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The Hangzhou Declaration

Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies

Adopted in Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, on 17 May 2013

We, the participants gathered in Hangzhou on the occasion of the International Congress “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development” (15-17 May 2013), wish to express our gratitude and acknowledge the generous hospitality and intellectual leadership of the Chinese authorities and the City of Hangzhou in providing a forum to reflect on the place that should be given to culture within the international sustainable development agenda. We especially recognize the efforts and achievements made by the City of Hangzhou to conserve its heritage and promote its vibrant culture for sustainable development.

We recognize the important advances that have been made over the past decade by the international community at all levels in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals.

We consider that in the face of mounting challenges such as population growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, disasters, climate change, increasing inequalities and persisting poverty, there is an urgent need for new approaches, to be defined and measured in a way which accounts for the broader picture of human progress and which emphasize harmony among peoples and between humans and nature, equity, dignity, well-being and sustainability.

These new approaches should fully acknowledge the role of culture as a system of values and a resource and framework to build truly sustainable development, the need to draw from the experiences of past generations, and the recognition of culture as part of the global and local commons as well as a wellspring for creativity and renewal.

We recall, in this regard, some of the most important policy documents that have underscored the importance of culture for sustainable development in recent years, including the UN General Assembly Resolutions N. 65/1 (“Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals”, 2010), N. 65/166 (2011) and N. 66/208 (2012) on “Culture and Development”, as well as a number of other relevant declarations, statements and normative instruments adopted at international, regional and national levels.

We recall in particular the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, “The Future We Want” (Rio de Janeiro, June 2012), which highlighted the importance of cultural diversity and the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development.

We reaffirm that culture should be considered to be a fundamental enabler of sustainability, being a source of meaning and energy, a wellspring of creativity and innovation, and a resource to address challenges and find appropriate solutions. The extraordinary power of culture to foster and enable truly sustainable development is especially evident when a people-centred and place-based approach is integrated into development programmes and peace-building initiatives.

We also reaffirm the potential of culture as a driver for sustainable development, through the specific contributions that it can make – as knowledge capital and a sector of activity – to inclusive social, cultural and economic development, harmony, environmental sustainability, peace and security. This has been confirmed by a wealth of studies and demonstrated by numerous concrete initiatives.

We recognize that one size does not fit all and that different cultural perspectives will result in different paths to development. At the same time, we embrace an understanding of culture that is open, evolving and strongly framed within a rights-based approach and the respect for diversity, the free access to which enables individuals “to live and be what they choose”, thus enhancing their opportunities and human capabilities while promoting mutual understanding and exchange among peoples.

We believe that the time has come, building on these important statements of principle and lessons learnt, for the full integration of culture – through clear goals, targets and indicators – into agreed development strategies, programmes and practices at global, regional, national and local levels, to be defined in the post-2015 UN development agenda. Only such a concrete political and operational framework can ensure that all development initiatives lead to truly sustainable benefits for all, while securing the right of future generations to benefit from the wealth of cultural assets built up by previous generations.

We therefore call on governments and policy-makers, who will play a role in defining the post-2015 UN global development framework and sustainable development goals, to seize this unique opportunity and give consideration to the following actions to place culture at the heart of future policies for sustainable development:

- **Integrate culture within all development policies and programmes**

Development is shaped by culture and local context, which ultimately also determine its outcomes. Consideration of culture should therefore be included as the fourth fundamental principle of the post-2015 UN development agenda, in equal measure with human rights, equality and sustainability. The cultural dimension should be systematically integrated in definitions of sustainable development and well-being, as well as in the conception, measurement and actual practice of development policies and programmes. This will require the establishment of effective institutional coordination mechanisms at global and national levels, the development of comprehensive statistical frameworks with appropriate targets and indicators, the carrying out of evidence-based analyses and the building of capacities at all levels.

- **Mobilize culture and mutual understanding to foster peace and reconciliation**

In the context of globalization, and in the face of the identity challenges and tensions it can create, intercultural dialogue and the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity can forge more inclusive, stable and resilient societies. They should be promoted notably through educational, communication and artistic programmes, as well as through dedicated national councils, to foster an environment conducive to tolerance and mutual understanding. In areas that have experienced violent conflicts, the rehabilitation of cultural heritage and cultural activities should be promoted to enable affected communities to renew their identity, regain a sense of dignity and normalcy, enjoy the universal language of art and begin to heal the scars of wars. Consideration of cultural contexts should also be integrated into conflict-resolution initiatives and peace-building processes.

- **Ensure cultural rights for all to promote inclusive social development**

Guaranteeing cultural rights, access to cultural goods and services, free participation in cultural life, and freedom of artistic expression are critical to forging inclusive and equitable societies. A rights-based approach to culture and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity should be promoted within national and regional policies and legal frameworks, including consideration for minorities, gender balance, and youth and specific indigenous peoples' concerns. Cultural values, assets and practices, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples, should be integrated into educational and communication programmes, and they should be safeguarded and given adequate recognition. Cultural literacy in schools is an integral part of quality education, and it should play an important role in the promotion of inclusive and equitable societies. Special support should be provided to cultural programmes that foster creativity and artistic expression, learn from the experiences of the past, and promote democracy and the freedom of expression, as well as address gender issues, discrimination, and the traumas resulting from violence.

- **Leverage culture for poverty reduction and inclusive economic development**

Culture, as knowledge capital and as a resource, provides for the needs of individuals and communities and reduces poverty. The capabilities of culture to provide opportunities for jobs and incomes should be enhanced, targeting in particular women, girls, minorities and youth. The full potential of creative industries and cultural diversity for innovation and creativity should be harnessed, especially by promoting small and medium-sized enterprises, and trade and investments that are based on materials and resources that are renewable, environmentally sustainable, locally available, and accessible to all groups within society, as well as by respecting intellectual property rights. Inclusive economic development should also be achieved through activities focused on sustainably protecting, safeguarding and promoting heritage. Special attention should be given to supporting responsible, culturally-aware, inclusive and sustainable tourism and leisure industries that contribute to the socio-economic development of host communities, promote cross-cultural exchanges, and generate resources for the safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage.

- **Build on culture to promote environmental sustainability**

The safeguarding of historic urban and rural areas and of their associated traditional knowledge and practices reduces the environmental footprints of societies, promoting more ecologically sustainable patterns of production and consumption and sustainable urban and architectural design solutions. Access to essential environmental goods and services for the livelihood of communities should be secured through the stronger protection and more sustainable use of biological and cultural diversity, as well as by the safeguarding of relevant traditional knowledge and skills, paying particular attention to those of indigenous peoples, in synergy with other forms of scientific knowledge.

- **Strengthen resilience to disasters and combat climate change through culture**

The appropriate conservation of the historic environment, including cultural landscapes, and the safeguarding of relevant traditional knowledge, values and practices, in synergy with other scientific knowledge, enhances the resilience of communities to disasters and climate change. The feeling of normalcy, self-esteem, sense of place and confidence in the future among people and communities affected by disasters should be restored and strengthened through cultural programmes and the rehabilitation of their cultural heritage and institutions. Consideration for culture should be integrated into disaster-risk reduction and climate-change mitigation and adaptation policies and plans in general.

- **Value, safeguard and transmit culture to future generations**

Heritage is a critical asset for our well-being and that of future generations, and it is being lost at an alarming rate as a result of the combined effects of urbanization, development pressures, globalization, conflicts and phenomena associated with climate change. National policies and programmes should be strengthened in order to secure the protection and promotion of this heritage and of its inherited systems of values and cultural expressions as part of the shared commons, while giving it a central role in the life of societies. This should be achieved by its full integration in the development sector as well as in educational programmes.

- **Harness culture as a resource for achieving sustainable urban development and management**

A vibrant cultural life and the quality of urban historic environments are key for achieving sustainable cities. Local governments should preserve and enhance these environments in harmony with their natural settings. Culture-aware policies in cities should promote respect for diversity, the transmission and continuity of values, and inclusiveness by enhancing the representation and participation of individuals and communities in public life and improving the conditions of the most disadvantaged groups. Cultural infrastructure, such as museums and other cultural facilities, should be used as civic spaces for dialogue and social inclusion, helping to reduce violence and foster cohesion. Culture-led redevelopment of urban areas, and public spaces in particular, should be promoted to preserve the social fabric, improve economic returns and increase competitiveness, by giving impetus to a diversity of intangible cultural heritage practices as well as contemporary creative expressions. The cultural and creative industries should be promoted, as well as heritage-based urban revitalization and sustainable tourism, as powerful economic sub-sectors that generate green employment, stimulate local development, and foster creativity.

- **Capitalize on culture to foster innovative and sustainable models of cooperation**

The great and unexplored potential of public-private partnerships can provide alternative and sustainable models for cooperation in support of culture. This will require the development, at national level, of appropriate legal, fiscal, institutional, policy and administrative enabling environments, to foster global and innovative funding and cooperation mechanisms at both

the national and international levels, including grass-roots initiatives and culture-driven partnerships already promoted by civil society. In this context, consideration should be given to the specific needs of different cultural sub-sectors, while opportunities should be provided to develop capacities, transfer knowledge, and foster entrepreneurship, notably through the sharing of best practices.

We, the participants, share in the ideals of “Diversity in Harmony” and “Harnessing the Past to Create the Future” expressed by our Congress;

We commit ourselves to developing action plans based on this Declaration and to working together for their implementation towards 2015 and beyond;

We believe that the integration of culture into development policies and programmes will set the stage for a new era of global development;

We recommend, therefore, that a specific Goal focused on culture be included as part of the post-2015 UN development agenda, to be based on heritage, diversity, creativity and the transmission of knowledge and including clear targets and indicators that relate culture to all dimensions of sustainable development.