prosperity”

SUMMARY

This document was prepared to provide relevant information concerning UNESCO’s activities related to the theme of the round table “Culture and Development: the role of culture for sustainable development and economic prosperity”, to be held in the Committee on International Non-Governmental Organizations at the 185th session of the Executive Board. It aims to serve as a background document to provide key elements to facilitate discussions during the round table.

CONCEPT NOTE

CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT



The **High-Level Round Table on “Culture for Development”** seeks to convince world leaders, executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system, leaders of development institutions, civil society and the global community at large of the need to address culture as an integral part of development.

The High-Level Event of the UN General Assembly on the MDGs provides an opportunity to revisit the international development paradigm, which does not yet explicitly recognize the role of culture in and for development. Yet it is widely acknowledged that **culture plays a crucial role in development and especially in the pursuit of the MDGs**. A sustainable development strategy cannot be culturally neutral: it should be not only culturally sensitive but should also

capitalize on the gains resulting from the dynamic interaction between cultures and the economic and social benefits generated by the culture sector. **Thus, an approach to development that is sensitive to cultural assets is the key to addressing the interlinked economic, social and environmental problems confronting the planet as a whole.**

For UNESCO, the cultural dimension of development underlies the protection and promotion of cultural diversity in different forms, in particular through initiatives to safeguard cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible – and to protect cultural property against looting and illicit trafficking or by offering diversified cultural goods and services. Furthermore, a diversified and mainstreamed cultural approach can help respond to contemporary challenges, from poverty eradication to issues such as resource management, safeguarding biodiversity and climate change. Moreover, only culturally sensitive action can successfully address a wide range of societal issues and problems (e.g. HIV/AIDS, family planning, gender-based violence, social inequalities, etc.).

CULTURE – A DRIVER FOR DEVELOPMENT

Culture, defined as “the set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group¹”, is a dynamic force for change.

The success of any development policy depends on recognizing and considering the principles of cultural diversity. Especially with regard to the process of globalization, UNESCO focuses on recognizing the pivotal role of culture in all its facets – including not only the arts and monuments but also museums, music, the performing arts, films, publishing, design, the crafts, intercultural dialogue, etc. – as well as culture for development, and the rapprochement of cultures, which we are celebrating this year.

Culture is an essential component of human development. It represents a **source of identity, innovation and creativity for individuals and communities as well as a tool for reconciliation and social cohesion.** In addition, culture possesses **intrinsic value for economic growth** and is an **asset essential for reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.** Thus, culture must become an integral part of development strategies and policies, involving all development partners and stakeholders. Special attention needs to be given to the articulation of culture-related and -sensitive priorities derived from national development plans, their inclusion in UN system joint programming, the pursuit of joint deliverables and the mobilization of resources by UN country teams.



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CULTURE – CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

Culture constitutes a tremendous economic capital in its own right and is the font of creativity and innovation. Cultural industries have become powerful engines of economic growth, generating considerable income and employment. Cultural industries and creativity are increasingly a strategic outlet for innovation, production, dissemination, income generation and poverty reduction.

Promoting the role of culture will strengthen existing markets and open new opportunities for livelihoods. Today cultural industries have an estimated global value of nearly US\$ 1.3 trillion. Cultural tourism accounts for 40 per cent of total world tourism revenues. Altogether, the culture sector represents 2-6 per cent of GDP in many OECD member countries and in developing countries. Cultural industries have the capacity to create jobs. For example, in Brazil, such industries account for 5 per cent of employment. Thus cultural industries are a dynamic sector with great potential for economic growth and economic empowerment – a potential that remains frequently underutilized and underinvested. Nevertheless, culture tends to remain marginalized in national and international development policies and programmes. The culture sector also suffers from a lack of access to funding, especially in developing countries, due to the often-false perception that such investments may be more risk-prone than in other sectors of the economy. The international development community needs long-term investments in infrastructure for culture to realize its economic and social potential. Access to capital for cultural entrepreneurs must be facilitated. The traditional forms of investing in culture such as subsidies are not always adequate. This situation could be alleviated by innovative financing and public-private partnerships.

CULTURE – AN ASSET FOR POVERTY ERADICATION

Cultural policies and culture-based projects have the potential to make significant contributions towards achieving the MDGs and particularly poverty eradication. Cultural approaches help to make poverty eradication strategies highly relevant and more effective at the local level, since they take into account the specificities (e.g. history, traditions, belief systems, and social organization) of the populations concerned. The African Union has put culture high on its agenda for Africa, with the support of UNESCO. At the operational level, UNESCO is actively engaged as the lead agency of the Culture and Development Thematic Window of the MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F), which finances projects in 18 countries highlighting culture as an asset for development and a factor for social cohesion and peace.

It is a well-known fact that cultural heritage can stimulate economic growth, notably through tourism and tourism-related activities such as local crafts, music and other derived cultural products. Similarly, museums and cultural institutions also largely contribute to economic investment and benefits. In operational terms, the role of culture should be explicitly taken into account in all efforts aimed at realizing the MDGs. UN country teams need to integrate this dimension explicitly in their joint programming exercises with appropriate deliverables, in particular in the context of UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). This may include support in policy formulation and data collection for evidence-based policies, the creation of conducive legal framework, the building of institutional and individual capacities, the design and implementation of heritage projects, the promotion of cultural industries and the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE – A LEVER FOR RECONCILIATION AND PEACE

In a culturally diverse world, globalization will have to bring about more than a mere coexistence between cultures and religions; it needs to spawn new approaches and pathways to peace building. It is part of UNESCO's mandate to build peace in the minds of people across cultures and civilizations, notably through the mutual appreciation of the intrinsic diversity among cultures, towards the development of intercultural dialogue and dialogue in action, indeed a genuine culture of dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue has to rest on mutual knowledge and tolerance so that divergences and convergences can be openly discussed. Dialogue constitutes a force to promote mutual understanding and knowledge, reconciliation and ultimately peace. Dialogue among cultures at all levels – local, national, regional and international – is a powerful lever to combat ignorance, prejudices, humiliation and exclusion. In this context, cultural heritage gives people affected by conflict or natural disaster a sense of identity and belonging that provides meaning to the reconstruction efforts. UNESCO projects in Ethiopia (Axum Obelisk), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mostar bridge) and Cambodia (Angkor) for example, reveal the extent to which cultural heritage, which once divided and separated different communities, can also act as means for finding common ground and shared purpose. Tourism can also play an important role in building social cohesion within and among groups as a vector of encounters and exchange, mobilizing people around cultural heritage, and giving rise to a shared responsibility towards its preservation for future generations. In the same vein, cultural festivals – which often preserve living traditions – help to enhance dialogue and transcend the barriers between different cultures via shared moments. A special focus must also be placed on the role of cities as harbingers of cultural heritage and levers for cultural interaction at the vanguard of creativity, innovation and technology.

Placing culture at the heart of development is thus an essential investment for world peace and stability and a prerequisite for the success of globalization that embraces the diversity of approaches and development models.

CULTURE – CONTRIBUTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Cultural diversity has an important – yet often underestimated – role to play in tackling the current ecological challenges, coping with climate change, preventing biodiversity loss and ensuring environmental sustainability. Cultural factors influence lifestyles, individual behaviour and consumption patterns, values related to environmental stewardship and the ways in which we interact with our natural environment. There is much to learn from the environmental management skills embedded within local, rural or indigenous peoples, including multi-use strategies of appropriation, small-scale production with little surplus and low energy needs, as well as a custodial approach to land and natural resources that avoids waste and resource depletion. This underlines that culturally based knowledge and endogenous know-how are core resources for sustainable development. Not only are biological and cultural diversity linked to a wide range of human–nature interactions, but they co-evolve, are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

THE NORMATIVE DIMENSION OF CULTURE – A LEVER FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

UNESCO's normative mandate, enshrined in part in its seven international conventions in the field of culture, provides a common set of agreed standards that serve to inform and develop national culture policies in harmony with the priorities of the international community. It is therefore critical to shift the focus from global to concrete country-level approaches and engagements that integrate culture into national development strategies and policies. UNESCO's Cultural Diversity Programming Lens can help in such operationalization.

CULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – TOWARDS 2015

Cultural policies and culture-based projects have the potential to make significant contributions towards achieving the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), including the MDGs, while advancing national priorities and strengthening national ownership of sustainable development efforts.

The Round Table on “Culture for Development” is expected to trigger the establishment of an international strategic platform on the role of culture in the context of the global sustainable development agenda, which will contribute to the Rio +20 Conference and to a proposed UN Summit on Culture and Development in 2013.

Specifically, the Round Table aims at

- recognizing the indispensable role of culture for development and the attainment of the MDGs;
- acknowledging cultural industries as powerful engines of economic growth;
- emphasizing the important role of culture as a strategic outlet for innovation, production, dissemination, income generation and poverty eradication;
- highlighting the role of culture and intercultural dialogue as an effective lever to promote mutual understanding, tolerance, reconciliation and peace;
- acknowledging the role of culture in promoting environmental sustainability;
- promoting the inclusion of culture in common programming exercises by UN country teams; and
- highlighting the power of cultural norms and conventions as an effective tool of international cooperation.

¹ *MONDIACULT*, World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 1982 ; *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, UNESCO, 2001

Culture, Communication and Development

A Contribution by the Communications and Information Sector

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are central to all aspects of cultural life. The advent of digital technologies has dramatically enhanced the role and importance of ICTs in the cultural sphere. Cultural industries are inherently dependent today on ICTs whether it is in the production of cultural commodities, their storage, or their distribution. In this way, ICTs have contributed to enhance the flow of cultural goods and commodities across the world and thereby led to the globalization of culture. Today cultural industries have an estimated global value of nearly US \$1.3 trillion and have become one of the fastest-growing sectors of economic growth.

The interconnections between culture and development are well known and UNESCO's approach has always been to consider culture as an integral part of development. However, there exist great disparities in the global flow of cultural commodities. Some countries, especially developed nations, enjoy some advantage in this area. For developing countries, the lack of infrastructure, capacity and financial resources needed to produce high-quality content have seriously restricted their ability to participate in the production and export of cultural commodities although the advent of digital technologies are offering cheaper means to developing countries to enhance their cultural industries. Therefore while disparities still exist in the global flow and trade of cultural commodities, new technological platforms can potentially increase the capacity of developing nations to participate in cultural production and dissemination.

The advent of the Internet has brought about vast new opportunities for cultural expression and dissemination. Today, anyone in principle can produce content and put it up online for the rest of the world to see and share this content. The progressive lowering of the cost of digital technology or equipment allied to lower Internet access costs provide people with an unprecedented opportunity to produce and share content globally.

In this regard, UNESCO is convinced that the Internet has a key role to play in fostering pluralistic, equitable, open and inclusive knowledge societies. However, UNESCO believes that in order for the Internet to be such an open and equitable global platform, it must be guided by the principles of openness, freedom of expression, cultural diversity and multilingualism.

In principle, the Internet is open to all languages of the world when certain technical conditions are met, and when the necessary human and financial resources are in place. Everyone therefore should have access to the multilingual Internet. Nations, communities and individuals without access to the Internet and its resources will certainly be marginalized with limited access to information and knowledge, which are critical elements of sustainable development.

UNESCO is however concerned about the fact that many languages are not present on the Internet. There is a vast linguistic divide, which exists in cyberspace today and this will only exacerbate the digital divide. Various sources indicate that around the world there are more than 6,000 languages, but as recently as 2008 only 12 languages accounted for 98% of all webpages on the Internet. English is clearly the dominant language of the web. Speakers of other languages need to be able to express themselves in culturally meaningful ways, create their own cultural content in local languages and share these through cyberspace.

UNESCO believes that the digital divide has two important aspects: firstly, everyone should have access to the Internet, and secondly, access to quality content created not only at international or regional level, but locally and in local languages. The international community therefore faces a tremendous challenge to ensure that the Internet is multilingual and culturally diverse where every culture and language has its own space.

UNESCO is of the conviction that the development of local language content will increase access to the Internet, contribute to the cultural diversity and multilingualism while at the same time lowering costs of access. Moreover, the development of local language content will create new economic opportunities for building local ICT capacity in both ICT enabled services and content

creation. This could significantly enhance the diversity of content and languages on the Internet while at the same time contributing to the burgeoning of local ICT economies and enterprise.

UNESCO has therefore launched a number of initiatives to promote multilingualism in cyberspace:

- The Organization continues to raise awareness at the international level. The question of multilingualism on the Internet has been addressed during the Internet Governance Forum held in Vilnius in September 2010 and the WSIS Forum in Geneva in May 2010 as well as on many other occasions.
- Within the framework of the “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism in Cyberspace”, UNESCO will prepare a consolidated report summarizing best practices and experiences gained in the process of implementation of the recommendation to be presented at the General Conference in 2011.
- Recognizing the Internet as a great facilitator for diversity of cultural expression and intercultural dialogue, the Organization aims to increase its exposure using the six official United Nations languages through its website and web services within the limits of budget allocations.
- In the area of International Domain Names, UNESCO signed a Cooperation Agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) in December 2009. In September 2010, both Organizations by a Letter of Intent agreed to implement the Agreement by collaborating in the creation of an IDN ccTLD Cyrillic country names/abbreviations reference table for countries whose official languages are based on Cyrillic script. UNESCO believes that this pilot project will invite, encourage and assist Member States by participating in the development of the IDN ccTLD reference table.
- UNESCO also recognizes that media, particularly locally created content by public service and community media, promotes linguistic diversity on the Internet. At the operational level, UNESCO commissioned a research study with an aim to analyse good practices on how public service media in various countries around the world are dealing with language issues, particularly introducing a language previously not used in programming and how it is sustained and promoted. In this respect it should be mentioned that UNESCO submitted to the Secretary-General the report “Communications for Development in the United Nations system”, which will be examined by the Second Committee of the General Assembly on 26 October 2010.
- Well-defined cultural policies have a tremendous impact on promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity. In this regard, UNESCO recognizes that development of comprehensive language policies and promotion of multilingualism on the Internet requires for a clear overview of the situation around the world. It requires reliable indicators developed to monitor and measure specifically linguistic diversity in cyberspace. UNESCO continues to support initiatives, which undertake research in measuring linguistic diversity in the Internet. The latest findings summarizing the work carried out during the last twelve was published in February of this year (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001870/187016e.pdf>).

Culture and Development:
The role of culture for sustainable development and
economic prosperity

NGOs' Views
[Compiled by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee]

Of the 335 NGOs maintaining official relations with UNESCO, 69 were specialized in the field of culture, and several others were concerned by the effects of cultural action on the sectors in which they were involved, such as education, sciences, human rights and the fight against poverty. Their many accounts, gathered during the round table, fittingly illustrated the wider conception of culture. Accordingly, the **European Academy of Arts, Sciences and Humanities (EAASH)** called for bridges to be built between scientific and artistic disciplines, the **International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU)** pleaded for a free and comprehensive approach in conjunction with education for all, and the **International Movement ATD Fourth World** advocated the use of culture as a path to social inclusion.

The first major theme that emerged from the consultation was awareness of the cultural rights, set out in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) which linked the guarantee of cultural diversity to respect for universal human rights. The **International Catholic Child Bureau** regarded their observance as the very basis of individual fulfilment through learning about freedom and building one's own identity. In the ATD Movement's action to combat cultural exclusion, it was also at the individual level that work to assist the poorest (through street libraries, knowledge festivals and grass-roots universities) was a first step in the assertion of identity. In the same vein, the **International Theatre Institute (ITI)** used theatre as an innovative educational tool, particularly for young people in areas marked by violence and conflict. Theatre was also a means of rebuilding the social fabric, a prerequisite for economic development.

In that connection, the collective and social dimension of cultural action was naturally highlighted in all accounts. Language-promoting organizations, in particular, pointed to the speaking of languages and language-exchange arrangements as cultural vehicles of prime importance in a world of constant and instantaneous communication. The **Association Francophone d'Amitié et de Liaison (AFAL)** stressed that the learning of widely fostered intercultural dialogue without impeding the promotion of cultural diversity. The **International Federation of Translators (IFT)** drew attention to the role of literary translators who built bridges between the cultures of the world.

The **World Martial Arts Union (WMAU)** underlined the importance of collective cultural customs and practices to the foundation and cohesion of a society. The **International Council for Film, Television and Audiovisual Communication (IFTC)** in turn stressed the potential of the film industry as an engine of development, as evidenced by the biennial African Forum of Documentary Film held in Niamey. IFTC's partner, the **Observatory for Cultural and Audio-visual Communication in the Mediterranean (OCCAM)** had launched in 2003 the INFOPOVERTY programme, under which disadvantaged population groups were provided with efficient technical and scientific tools to assist in development.

The heritage dimension of culture and its role in development was noticeably central to cultural NGOs' activities carried out to preserve, enhance, or make good use of the heritage. Thus, in addition to its efforts to preserve traditional music, the **International Music Council (IMC)**, which was the world's largest music organization and present in 150 countries, aimed, under its Music Sector Development Programme (MSDP), to help countries to build a music industry to boost social and economic development.

The **International Association to Save Tyre** took action in the fields of education, cultural tourism, traditional craft and environment designed specifically to preserve the cultural heritage shared by 32 cities in the Mediterranean basin. Its action attested to the strength of culture as a means of achieving development and economic prosperity. The heritage of the Mediterranean Basin, a major cultural hub, was one of the oldest and richest worldwide. Several NGOs were very

active there. The **Community of Mediterranean Universities (CMU)** considered that ownership of cultural heritage by those to whom it was passed on through appropriate education was of the essence, followed by action on its economic and social impact and the strengthening of heritage-related laws and institutions. To that end, CMU had established a Euro-Mediterranean Culture and Tourism Master's degree. The **Mediterranean Fine Arts Chamber** also focused on the socio-economic features of the culture sector. Drawing on the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, it held national and regional workshops, the most recent of which provided training for cultural operators, in conjunction with UNESCO's Antenna Office in Sarajevo.

Lately, **ITI**, regretted that culture was still not recognized as an official vehicle for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nevertheless, NGOs could be proud of the official role that they have played in implementing the cultural conventions mentioned above.