

Third ordinary session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

Francesco Bandarin, Assistant Director-General for Culture

Opening remarks

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Director General, Ms Irina Bokova, I am honored to welcome you to this third ordinary session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

The 2005 Convention is the first standard setting instrument that puts culture and development at its core. The UN Millennium Declaration and Goals figure in its preamble, in its objectives, guiding principles and operational guidelines. Together they define an agenda to promote the cultural and creative sector as an engine for the social and economic development of countries, in particular through the cultural industries. This was, as you now, recently reaffirmed in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Culture and Development that has recognized the 2005 Convention as one of its pillars. Culture and development is also a pillar of the action of UNESCO and of the cultural sector as discussed at the recent session of the Executive Board.

The third session of the Conference of Parties is a special occasion because we are at the crossroad in the life of the Convention. And we have an opportunity

today to put in place the mechanisms that are needed to enable the cultural sector at all levels to grow, develop and prosper.

There are several priorities for action that we must take forward in the near future in order to ensure that the Convention becomes more than just a document of principles and ideals.

The first and fundamental issue to address is the ratification of the Convention. Today, there are 117 Parties to the Convention. But considering its relatively recent entry into force, this is a remarkable achievement. Since the last time the Conference of Parties met in 2009, seventeen countries have ratified the Convention, the most recent being Costa Rica earlier this year. Countries from Africa currently make up the largest proportion of Parties. Both the Conference of Parties and the Intergovernmental Committee have, however, recognized that we must ensure adherence to the principle of equality and equal representation among all regions as Parties to the Convention. You have indicated that priority must be given to increasing the rate of ratification from among under-represented regions in Asia Pacific and the Arab States.

As we heard this morning, ratification makes a difference not only at the institutional level, but in the every day professional lives of artists and cultural entrepreneurs, particularly from the South.

A second priority, after ratification, is to ensure the visibility of the Convention and work towards a common understanding of its key messages.

One way to address this challenge is to increase our efforts to communicate and exchange experiences to demonstrate, in concrete terms, the ways in which the Convention is being implemented around the world. The work you are starting to undertake on the quadrennial periodic reports to be submitted over the next ten months is an important step in this direction. These reports should become working tools and platforms for sharing experiences. By this time next year, 94 countries will have completed their first round of reports. This means that we will have collected information on how governments have integrated culture into sustainable development strategies and national development plans, on the types of cultural policies and measures in place to promote the diversity of cultural expressions. I think we will also have a better understanding on the ways in which parties are facilitating international cooperation and all the measures taken to implement preferential treatment for artists and cultural professionals.

The third priority for action is to ensure the success of the pilot phase of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity. This Fund seeks to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing and least-developed countries through support for cultural policy and cultural industries projects and activities, As you know, it has been activated last year for the first time. I am pleased to report to you that 31 projects have been approved by the Intergovernmental

Committee in December of last year, and they are being implemented in 24 countries. A new call for projects was launched earlier this year and we are expecting an equally impressive number of projects to be approved by the Committee at its fifth session at the end of this year. One of the main issues you will discuss over the next days will be how to raise resources for the Fund. The Director-General continues to call on all Parties to contribute 1% of their annual contribution to UNESCO to the Fund. Given that just over one-quarter of the Parties have made contributions to the Fund shows that some have gone far beyond the benchmark set by the Director-General while others still need to be convinced. The success of the Fund will depend also on the quality of the implementation of the projects on the ground and the impact that they will have to promote the diversity of cultural expressions within their own countries and at the international level.

The fourth priority for action is to address the growing demands from Parties for help in implementing the Convention into their national policies and programmes. The Secretariat has taken first steps in this direction thanks to the support received from the European Union to launch and implement a programme of technical assistance to improve the governance of culture in developing countries.

In parallel, thanks to the support of the Spanish government, the Secretariat has developed a variety of practical tools designed to help implement the Convention and build capacity at national levels. I would like to quote some of them:

- For policy makers, the UNESCO *Cultural and Creative Industries Policy Guide* will be officially launched this year in July during the Latin American Forum of Ministers of Culture that will take place in Bolivia.
- For stakeholders from the public, private and civil society sectors looking to establish partnerships, a new online resource centre has just been launched through the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity. This website provides guidelines, best case practice examples and a project showcase on partnerships in the cultural industries in developing world.
- For researchers and experts, the Secretariat has developed a gateway to online resources on the cultural industries around the world.
- And finally, the Secretariat has recently launched the pilot test phase of the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicator Suite in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ghana, Uruguay and Vietnam.

The growing number of operational activities will require an increase in available resources. Issue of human and financial resources to reinforce the Secretariat of the Convention and its activities, figures in the Decisions of the recent Intergovernmental Committee. And I think we all agree that this is a very important issue that has been the focus of UNESCO's attention in the restructuring of the culture sector. I am pleased to inform you that an additional post will be transferred to the Secretariat shortly in order to reinforce it.

Excellences,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We collectively stand on a threshold looking at the future priorities for action. This week, there will be an election of 12 new members to the Intergovernmental Committee. Those who have served their four year term have built a secure foundation for the future. New members of the Committee will be tasked with ensuring this stability, with taking forward the priorities mentioned and also with pioneering new paths for the future. To the outgoing members of the Committee, I would like to express our congratulations for the tremendous work that you have done and invite you of course to not wander too far away. The success of this Convention requires the contribution of all Parties and members of civil society if we are going to make a difference.

Thank you