



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Culture Sector

Dialogue with Permanent Delegations to UNESCO on the future Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4)

- Pillar 3 of UNESCO's Strategic Transformation -

15 July 2019

Introductory note

Context

- The next Medium-Term Strategy will cover an 8-year period ending in 2029, and will therefore have to demonstrate the relevance and alignment of the Culture Programme with the 2030 Agenda, and how it can help Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), many of which have integrated culture.
- This meeting is a continuation of the informal consultations launched earlier this year, including those held with the National Commissions last April during the 206th session of the Executive Board, as well as during the meetings of the governing bodies of the culture conventions.

Global environment - trends and issues

- The current Medium-Term Strategy and many of its strategic objectives remain relevant. Nevertheless, the global environment has evolved and, in many cases, has grown increasingly unstable, raising many challenges in the field of culture.
- Cultural diversity and pluralism are being challenged, as demonstrated by the intentional destruction of heritage, the prohibition of certain cultural practices, attacks on freedom of expression, including cultural expression, exclusion, tensions around identity, the rise of intolerance, and ethnic, religious and gender discrimination.
- Displacement and voluntary or forced migration due to conflicts, climate change and demographic pressures, particularly in Africa, are making societies increasingly plural and complex. This migration poses challenges for integration, and is perceived as detrimental to social cohesion, despite the beneficial impact it can have on societies.
- Developing countries are facing an intensification of natural disasters due to climate change, severely impacting cultures and economies, particularly in Small Island Developing States.
- The world is rapidly urbanizing, and cities must respond to the challenges of persistent poverty, growing inequality, lack of employment opportunities for young people and exclusion. This phenomenon is particularly acute in Africa.
- The digital revolution and its consequences for the circulation of ideas and the sharing of knowledge are disrupting societies. Artificial intelligence must provide equitable and universal access to culture, including by ensuring gender equality.

Some ideas for reflection

- Past evaluations of UNESCO’s standard-setting actions concluded that UNESCO has a significant comparative advantage at the normative and operational level through its culture conventions, which enable it to serve as a global reference and consultative body in the field of culture.
- More recently, the MOPAN evaluation noted that “UNESCO's normative work within its mandate aims to contribute to policy change at both national and international levels”, that “country-level interventions are in line with national and regional priorities”, and that “there is a clear commitment to human and institutional capacity building”.
- On the basis of these observations and the SDGs, Member States are invited to consider the role they wish UNESCO, and the conventions, programmes and tools associated with it, to play in the field of culture. Member states are also invited to consider interdisciplinary approaches that are better able to respond to the 2030 Agenda 2030. Some relevant questions include:
 1. How can UNESCO better support the development of public policies and strengthen human and institutional capacities for their implementation at the national level, while ensuring their monitoring at the global level (SDGs 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16)?
 2. What programmes should be implemented, alongside the Education Sector, to ensure, as an ethical imperative and the foundation of UNESCO's mission, the enhancement of cultural diversity and pluralism, the defense of inclusion, access to culture, heritage and knowledge, including traditional knowledge (SDGs 4, 11, 16)?
 3. In cooperation with the Communication and Information Sector, what levers can be used to promote human rights, gender equality and the defense of fundamental freedoms, such as access to culture (including in digital form), the right to participate in cultural life, and freedom of expression (SDGs 5, 16)?
 4. What actions should be taken, in cooperation with the Science Sector, to support the protection of cultural and natural resources and resilience to natural disasters and climate change, particularly in Small Island Developing States and Africa (SDGs 13, 14, 15)?
 5. How can innovation, the development of the creative economy and digital technology, particularly in cities, be used to combat exclusion, poverty and inequality - including gender inequality (SDGs 5, 8, 10, 11, 17)?