

COMMUNIQUE: CULTURE IN THE SDG OUTCOME DOCUMENT: PROGRESS MADE, BUT IMPORTANT STEPS REMAIN AHEAD

The Special Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in New York on 25-27 September, within the 70th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 70), will adopt the Outcome Document *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, this document will guide sustainable development policies and strategies in the next 15 years.

Since 2013, the global campaign “[The Future We Want Includes Culture](#)”, led by several regional and global civil society organizations, has advocated for the inclusion of culture in the SDG Outcome Document. The campaign’s [Declaration](#), which was translated into eight languages, was endorsed by over 900 organizations and thousands of citizens from 120 countries, proof of its universal appeal.

As global leaders prepare to adopt the SDG Outcome Document, members of the “The Future We Want Includes Culture” campaign present this communiqué in order to convey the following observations:

1. Achievements

The nature of the process leading to the adoption of *Transforming Our World*, with wide consultations involving regional, national and local organizations and civil society actors, should be welcomed. **A global community has been able to discuss its vision for sustainable development** in a broad forum of relevant stakeholders. Such participatory exercises should also be applied in the future, not least when preparing National Development Plans which will implement the 2030 Agenda on a national level.

When compared to the Millennium Development Goals, *Transforming Our World* represents a **significant step forward with regard to the acknowledgement of the role of culture in development processes**. The following elements are noteworthy:

- **The Preamble** refers to the need to respect cultural diversity (para. 8) and pledges member states to foster inter-cultural understanding, tolerance and mutual respect, while acknowledging the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognizing that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development (para. 36). Other aspects highlighted by the Preamble, such as the vision of enabling a world of universal literacy (para. 7), are also essential to foster access to culture and promote cultural understanding.
- **Target 2.5** touches on the need to ensure access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, in order to achieve the goal of ending hunger and achieve food security etc.
- **Target 4.7** stresses the need for education to promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

- **Target 8.3** suggests that creativity and innovation should be encouraged by development-oriented policies together with productive activities, decent job creation and entrepreneurship.
- **Targets 8.9** and **12.B** refer to the need to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, including through local culture and products, and to the need to develop suitable monitoring tools in this area.
- **Target 11.4** highlights the need to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage, in the context of Goal 11's aim to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- **Target 16.4** refers to the need to strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets while **16.10** commits to ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms, which should involve recognizing the importance of libraries.

2. SHORTCOMINGS

The “The Future We Want Includes Culture” campaign leaders remain concerned, however, that **the Outcome Document falls short of a full understanding and affirmation of the importance of culture to sustainable development.** As the campaign has consistently underlined [in several documents](#), culture is a driver and an enabler of sustainable development. Culture is one of the four dimensions of sustainable development, and is as essential as its economic, social and environmental dimensions. Holistic and integrated development will only be achieved when the values of creativity, heritage, knowledge and diversity are factored into all approaches to sustainable development. This means guaranteeing the availability and accessibility of cultural infrastructure (such as, but not limited to, libraries, museums, theatres, community centres, arts education centres) and the implementation of long-term cultural programmes and projects.

Whilst *Transforming Our World* integrates some references to cultural aspects, it fails to fully take into account the evidence gathered by the international community over the past two decades, of the positive role of culture in development. In this respect, **culture is referenced explicitly in only four of the 169 targets which will make up the SDGs.**

Finally, **there are no assurances that the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be fully funded.** According to UN estimates, for the new goals to be met will require as much as \$11.5 trillion per year. UNCTAD has also estimated that the total investment needs in developing countries [amounts to \\$3.3-4.5 trillion annually](#), which when compared to current investment shows a gap of \$1.9-3.1 trillion per year.

3. NEXT STEPS

“The Future We Want Includes Culture” campaign has set a new global agenda for culture by gathering and presenting – for the first time ever in a unified way – the voices of peoples and civil society on the importance of culture in sustainable development. **A global initiative such as this will continue to be necessary**, in order to advocate for the inclusion of culture in development frameworks and strategies, operate as a watchdog, raise awareness and bring together local, national and regional perspectives and initiatives.

As a result, **campaign members intend to pursue their work in this field in the following manner:**

- A)** We will encourage the inclusion of cultural aspects in National Development Plans, international cooperation mechanisms and other strategies and policies resulting from *Transforming Our World*. We believe that references to culture should be made both with regard to the specific targets where culture is mentioned in the SDG Outcome Document and elsewhere, in

other targets that have an implicit cultural dimension. We strongly believe that participatory exercises established to implement *Transforming Our World* should systematically include agents active in the cultural field.

- B)** We call for the inclusion of truly operational references to culture in the major international conferences where the implications of the SDG framework will be discussed, including the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21, Paris, December 2015) and the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III, Quito, October 2016).
- C)** We believe that the narrative on culture and sustainable development must be strengthened with evidence-based research and indicators. There is a need for reliable and inclusive indicators to measure the implementation of the culture related targets. We aim to contribute to the design of cultural indicators and a suitable information infrastructure which allows for a better quantitative and qualitative understanding and measurement of the place of culture in sustainable development.
- D)** We will seek opportunities to convincingly and inspiringly present evidence of culture's role in development at international fora across a range of disciplines outside the culture sector in order to raise awareness, create understanding, build bridges and develop partnerships.
- E)** We believe that new partnerships with civil society organizations, public authorities, UN agencies, regional intergovernmental organizations, international networks, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders are needed, more than ever, in order to broaden society's awareness of the essential role that culture plays in sustainable development.
- F)** We will seek to develop a strategy that builds on the actions to date, strive to build resources and relationships that could contribute to continuation of the global campaign, and communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

We INVITE ALL CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS, AND OTHERS, TO CONTINUE TO COLLABORATE IN THESE EFFORTS AND ANY OTHER INITIATIVES THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO ENSURING WE HAVE A FUTURE THAT INCLUDES CULTURE.

Signed, 23 September 2015

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