



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

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# 187 EX/46

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Item 46 of the revised provisional agenda

## PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL JAZZ DAY

### SUMMARY

This item has been included in the agenda of the 187th session of the Executive Board at the request of Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Philippines, Poland, Spain, Sri Lanka, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America. Attached hereto are an explanatory note and a draft decision prepared by these countries.

An information document (187 EX/INF.10) will be issued as soon as possible by the Secretariat containing the relevant feasibility study.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 8.

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

### International Jazz Day

1. On the recommendation of UNESCO's General Conference, the United Nations General Assembly designated 2010 as the "International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures". UNESCO's role as the lead agency for that Year was consistent with its mandate "to develop and increase means of communication between peoples, and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives".<sup>1</sup> As UNESCO reflects on the achievements of the Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, the Organization must seize the momentum the celebration provided and continue to advance that Year's ideas, particularly that "all cultures and civilizations derive from and feed into each other, and hence diversity constitutes a source of enrichment and innovation for humanity".
2. Music has throughout the ages proved to be a powerful vehicle for communication. When it springs from the fusion of the music of different cultures and creates a harmonious expression that speaks to many different cultures, the rapprochement is complete. Jazz exemplifies this process. Jazz is a unique style of music which originated in the southern United States but has its roots in Africa and merges both African and European music traditions. Jazz has become an international art form, evolving as it travels across the globe, borrowing the best from other nations and regions to enrich it. Defying definition, jazz speaks many languages and has become a unifying force for its adherents regardless of race, religion, ethnic or national origin. The 100th United States Congress designated jazz as "a rare and valuable national American treasure",<sup>2</sup> but today it belongs to the world.
3. It is against this background that the sponsors are requesting the inscription of an item on the agenda of the 187th session of the Executive Board entitled "Proclamation of an International Jazz Day." The designation of 30 April each year as the "International Jazz Day" would unite communities, schools and other groups all over the world to celebrate and learn more about the art of jazz and how it has become part of their culture. Celebrations could be organized at UNESCO Headquarters, field offices and non-governmental organizations and other institutions. UNESCO National Commissions could play an important role in promoting International Jazz Day and what it represents – a means of communication that transcends differences.
4. "International Jazz Day" would be a cross-sectoral project which would engage the expertise of the Culture, Education and Communications/Information sectors. It would also be a Day for all ages since jazz knows no generation gap. Outreach to youth would be an important component. "Jazz in the Classroom" programmes have already been successful in helping students in the inner-city and rural areas to develop creativity, a positive self-image and appreciation for their own and others' cultural heritage. Herbie Hancock, a jazz legend who was recently named as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue, has been featured in an interactive satellite television for music education programme as part of "Jazz in the Classroom".
5. 30 April of each year would be dedicated to highlighting the joy that jazz can bring as a unifying force. Jazz, as a tool for rapprochement, works. An example is "Massar Egbari", a group of young Egyptians recognized by UNESCO for promoting dialogue between Arab and Western countries. These young musicians mix rock, jazz and blues with oriental music. The group launched the "music as a means of intercultural dialogue" project, inviting Western artists to share the stage in concerts.

<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference, adopted at the 22nd plenary meeting on 2 November 2007, 34 C/46.

<sup>2</sup> H.Con. Res 57.

6. “International Jazz Day” would be a force for unity, dialogue and enhanced cooperation among people. It could be a rallying point with endless potential and possibilities. Many organizations currently engaged in promotion of jazz music will embrace the opportunity to foster greater appreciation not only for the music but also for the contribution it can make to build a better society. UNESCO’s role in celebrating jazz will raise awareness of the Organization’s work.

7. The sponsors propose that the 187th session of the Executive Board adopt the draft resolution recommending that the General Conference at its 36th session proclaim 30 April of each year as “International Jazz Day”. The sponsors are ready to provide any further information that may be needed to facilitate preparation of the feasibility study.

#### **Action expected of the Executive Board**

8. The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 34 C/Resolution 46 (2007) and United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/90 (2008),
2. Expressing appreciation for the active engagement of the international community in promoting and participating in the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures,
3. Recognizing that enhancing intercultural dialogue is a never-ending process,
4. Determined that UNESCO should continue to take the lead in fostering cultural rapprochement using a variety of art forms,
5. Noting that jazz represents a very unique form of music which can be a unifying force for positive engagement among diverse groups,
6. Having examined document 187 EX/46,
7. Takes note of the conclusions of the feasibility study presented by the Director-General on the celebration of International Jazz Day, including an indication of the expected results as well as an assurance that there will be no additional financial implications for the regular budget of UNESCO;
8. Recommends that the General Conference, at its 36th session, proclaim 30 April of each year as “International Jazz Day”.