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Distinguished Panellist and Friends,

Before starting to answer the question posed to me I would like to thank UNESCO for inviting me to this very important Congress and the Peoples Republic of China for their very generous hospitality.

We have an ancient Indian text the Vishnudharamottara that states and I paraphrase – Before you start to build, you must understand craft; to master the crafts you need an understanding of art; to be an artist you need to appreciate rhythm and so you need to have knowledge of dance and of music, and thus it goes on. We are here to talk about the sector of sectors that runs transversally across our lives our economies, our countries and our world.

Mahatma Gandhi's understood this well, his powerful call of Swadeshi and Swaraj to his fellow Indians not only created the radical shift that led to the crumbling of imperialism in India, the call was equally a beacon to spinners and weavers, the makers by hand, spread across rural India. His vision for a self-reliant, free India closely linked to its resurgent cultural roots laid its foundation stone. In parallel the visionary Nobel Prize winner, Gurudev Rabindranath

Tagore initiated a search into the indigenous roots of culture, setting the bedrock, inspiring others to follow.

Over the almost seven decades since India's independence investment in safeguarding and promoting traditional crafts has come from across the spectrum - from different ministries in government, civil society, the private sector, UN Bodies, multi-lateral agencies and others.

Much has been done and we have a great deal to show for this input – the great pull that this tradition has on tourism the numbers of arrivals increasing by an average of 9% year on year. The increase in export of products of traditional handicrafts by 25%, and in handloom export by 32% in the last financial year, and this too in spite of global recession, with 95% of the world's handlooms being sourced from India. The numbers employed in the making of traditional handicrafts are estimated to be between 60 million and 100 million. 87%, an overwhelming majority, live and work in the over 6 lakh villages spread across India.

The range of skills that encompass this sector include the creation of classical statues that follow the iconographic and iconometry of auspicious orthodox practice to the making of the humble clay pot, from a bamboo string instrument, to the Dhokra lost wax metal castings of the tribals, the weaving of raw silks to the embroidery of

the Toda tribals. The variety is enormous, and craftspersons work with materials as diverse as metal, wood, clay, paper, glass, grass, fibre, nut, leather, textiles, and much more with enormous regional and individual variations within each group of specialization; a whole host of processes, contexts and variations, each requiring a specific approach.

Skills and techniques, craft ritual and folklore are handed down orally, within and across generations, taught through alternate knowledge transmission systems that do not form part of mainstream educational systems prevalent today. Specialized crafts and handlooms are hereditary specialties passed on from generation to generation. The Moosaris of Kerala who cast the bell metal Charakku cooking utensils in diameters of up to 8 feet, the Patola yarn resist saris woven by members of the Salvi family in Patan characterised by mathematical precision in the multiple tying, dying and weaving, the Sthapatis of Swamimalia who cast the bronze idols are only some such examples.

These immense numbers of self-employed, self-organised, skilled craftspersons are not only the bearers of India's traditional knowledge, the source of creativity and keepers of national cultural identity, but equally provide livelihoods linked to self fulfilment and

sustainable development, this being the second highest area for employment in India after agriculture.

There have been many success stories, the link between cultural industries and sustainable development clear and identifiable. Government initiatives supplemented by civil society efforts placed great importance on these creative and cultural enterprises. This has been a challenging task for there was no previous experience on which to build the work. It meant the creation of a new economic order which would nurture and support the existing structure and skills. The task of formulating policy, the setting up of institutions, and the designing of a framework for the creative industries to flourish and develop in was the vast undertaking faced by government. It was a holistic view that laid the foundations wherein these creative industries were viewed not in isolation, but as part of the fabric of development involving all the creative expressions of a people.

Working to create sustainable economic models and equally significantly going beyond economics to fulfil social development agendas measures included seeking sustainable employment, collectivization, generating income, economic self-sufficiency and social equity... all human development aspirations.

To review the impressive line-up could risk producing a mere laundry list of achievements and given the exigencies of time I will keep it brief to just a few examples.

The rural University program that focussed on one of the most deprived areas in Rajasthan, combined the skills of Management graduates and design students to lift the leather workers and weavers out of the stranglehold of poverty.

In Andhra Pradesh, Uttrakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and other states the weaving initiatives of government, handloom organisations and multi-lateral agencies have brought higher incomes to the weavers, ensuring increasing numbers of days worked and improvements in status and other benefits.

The arid area of Kutch has seen remarkable transformations in craftspersons lives, organisations working in Kashmir and other areas of strife have also been making a huge difference to poverty alleviation and sustainability.

Organizations with wide mandates strengthened women groups working in the traditional crafts to organize for social change, creating self-reliance, employment and sustainable development.

Through successful experimentation the products of the creative and cultural industries were introduced across India, demonstrating that skills were alive and the products of craftsmanship in demand for a new, rapidly evolving middleclass. Groundbreaking exhibitions

wherein craftspeople could interact with their customers, learning new skills and developing markets lead to improved incomes, social equity and empowerment.

Responding to the beat of development and opportunity craftspeople across clusters, quickened to change. Their response echoed across the country. From the first women craftspeople to step out of the confines of home whether it was women chikan embroiderers from Lucknow, Ahir and Rabaritribal women from Kutch or nomadic communities from Sandur, these remarkable pioneers broke the mould, setting examples for others to follow. Artists from Mithila, Gond women from Jharkhand, weavers from the North-East took the step, their standing-up to be counted having a multiplier effect on others in their community. Their personal growth linked to social change and economic progress. These craftswomen seized the opportunity to enter the economic sphere, asserted their rights and developed a voice within the social and contractual sphere of their lives. In interviews their reactions covered a range of affirmative responses from “ghorebosa kaaj” (work sitting at my hom), to “..this is a boon to my craft” their engagements and interactions creating social and economic ripple effect on their communities.

Alongside the NGO movement was the parallel growth of commercial and entrepreneurial activity that brought to markets

across India products of traditional craftsmanship. Clearly demonstrating that it was possible to run successful craft-based businesses with a social agenda. These commercial interdependencies between entrepreneurs and craftspeople worked in the best interest of both, reviving techniques, empowering craftspeople , introducing and innovating with new designs and opening fresh markets so successfully that a steady demand for crafts skills is sustained from year after year.

In the area of educational reform and change, the first institution of design for traditional artisans was set up in 2005, providing the tools of education and language to reduce dependencies. Hopefully it will be a module for many other similar local design schools in craft pockets all over the country. This has followed by a handloom School and several other ventures. The work at the Craft Revival Trust with the largest encyclopedia on traditional craftsmanship in South Asia that is free for anyone to access online received 5.8 million hits in 2012.

While recognising that this is the route to sustainable development and though much has been realized, we need to do more to achieve a higher watermark level for empowerment, inclusion and economic, social equity and sustainable development.

Development initiatives need to reach out to larger numbers; to deliver to those who need it most, for all this to be achieved continuous sustained and determined effort by many more is needed.

However while we have export data, we have limited data on production figures or sales within India of products of traditional crafts. We know the numbers that are being provided with artisan cards, with skill training, insurance, invitations to participate in exhibitions, yet more data is needed.

On a national scale we do not know how many have been pulled out of poverty and how many remain mired in it. Studies abound, including those conducted by the organisation I work with.

These studies clearly demonstrate the link between intangible culture and growth, employment and sustainability and strengthen our case for inculcating cultural heritage as a pillar of sustainable development.