

**Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies,  
World Conference on Cultural Policies Mexico City,  
26 July - 6 August 1982**

The world has undergone profound changes in recent years. The progress of science and technology has changed man's place in the world and the nature of his social relations. Education and culture, whose significance and scope have been considerably extended, are essential for the genuine development of the individual and society.

Despite today's increased opportunities for dialogue, the community of nations is also faced with serious economic difficulties, inequality between nations is growing, and many conflicts and grave tensions are threatening peace and security.

It is therefore now more urgent than ever to establish closer collaboration among nations, to guarantee respect for the rights of others and to ensure the exercise of the fundamental freedoms of man and of peoples, and of their right to self-determination. More than ever it is urgent to construct 'defences of peace' in the mind of each individual, inter alia through education, science and culture, as affirmed in the Constitution of UNESCO.

By gathering in Mexico City on the occasion of the World Conference on Cultural Policies, the international community has decided to contribute effectively to the closer communion of peoples and to greater understanding among men.

Therefore, expressing trust in the ultimate convergence of the cultural and spiritual goals of mankind, the Conference agrees:

that in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs;

that it is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations.

Consequently, the Conference solemnly agrees that the following principles should govern cultural policies:

Cultural Identity

Cultural Dimension of development

Culture and democracy

Cultural Heritage

Artistic and Intellectual Creation and Art Education

Relationship of Culture with Education, Science and Communication

Planning, administration and financing of Cultural Activities

International Cultural Co-operation

## **CULTURAL IDENTITY**

1. Every culture represents a unique and irreplaceable body of values since each people's traditions and forms of expression are its most effective means of demonstrating its presence in the world.
2. The assertion of cultural identity therefore contributes to the liberation of peoples. Conversely, any form of domination constitutes a denial or an impairment of that identity.
3. Cultural identity is a treasure that vitalizes mankind's possibilities of self-fulfilment by moving every people and every group to seek nurture in its past, to welcome contributions from outside that are compatible with its own characteristics, and so to continue the process of its own creation.
4. All cultures form part of the common heritage of mankind. The cultural identity of a people is renewed and enriched through contact with the traditions and values of others. Culture is dialogue, the exchange of ideas and experience and the appreciation of other values and traditions; it withers and dies in isolation.
5. The universal cannot be postulated in the abstract by any single culture: it emerges from the experience of all the world's peoples as each affirms its own identity. Cultural identity and cultural diversity are inseparable.
6. Special characteristics do not hinder, but rather enrich the communion of the universal values that unite peoples. Hence recognition of the presence of a variety of cultural identities wherever various traditions exist side by side constitutes the very essence of cultural pluralism.
7. The international community considers it its duty to ensure that the cultural identity of each people is preserved and protected.
8. All of this points to the need for cultural policies that will protect, stimulate and enrich each people's identity and cultural heritage, and establish absolute respect for and appreciation of cultural minorities and the other cultures of the world. The neglect or destruction of the culture of any group is a loss to mankind as a whole.
9. The equality and dignity of all cultures must be recognized, as must the right of each people and cultural community to affirm and preserve its cultural identity and have it respected by others.

## **CULTURAL DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT**

10. Culture constitutes a fundamental dimension of the development process and helps to strengthen the independence, sovereignty and identity of nations. Growth has frequently been conceived in quantitative terms, without taking into account its necessary qualitative dimension, namely the satisfaction of man's spiritual and cultural aspirations. The aim of genuine development is the continuing well-being and fulfilment of each and every individual.
11. It is vital to humanize development, the ultimate goal of which is the individual in his dignity as a human being and his responsibility to society. Development implies for every individual and every people access to information and opportunities to learn and to communicate with others.
12. If all men and women are to be given the opportunity to improve their lot the course of development must be continually adjusted.

13. Steadily increasing numbers of men and women are seeking a better world. They do not only seek the satisfaction of basic needs but also the development of human beings, their well-being and their possibilities of living together in fellowship with all peoples. Their objective is not production, profit or consumption per se, but the full realization of their potential, both individual and collective, and the preservation of nature.

14. Man is the origin and the goal of development.

15. Any cultural policy should restore to development its profound, human significance. New models are required. And it is in the sphere of culture and education that they are to be found.

16. Balanced development can only be ensured by making cultural factors an integral part of the strategies designed to achieve it; consequently, these strategies should always be devised in the light of the historical, social and cultural context of each society.

## **CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY**

17. Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits'. States must take the necessary steps to attain this objective.

18. Culture springs from the community as a whole and should return to it; neither the production of culture nor the enjoyment of its benefits should be the privilege of élites. Cultural democracy is based on the broadest possible participation by the individual and society in the creation of cultural goods, in decision-making concerning cultural life and in the dissemination and enjoyment of culture.

19. The aim, above all, should be to open up new channels for democracy through equality of opportunity in education and culture.

20. It is necessary to bring about a geographical and administrative decentralization of cultural life and ensure that the institutions responsible for cultural action are more fully aware of the preferences, options and needs of society in cultural matters. It is essential, therefore, that more opportunities should be provided for contact between the public and cultural bodies.

21. A programme for the democratization of culture calls, in the first place, for the decentralization of access to leisure pursuits and the arts. A democratic cultural policy will provide for enjoyment of artistic excellence by all communities and the whole population.

22. The participation of all individuals in cultural life requires the elimination of inequalities based, inter alia, on social background and status, education, nationality, age, language, sex, religious beliefs, health or the fact of belonging to ethnic, minority or fringe groups.

## **CULTURAL HERITAGE**

23. The cultural heritage of a people includes the works of its artists, architects, musicians, writers and scientists and also the work of anonymous artists, expressions of the people's spirituality, and the body of values which give meaning to life. It includes both tangible and intangible works through which the creativity of that people finds expression: languages, rites, beliefs, historic places and monuments, literature, works of art, archives and libraries.

24. Every people therefore has a right and a duty to defend and preserve its cultural heritage, since societies recognize themselves through the values in which they find a source of creative inspiration.

25. The cultural heritage has frequently suffered damage or destruction as a result of thoughtlessness as well as of the processes of urbanization, industrialization and technological penetration. But even more intolerable is the damage caused to the cultural heritage by colonialism, armed conflict, foreign occupation and the imposition of alien values. All these have the effect of severing a people's links with and obliterating the memory of its past. Preservation and appreciation of its cultural heritage therefore enable a people to defend its sovereignty and independence, and hence affirm and promote its cultural identity.

26. The restitution to their countries of origin of works illicitly removed from them is a basic principle of cultural relations between peoples. Existing international instruments, agreements and resolutions could be strengthened to increase their effectiveness in this respect.

### **ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL CREATION AND ART EDUCATION**

27. The flowering of culture is inseparable both from the independence of peoples and from individual freedom. Freedom of opinion and expression is essential for the creative activities of artists and intellectuals alike.

28. Social and cultural conditions must be established which will facilitate, stimulate and guarantee artistic and intellectual creation without political, ideological, economic or social discrimination.

29. The development and promotion of art education imply not only the formulation of specific programmes designed to foster artistic appreciation and support groups or institutions engaged in creation and dissemination, but also the encouragement of activities that will stimulate public awareness of the social importance of art and intellectual creation.

### **RELATIONSHIP OF CULTURE WITH EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND COMMUNICATION**

30. The overall development of society calls for complementary policies in the fields of culture, education, science and communication with a view to the establishment of a harmonious balance between technological progress and the intellectual and moral advancement of mankind.

31. Education is ideally suited to the transmission of national and universal cultural values and should foster the assimilation of scientific and technological knowledge without detriment to each people's capacities and values.

32. At the present time, integral, innovative education is required that not only informs and transmits, but also trains and renews; that helps students to become aware of the realities of their times and of their environment, that assists in the full development of the personality; that provides training in self-discipline, respect for others, and social and international solidarity; that equips people for organization and productivity and for the production of truly necessary goods and services; and finally, that encourages renovation and stimulates creativity.

33. It is necessary to encourage the use of national languages to communicate knowledge.

34. Literacy is an essential condition for each people's cultural development.

35. Science and technology teaching should be conceived above all as a cultural process which develops critical awareness, and should be made an integral part of education systems in accordance with the development needs of peoples.

36. A free flow and a wider and more balanced dissemination of information, ideas and knowledge, which are among the principles of a new world information and communication order, imply for all nations the right not only to receive but also to transmit cultural, educational, scientific and technical information.

37. The modern communication media should facilitate objective information on cultural trends in the various countries, without detriment to the freedom of creativity and cultural identity of nations.

38. The technological progress of the last few years has led to the expansion of cultural industries. Whatever their mode of organization, these industries play an important role in the distribution of cultural goods. However, in their international activities they often disregard the traditional values of society and kindle hopes and aspirations which are not in keeping with the actual needs of its development. Furthermore, the absence of national cultural industries may, particularly in developing countries, constitute a source of cultural dependence and give rise to alienation.

39. It is consequently essential to encourage the establishment of cultural industries in countries where they do not exist, through bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes, always ensuring that the production and distribution of cultural goods is in keeping with the integrated development of each society.

40. The modern communication media are now fulfilling a basic role in education and the spreading of culture. Society therefore has to find ways and means of using new production and communication technologies to achieve genuine individual and collective development and to promote the independence of nations by preserving their sovereignty and strengthening peace in the world.

## **PLANNING, ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCING OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

41. Culture is the essential condition for genuine development. Society must make substantial efforts with respect to the planning, administration and financing of cultural activities. For this purpose account must be taken of the needs and problems of each society, always guaranteeing the freedom necessary for cultural creation, as regards both its spirit and its content.

42. If cultural development in the Member States is to be effective, the corresponding budget allocations must be increased and funds from a variety of sources must be employed as far as possible. Similarly, more must be done to train staff in the fields of cultural planning and administration.

## **INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CO-OPERATION**

43. The widest possible dissemination of ideas and knowledge on the basis of cultural exchanges and encounters is essential to man's creative activity and to the full development of the individual and of society.

44. More extensive subregional, regional, interregional and international co-operation and understanding in cultural matters are pre-conditions for the achievement of a climate of respect, confidence, dialogue and peace among the nations. Such a climate cannot be fully achieved without reducing and eliminating current tensions and conflicts and without halting the arms race and achieving disarmament.

45. The Conference solemnly reaffirms the value and validity of the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation, adopted at its fourteenth session by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

46. International cultural co-operation must be based on respect for cultural identity, recognition of the dignity and value of all cultures, national independence and sovereignty, and non-intervention. Consequently, in co-operative relations between nations, all forms of subordination or the replacement of one culture by another should be avoided. It is also essential to rebalance cultural interchange and co-operation in order that the less-known cultures, particularly those of certain developing countries, may be more broadly disseminated in all countries.

47. Cultural, scientific and educational exchanges should strengthen peace, promote respect for human rights, and help to eradicate colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, apartheid and all forms of aggression, domination and interference. Similarly, cultural co-operation should help to create an international climate conducive to disarmament, so that the human resources and huge sums allocated to armaments can be used for constructive purposes, such as programmes of cultural, scientific and technological development.

48. International cultural co-operation needs to be diversified and fostered in an interdisciplinary context and with special attention to the training of qualified staff for cultural services.

49. Encouragement should be given, in particular, to co-operation among developing countries, so that knowledge of other cultures and of other experiences of development may enrich the lives of such countries.

50. The Conference reaffirms that educational and cultural factors are essential in efforts to establish a new international economic order.

## **UNESCO**

51. In a world torn by dissensions which imperil the cultural values of the different civilizations, the Member States and Secretariat of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization must increase their efforts to preserve such values and take more intensive action to further the development of mankind. The establishment of a lasting peace is essential to the very existence of human culture.

52. In this situation, the goals of UNESCO, as set out in its Constitution, acquire a capital importance.

53. The World Conference on Cultural Policies appeals to UNESCO to continue and strengthen its work to increase cultural contacts between peoples and nations and continue to pursue its lofty mission of helping men, despite their diversity, to make the ancient dream of universal brotherhood come true.

54. The international community, meeting in this Conference, endorses the motto of Benito Juárez: 'In relations between individuals as between nations, peace means respect for others' rights'.