

The First Quadrennial Periodic Report on Measures to Protect and Promote the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in the Syrian Arab Republic

Summary

The Syrian Arab Republic, Al-Jumhuriya Al-Arabiya As-Souriya, has a surface area of 185,180 square kilometres and its population is around 24 million. The country is divided into fourteen Governorates, and the capital, Damascus, and its surrounding area constitute a Governorate on its own. Urban dwellers constitute about 55% of the total population and their proportion of the total is rapidly increasing.

Syria's new constitution became valid as of 27 February 2012, and the Supreme Constitutional Court is to amend existing laws in accordance with this constitution within three years. The new constitution sets cultural diversity as one of the principles upon which governance should be based, and considers it a national heritage that consolidates national unity in the frame of the unity of the Syrian land. It guarantees the freedom of scientific, literary, artistic and cultural creativity, states that all citizens have the right to contribute to cultural life and guarantees the freedom and independence of press, publishing and media institutes.

The main laws that regulate cultural expressions and their production in Syria are the bylaws of the Ministry of Culture, Local Administration Law, Associations' Law, Copyright Law, Media Law, Antiquities Law and Illiteracy Alleviation Law. Syria has ratified several UNESCO conventions, in addition to those in the field of environment. The principal area of its cultural international collaboration is archaeology and cultural heritage.

The Ministry of Culture is the authority responsible for implementing cultural projects beyond capacities of local administrative units (Governorates, cities, towns and districts), in addition to its role of planning and evaluation the cultural process, while the elected councils of administrative units are responsible for local administration and actions aiming at the development of the Governorate, based on the principles of sustainable and balanced development.

Syria's main achievements related to the Convention are in the fields of illiteracy elimination and adult education, providing infrastructure for cultural production through establishing and equipping cultural centres, increasing theatrical performances and focusing on children's theatre, establishing new museums and developing existing ones, increasing archaeological research and heritage documentation, organizing fine art exhibits, and updating the legal framework for cultural work in the country.

Main challenges related to implementing the Convention are the lack of funds allocated to culture, lack of local statistics in the field, difficulty in achieving balanced cultural development between different Governorates due to differences in available infrastructure, plus administrative challenges related to the distribution of responsibilities in the cultural field over several governmental entities, mainly the Ministries of Culture and that of Local Administration.

Priorities related to the Convention are: the institutional and legislative development, developing infrastructure, adult education, developing the cinema industry, theatre and fine arts, focusing on children's culture, improving museums and rehabilitating archaeological sites, documenting Syria's heritage, and building internal capacities.

This report was prepared through a collaborative effort between the Directorate of Popular Heritage at the Ministry of Culture and the Council of Ministers represented by the Planning and International Cooperation Commission and the Central Bureau of Statistics, and through the consultations with other governmental and non-governmental entities.

1. General information

- a) Name of Party: Syrian Arab Republic
- b) Date of ratification: 5 February 2008
- c) Ratification process: Presidential Decree No. 42, dated 31 December 2007, based on Parliament's approval in its session dated 26 December 2007.
- d) Total contribution to the IFCD (to date): 0
- e) Organizations or entities responsible for the preparation of the report:

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- g) Date report was prepared: 23 April 2012
- h) Name of designated official signing the report: Dr. Riad Ismat, Minister of Culture
- i) Description of the consultation process established for the preparation of the report and name of representatives of participating civil society organizations:

This report was prepared through a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Culture and the Council of Ministers represented by the Planning and International Cooperation Commission and the Central Bureau of Statistics. The Directorate of Popular Heritage at the Ministry of Culture led the effort, consulting in the process with the Directorates of Arab Cultural Centres, Copyright, Planning and Statistics, and Fine Arts, in addition to the Ministries of Information and that of Social Affairs and Labour, the Damascus Opera House, the National Film Organization, the Publishers' Union and Al Makan Art Association.

2. Measures

2.1. Cultural policies and measures

Syria's new Constitution

Syria's new constitution became valid as of 27 February 2012. The Supreme Constitutional Court is the body responsible for amending existing laws in correspondence with it within a maximum of three years. Parts of the new constitution that are related to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions are:

- The prologue sets cultural diversity as one of the principles upon which the governance of the people should be based.
- Article 3: the State respects all religions and guarantees the freedom to practice all their rituals that do not cause public disorder.
- Article 9: the constitution safeguards the cultural diversity of Syrian society and considers it a national heritage that consolidates national unity in the frame of the unity of Syrian land.
- Article 27: protecting environment is a responsibility of the State and society.
- Article 28: the educational system is based on founding a generation that is proud of its identity, heritage, belonging and national unity.
- Article 31: the State guarantees the freedom of scientific, literary, artistic and cultural creativity, and provides the necessary tools to achieve that, in addition to providing assistance to the development of arts, artistic creation and creative talent and protecting their productions.
- Article 32: the State protects archaeological and heritage sites, in addition to objects of artistic, historic and cultural value.
- Article 33: citizens are equal in rights and duties, and no discrimination shall be made between them on the basis of gender, origin, language, religion or conviction.
- Article 34: all citizens have the right to contribute to cultural life.

- Article 43: the State guarantees the freedom and independence of the press, printing, publishing and media institutes according to law.

Bylaws of the Ministry of Culture

Passed in 1958 and currently being updated, this is the main legal document that regulates artistic and cultural work in Syria. According to this law, the goals of the Ministry of Culture include promoting knowledge and culture and raising awareness towards the Arab culture, facilitating popular culture, coordinating with foreign cultural institutes, implementing international agreements in the field of culture, holding different cultural and artistic activities, organizing competitions and giving awards, establishing cultural organizations, reviving Arab heritage, safeguarding the archaeological and historic heritage of Syria, establishing museums, and encouraging arts and literature.

The Ministry of Culture includes the Directorates of Arab Cultural Centres, Adult Education, Cultural Relations, Theatres and Music, Children’s Culture, Censorship, Fine Arts, Popular Heritage, Legal Affairs, Copyright and Statistics and Planning, and supervises the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, the Damascus Opera House, the National Film Organization, the Syrian General Commission for the Book, Al Assad National Library, the Higher Institutes of Theatre and Music, and those of Archaeology and Applied Arts.

Local Administration Law

A new version of this law was passed on 23 August 2011 and its aims include:

- Decentralizing authority and responsibility through expanding and specifying authorities of elected councils in administrative units (Governorates, cities, towns and districts) in order to facilitate their role in developing these units economically, socially, culturally and urbanely.
- Establishing qualified administrative units that are capable of delivering their development plans, making administrative units directly responsible for services, the economy, culture and all matters of concern to citizens, and decreasing the role of central authorities to planning, legislation, regulation, the introduction of new technologies and the implementation of large projects that are beyond the capacities of administrative units.
- Increasing the income of administrative units to allow them to perform a developmental role in addition to their service one.

Administrative units (Governorates, cities, towns and districts) are administratively and financially independent and each has an elected council for a four year term.

In the frame of the general policy of the state, local councils are responsible for local administration and actions aiming at developing the Governorate including culture and based on the principles of sustainable and balanced development. The councils’ work includes the fields of planning, education, culture, archaeology, tourism, environment, and sports and youth.

The councils coordinate with central bodies (like the Ministry of Culture) by providing feedback on their plans and their implementation, set long term and annual plans, supervise their implementation, evaluate achievements and have contracting powers, in addition to supervising central bodies that are to become decentralized soon.

Local councils at the level of the Governorate draft plans and follow their implementation to ensure balanced and sustainable development in the Governorate, following guidelines set by national Five Year Plans and coordinating in the process with private, public and civil entities.

Administrative units can carry out cultural projects and help non-for-profit cultural organizations, associations, forums and clubs to achieve their goals, in addition to establishing sport, social and cultural clubs.

Furthermore, the local councils can establish committees on the level of quarters to better respond to the needs of local neighbourhoods, including social and cultural ones. These committees participate in implementing local projects, in addition to communicating citizens' feedback.

Associations' Law

Passed in 1958, and currently being amended, this law regulates the establishment and work of associations, clubs, unions and other non-governmental organizations in Syria that do not aim at gaining profits. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is responsible for NGOs in Syria.

Tax exemptions for artists

Set by law No. 24 dated 13 November 2003 as writing, music playing and composition, painting by hand, sculpture.

Tax exemption decision for industrialists to fund culture

The first tax exemption decision for industrialists if they support cultural activities was made by the Council of Ministers on 10 February 2009.

Copyright Law

For copyright of written, theatrical, music, cinema, radio, TV, choreography, mime, fine and applied arts and photography works, in addition to maps, designs, and works related to topography, archaeology or sciences, and computer programs.

This law was introduced in 19 February 2001, followed by the creation of the Directorate of Copyright at the Ministry of Culture in 8 June 2002, which is working on updating the law today, and whose main challenge is raising public awareness towards intellectual property rights. An updated version of this law, including sections related to oral heritage, is currently being studied.

Media Law

Out in 28 August 2011, the new Media Law replaced the Publications Law, the Law of Communicating with the Public Online, and a Presidential Decree related to Private

Commercial Radio Stations. This inclusive new law regulates press and print, accompanies developments in communication technology, and has established a National Council for Media to protect freedom of press.

The Antiquities Law

This law, published in 1963 and currently being updated, protects ancient movable or immovable properties older than 200 years and more recent properties considered by the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums to have 'historical, artistic or national characteristics'. The law protects historical mosques, churches, temples, hospitals, schools, playgrounds, theatres, khans and baths. Planned amendments include regulating private museums and further safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of Syria.

The current Antiquities Law, implemented by the General Directorate for Antiquities and Museums, surpasses other laws in the case of conflict, but it is not the only one that protects Syria's cultural heritage. Other ones are the Penalties Law 1949, Civil Law 1949, Public Administration Law 2011, the Law of Developing and Organizing Cities 1974, the Law of Shrubs and Environmental Touristic Investment 2007 and Law No. 1 dated 29 March 2003 and amended in 2008, which states the responsibilities of administrative authorities, city councils and towns towards violations.

Illiteracy Elimination Law

This law was passed in 1972, edited in 2002 and is currently in the process of updating. It was accompanied with the establishment of the Directorate of Adult Education, in addition to providing financial (in kind or cash) incentives for those who study, and connecting vocational to alphabetic training.

Laws being processed

- Television Production Law (Ministry of Information), aiming at better regulating the field of TV production.
- Establishing a Cultural Development Fund (Ministry of Culture): with the aim of supporting cultural productions.

World Heritage Sites

Syria has 6 registered World Heritage sites, 4 of which were registered before 1995, in addition to 11 properties submitted to the Tentative List. These sites are managed by the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, with contributions from the Ministry of Tourism and relevant Governorates. Governorates in which World Heritage Sites are located contribute to the protection and regulation of these sites. The ancient cities of Damascus and Aleppo, two World Heritage Sites that are inhabited, each has a directorate of its own at the relevant Governorate. These Directorates look after traditional baths (hammams), water fountains (Sublan), Souqs, religious spaces, Khans and residential houses.

Forests and Biosphere and Natural Reserves

Syria has 25 Natural Reserves (0.6% of total land) including 1 Biosphere Reserve, and forestry composes 2.7% of its total land area. The Ministry of Environment (established in 2009) and that of Agriculture are responsible for overseeing these lands.

The intangible cultural heritage

Syria has one element inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity and has submitted two requests for assistance for listing on the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The Directorate of Popular Heritage at the Ministry of Culture oversees promotion and safeguarding of Syria's ICH, and plans are underway for establishing a national documentation centre for Syria's ICH and starting up a formal wide scale inventorying process.

2.2. International cooperation and preferential treatment

Syria has ratified the following UNESCO Conventions:

Convention	Year of ratification
Agreement for Facilitating the International Circulation of Visual and Auditory Materials of an Educational, Scientific and Cultural character with Protocol of Signature (1948)	1951
Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Protocol (1954)	1975
Convention on the Means of Prohibiting the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970)	1975
Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	1975
Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials, with Annexes A to E and Protocol annexed (1950)	1980
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971)	1998
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	2005
International Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations (1961)	2006
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)	2008

It has Twin Cities agreements with Argentina (1), Armenia (2), Australia (1), Belarus (1), Brazil (1), China (1), Iran (2), Lebanon (1), North Korea (1), Russia (1), Slovakia (1), South Africa (1), Spain (3), The Czech Republic (1), Tunisia (1) and Turkey (6).

International cooperation in the field of archaeology includes excavation and rehabilitation of archaeological sites and development of museums, in addition to building capacities of employees and providing funds in these fields. The number of foreign archaeological expeditions in 2010 reached 33, joint ones 47 and national ones 58.

The Directorate of Cultural Relations at the Ministry of Culture is responsible for implementing international cultural cooperation programs in addition to organizing cultural days out of Syria in Arab and other capitals based on international cooperation and cultural exchange agreements. These include: Cooperation Protocol in 2006 with Belarus (valid 2006-08), Cooperation Work Agreement in 2010 with Belarus (valid 2010-12), Implementation Program in 2011 with Poland (valid 2011-13), Cultural Cooperation Program in 2010 with Russia (valid 2010-12), Implementation Program in 2007 with Tunisia (valid 2007-09), Implementation Program of Cultural Agreement in 2010 with Tunisia (valid 2010-12), Implementation Program in 2010 with Turkey (valid 2010-12), and Implementation Program for Cultural Cooperation in 2011 with Yemen (valid 2011-13).

Furthermore, The Ministry of Culture participates in regional and international specialized seminars and workshops held by the Arab League, Arab states or international organizations such as the Arab League for Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

The Ministry of Culture is an active participant in the meetings of WIPO's Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore, held with the aim of reaching an international instrument for safeguarding these knowledge sources.

As for environment, beside the UNESCO's 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Syria has ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992, the Ramsar Convention 1971 and the protocol concerning Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas 1982.

2.3. Integration of culture in sustainable development policies

Syria's new constitution sets cultural diversity as one of the principles upon which the governance of the people should be based.

The new Local Administration Law (2011) states that within the general policies and national plans of the State, local councils on the levels of Governorates, cities, towns and districts are responsible for local administration and actions aiming at developing the Governorate including culture based on the principles of sustainable and balanced development.

Local councils at the level of the Governorate draft plans and follow their implementation to ensure balanced and sustainable development in the Governorate, following guidelines set by national Five Year Plans and coordinating in the process with other local councils in addition to private, public and civil entities.

Furthermore, the current and planned programs of alleviating illiteracy by the Ministry of Culture involve economic empowerment and micro-finance projects, in addition to joining vocational training with alphabetic one.

2.4. Protecting cultural expressions under threat

Syria has registered 6 sites as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and produced relevant laws to safeguard them, in addition to working on registering two elements on the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

Syria's efforts to protect and revive Aramaic Language include establishing the Aramaic Language Teaching Institute in Ma'loula under the auspices of Damascus University in 2007. It should be noted that Syria is the only country in which Aramaic is still spoken today, by a population of 15-20,000 living in the towns of Ma'loula, Jabi'deen and Sarkha, 50 km North of Damascus.

Awareness-raising and participation of civil society

Non-governmental organizations (NOGs) contribute to the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions in Syria. Associations are licensed and monitored by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. NGOs working in the field of culture include:

Artistic and cultural associations

- **Damascus:** the Free Theatre Crew (1956), the Cinema Club (1959), the Artistic Club for Acting and Music (1960), the New Generation Association (1979), the Photography Club (1982), the Charity Artistic Music Institute (1998), the Syria Trust for Development (2001), the Association for the Revival of Popular Heritage in Barzeh (2002), the Zanoia Festivals Association (2005), Al Makan Art Association, the Artistic Renaissance Association, Echo Sada Association, the Association of the Syrian Flying Club, the Businessmen Association and the Syrian Association for Fashion Designers (2006), the Damascene House Association and the Association of the Tourist's Friends (2007), the Syrian Organization for Sustainable Tourism (2008) plus the Damascene Eagles Association for Swords and Shields and the Damascene Popular Arada (2010).
- **Aleppo:** Al Adiyat Association (1959, with branches in Damascus, Homs, Idlib, Raqqa, Sweida, Deir Ez-Zor, Tartous, Latakia, Hama and Daraa), the Arab Acting Club (1959), the Association of the Popular Arts Ensemble (1960), the Arab Youth Club for Arts and Literature (1961), the Nairab Youth Club for Arts and Literature (1963), Kilikia Cultural Association and the Arab Palestinian Club (1965), plus the Association of the Friends of Fathi Muhammad Centre for Fine Arts (2006).
- **Homs:** Dawhat Al Mimas Club (1959), Al Khayyam Club for Culture and Arts (1961), the Bank and Insurance Employees Club (1962), the Chess Club (1963), Dar Al Funoun Club (1968), the Electricity Workers Club (1969), the Cinema Club (1972), and the Legal Family Association (2006).
- **Sweida:** the Friends of Music Association (2005), the Association of Heritage Friends and Popular Heritage (2006), and the Association of the Local Development Fund-Emtan (2007).

- **Tartous:** the Cinema Club (1981).
- **Latakia:** the Music Club Association (1960), the Ugarit Cultural Club Association and the Child Theatre Family Association (2006), plus I Paint my Dream Association (2010).
- **Hama:** the Art League Club (1954), the Farabi Club (1959), and the Sword and Shield Club for Popular Arts (2006).

Social associations

Social associations include social clubs, city friends associations and ones for literature, cultural minority groups like Circassians and Armenians and social groups like youth and women. They also include cultural exchange and friendship associations with foreign countries.

The total number of these associations is 133 (Damascus 65, Aleppo 21, Hama 7, Homs 19, Tartous 3, Latakia 14, and Damascus Countryside 4).

Environment associations

- **Damascus:** the Syrian Environment Association (2001, with a branch in Aleppo), the Environment Protection Association (2001), the Environment Friends Association and the Environment Protection and Sustainable Development Association (2002), the Syrian Wild Life Preservation Society (2003), the Syrian Association for Environment Protection (2004), the Wild Birds Protection Association (2005), the Association for Health and the Environment (2006) and the Sham Club for Eco-Tourism (2008).
- **Damascus Countryside:** the Environment Lovers Association in Jaramana (2004), Nabek Friends Association (2005), and Al Marah Association for Reviving and Developing the Damascene Rose (2010).
- **Aleppo:** the Syrian Association for Plan Protection (1975), the Environment Friends Association (2003), and the National Association for Environmental Development (2005).
- **Latakia:** the Syrian Coast Association for Environment Protection (2004), the Youth Association for Environment Protection (2005), the Association of Protecting the Water Environment and the Scientific Environment Association (2006), plus Nature without Limits Association (2007).
- **Hama:** the Environment Friends Association (2005) plus the Olive Association in Salamiyeh (2006).
- **Homs:** Al Ardd Charity Environmental Association in Qseir and Homs Environment Association (2003), plus the Palmyra Association for Safeguarding the Environment and Wild Life (2006).

- **Tartous:** Nature Protection Association (2006).
- **Deir Ez-Zor:** Environment Protection Association (2004).
- **Quneitra:** the Golan Association for the Protection of Heritage and the Environment (2006).
- **Sweida:** the Environment Friends Association (2002) plus the Environment Protection Association in Ara (2007).
- **Raqqa:** Zaleb Environmental Association (2006).
- **Qamishli:** the Environment Protection Association (2006).

Main results achieved and challenges encountered when implementing the Convention

Illiteracy elimination

The rate of illiteracy was down from 19% in 2005 to 14% in 2010 due to the National Campaign for Adult Education and Decreasing the Rate of Illiteracy. The Governorates of Quneitra, Sweida and Tartous were declared illiteracy free, in addition to Hama and Dar'a.

The number of women who are illiteracy free increased due to special programs connected with economic empowerment and micro-finance projects.

Cultural centres and forums

The number of cultural centres increased from 423 in 2005 to 476 in 2010, out of which 442 have public libraries, 111 have theatres and 106 have cinemas. These centres organize lectures, conferences, book circles and theatrical performances, and there has been an effort to host activities of local communities organized by NGOs.

During the 10th Five Year Plan, Cultural Centres were also equipped with internet forums, with an average of 10 per year between 2005 and 2010 with the aim of spreading informatics, in addition to rehabilitating already established centres including their theatres.

The number of cultural centres functioning abroad increased to 5, all of which teach Arabic, especially to the children of immigrants, in addition to promoting and spreading the Syrian Arab culture.

Public education institutes

The number of institutes increased from 75 in 2005 to 115 in 2010, and the number of students almost doubled.

Theatrical performances, cinema, and children's theatre

The number of public cinemas and theatres, including those in cultural centres, has not increased during the 10th Five Year Plan (2005-2010) but some have been rehabilitated. This

rehabilitation effort, in addition to increasing the number of movable stages and artistic ensembles has increased theatrical performances from 14 in 2005 to 28 in 2010, out of which children's performances increased from 6 to 8.

A national annual festival dedicated to children's theatre was launched and children's cinemas and theatres in cultural centres have been rehabilitated with a rate of 2 per year, in addition to fostering and developing children's literary, artistic and scientific talents in the frame of Arab Cultural Centres.

Furthermore, the number of performances at the Damascus Opera House increased from 230 in 2006 to 512 in 2010.

Books, publishing and public libraries

The number of books published by the Ministry of Culture increased from 176 in 2005 to 244 in 2010 and the number of exhibits (organized inside and outside the country) from 14 to 21.

During the 10th Five Year Plan, the National Assad Library continued its activities of holding poetry evenings, exhibits, conferences and lectures. However, the number of readers at the library dropped from 130,996 in 2006 to 119,570 in 2010.

Museums and archaeological sites

Two new museums were established between 2005 and 2010, increasing the total number to 28. The number of museum visitors increased from 548,966 in 2005 to 811,765 in 2010 due to the rehabilitation of museums, increasing their offered services and promoting tourism towards them and archaeological sites.

The number of revenue generating archaeological sites has increased from 25 in 2005 to 28 in 2010 and the number of their visitors from 1,212,361 to 2,025,779, accompanied by a doubling of revenues from archaeological sites and museums. These achievements result from the discovery of new archaeological sites, documenting the archaeological heritage of the country, safeguarding it and the continuation of excavation and rehabilitation works, in addition to the increase in available funds for such activities

The 10th Five Year plan also witnessed an increase in the number of expeditions working in excavation and rehabilitation of archaeological sites from 123 in 2005 to 138 in 2010, in addition to building the capacities of workers in the fields of archaeology, museums, GPS and management of World Heritage Sites, and using recent scientific technology in excavation and rehabilitation works. Studies have also been conducted on using local traditional techniques in the rehabilitation and preservation of archaeological sites.

Fine arts

The Ministry of Culture organizes annual exhibits for fine artists, photographers and Arabic calligraphers, in addition to an annual international sculpture symposium.

Spending on culture

Spending on culture during the 10th Five Year Plan was less than planned but the set goals were mostly achieved.

Expenditures of the Ministry of Culture (including on archaeology and museums) in addition to Directorates of Culture in Governorates (Ministry of Local Administration) increased from 3,010,931 thousand SYP in 2005 to 5,656,049 thousand SYP in 2010.

Administrative and legal reform

The Ministry of Culture has improved internal regulations for many of its institutions and established some new ones, in addition to increasing its number of employees and introducing a new incentives system.

Challenges

- Lack of funds allocated to culture, in comparison to the objectives of this sector;
- Lack of statistics, which affects planning, monitoring and performance of local cultural bodies, and lack of feedback towards central planning units;
- Difficulty of achieving balanced cultural development in different Governorates due to differences in available infrastructure;
- The inability to specify the total financial allocations or expenditures related to local cultural activities, because they are managed by several administrative units (Governorates, cities, towns and districts);
- Lack of land allocations to suffice for the Ministry of Culture's projects;
- Inability to employ a sufficient number of people to achieve the goals of the Ministry of Culture and the bodies affiliated with it;
- The gap between functionality plans for local cultural infrastructures and local cultural needs.

Culture in the 11th Five Year Plan (2011-2015)

The Plan has not been published yet due to the unrest in the country; therefore the plans listed below may change. Priorities of the 11th Five Year Plan in the field of culture are:

- **Institutional development:** amending bylaws of the Ministry of Culture, re-defining local cultural institutes in Governorates to surpass current institutions in scope, plus decision making and spending authority.
- **Legislative development:** providing the Directorate of Theatres and Music and the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums with larger decision making and financial authority.

- **Improving local cultural bodies (cultural centres, libraries and public education institutes):** establishing and rehabilitating cultural centres, establishing cultural forums, building a cultural palace in Damascus.
- **Adult education (illiteracy alleviation):** equipping local development centres.
- **Distributing books to the widest possible population:** completing equipping Al Assad National Library.
- **Developing cinema and the cinema product:** rehabilitating public cinemas in Latakia, Deir Ez-Zor and Tartous Governorates.
- **Developing theatre:** building theatres and establishing music institutes in Governorates.
- **Developing fine art:** completing building the Institute of Applied Arts, establishing a contemporary art museum in Damascus, rehabilitating fine art institutes in different Governorates.
- **Developing children's culture:** equipping children's cinema and theatre equipment at cultural centres.
- **Documenting Syria's heritage:** documentation of archaeology and museums.
- **Improving museums:** establishing new museums in the Governorates of Latakia, Tartous, Idlib, Raqqa and Damascus Countryside.
- **Rehabilitating and safeguarding archaeological sites:** excavation and rehabilitation in archaeological sites.
- **Capacity building:** training employees of the Ministry of Culture.

Signature on behalf of the State

Name: Dr. Riad Ismat

Title: Minister of Culture

Date: 23 April 2012

Signature: