



International Music Council

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Chapeau

The Pact for the Future should welcome a move to a truly people-centred paradigm for development, built on a radically stronger incorporation of cultural factors and actors.

Policy-makers and civil society need to maintain ambition and demonstrate readiness to adopt radically new approaches to development in order to ensure that it delivers human and social progress. We believe that the omission of any significant reference to culture in the 2030 Agenda has led to significant gaps in implementation.

We are fortunately seeing growing recognition by policy makers of the need to give a greater role to culture, notably in the Secretary General's 2023 report on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the SDG Summit Declaration, the G20 Declaration, the BRICS Summit Declaration, and ministerial declarations on culture at UNESCO MONDIACULT, the G77+China, ICESCO, the EU, the Andean Community and more.

The Pact for the Future should reaffirm the importance of integrated approaches to policy-making, ensuring strong upstream planning and coordination between policy initiatives in order to maximise synergies and manage potential trade-offs. One of the underlying themes of the 2030 Agenda – that policy-making should be coordinated, and individual issues not treated in isolation – is far from being implemented. We believe that this is particularly the case for culture, which not only lacks recognition in the current agenda, but which is too often not seen – and acted on – as a cross-cutting driver of development.

Culture is at the foundation of values and ideas that govern the behaviour of people. Culture shapes how we understand, communicate and imagine our future. Culture informs human trust, felt loyalties and senses of belonging, whether that is to specific places, to specific communities, to higher beings, or to their own species. We are living one of the most difficult moments for humanity, with existential threats (peace, climate change) and with major challenges facing present and future generations. Strong cultural ecosystems that support and foster a rich diversity of cultural expressions is essential to tackle those challenges. The Pact for the Future should acknowledge culture as an explicit dimension in the analysis, and identify several explicit actions. It is time to work as a single humanity.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

The Pact for the Future should recognise culture as the 4th dimension of sustainable development, acting both as a key determinant of success across development agendas, and as a goal in its own right, noting in particular the need to guarantee the enjoyment of cultural rights, protect tangible and intangible heritage, safeguard and promote diversity of cultural expressions, mobilise and support cultural actors and institutions, protect and promote indigenous languages and cultures, and integrate culture into policy-making across development agendas.

We believe that culture represents a key factor of sustainability which must be taken into account in wider development planning, considering its role in addressing pressing challenges such as the climate emergency, health and wellbeing and gender equality, as well as inequalities within and between countries among others. Neglect of it jeopardises the chances of success in many areas, while making it part of an integrated approach promises to bring dividends across the board.

We need a commitment by countries to reporting on how culture is contributing to the achievement of all UN priorities from now on, in particular sustainable development, and a commitment to including a culture goal in any future development agenda, in line with the commitments made in the 2022 UNESCO MONDIACULT Declaration, the 2023 G20 Declaration, and the EU's Caceres Declaration.

Following the clear calls in different international policy settings for culture to be seen as a goal, we believe that it is time to recognise the same in the Pact for the Future, ensuring that culture is given a practical, concrete role in development and other processes today, as well as setting out intentions for post-2030. The integration of a culture goal would allow governments and stakeholders at all levels to capture and harness the multifaceted impact of culture on sustainable and inclusive development across the SDGs. We are already seeing Voluntary National and Local Reviews doing this in many cases, recognizing the depth and breadth of culture's contribution to development.

Chapter II. International peace and security

The Pact for the Future should reflect a strong commitment by countries to protect and promote cultural heritage and cultural expressions, to support artists and culture professionals at risk, while reaffirming their commitment to the respect of cultural diversity and pluralism, as a security imperative, to sustain social cohesion and stability, support conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution, while also enabling post-conflict reconciliation both within and between countries.

We wish to underline the need to build proactively a culture of peace, through upholding and celebrating cultural diversity, promoting intercultural exchange and education.

We welcome the reference to a culture of peace in the co-facilitators' draft and believe strongly that this should feature in a future chapter on this topic.

We are deeply concerned that culture has been increasingly targeted and instrumentalised in a world marked by conflicts and forced mobility, undermining fundamental human and cultural rights.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

The Pact for the Future should recognise the role of culture in shaping behaviours and defining values, as well as the contribution of heritage and traditional knowledge, especially indigenous cultures, languages and knowledge, to finding solutions to the challenges of our times, and so the need to integrate these fully into policy planning and implementation.

We welcome the already existing emphasis on the value of social sciences in helping to build our understanding of the world, as well as a recognition among stakeholders of the role of other ways of knowing. As the UN looks to make better use of knowledge in its own work, we hold that culture must be central.

The Pact for the Future should underline that true digital inclusion requires a focus on ensuring access to relevant and engaging content, in a way that is equitable for creators and users alike, as well as the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. This must be a central concern in discussions around internet governance going forwards.

So far, discussions around the Global Digital Compact have paid little attention to the question of content. Yet the current situation raises concerns, both in terms of the ability of artists to earn a living faced with the power of platforms and other digital services, and the availability and accessibility of material for internet users. Digital governance - in particular around AI - is needed in order to ensure the sustainability of cultural ecosystems.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

We approve the meaningful and equitable inclusion of young creative and cultural actors in work to strengthen the voice of youth and ensure the recognition of the interests of future generations.

Building a new future will require new perspectives and imagination – something that culture and cultural practitioners are uniquely well placed to provide. Engaging young creators – with sufficient support to recognise their time and contribution – will help bring energy to this work.

The Pact for the Future should stress the value of mobilizing culture as a means of helping the world to imagine different futures more effectively, and to give true value to the interests of future generations.

Culture can provide a powerful tool for thinking differently about both the present and the future, helping to overcome barriers and resistance. Supporting the promotion of and engagement with culture at all ages offers a way to bring all people along with the radical changes potentially necessary in the future.

Chapter V. Transforming global governance

The Pact for the Future should underline the importance of cultural sustainability in global governance priorities, and of strengthening mechanisms to incorporate cultural concerns and expertise into recommendations and decisions across the UN System.

We worry that culture is still too often seen as a sectoral concern within the UN. While upholding the importance of promoting culture and cultural diversity as goals in their own right in themselves, we believe that there also need to be effective means of integrating it more systematically into work across the UN's portfolio. Similarly, we also need to ensure that cultural insights and actors infuse decision-making more widely.