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**Sustainable development and opportunities provided by the UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions**

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Today I'll discuss about sustainable development and opportunities which are provided by this newly born UNESCO convention of the diversity of cultural expression. You might remember a quote from Octavio Paz who says any culture is born in mixing, interaction, confrontation and inversely it is in isolation that civilization dies. That's quite a statement that makes us aware and a bit humble in front of the challenge that we face as international community but also in our respective local and grassroots activities when we really want to engage on this horizon of structuring our work with culture in the perspective of sustainable development.

So why do we link this with the UNESCO convention. A month ago the German EU presidency offered a good momentum to organise an international meeting. I see also here some faces of good colleagues who took the time to join this working process. The convention process mirrors a very special moment in time, where on one hand there is increasing pressure on many countries concerning their own cultural recourses and also viability of their cultural industries. There are also examples of struggling, of how to make a richer notion of cultural rights in sensible reality in many difficult situations.

From the beginning this has been global process with a strong networking of cultural ministries, organisations, artists and other cultural professionals, civil society, researchers and others who are struggling with moving towards to evidence based programming of policies. It has truly been a multi-stakeholder process which is worthwhile mentioning.

It is now an agreed treaty and I will now take us to a short guided tour through the text. The convention entered into force in March 2007 due to a very energetic process, with an unforeseen speed, 57 countries have already ratified this instrument. There are still regional imbalances, and a number of bigger and smaller countries are missing before it will be a truly universal instrument.

Now for the first time there is an international leader instrument meaning that the convention will offer a permanent structure of working together around this challenge of sustainable development and creative diversity, this is the overarching new quality. There is already decades of debate already on the linkage of these debates of sustainable development and diversity. This is the first time the international community has given itself an organised structure to work for this, organised both its own cooperation and the obligation about how these ideas should be put in place in every single country that becomes a state party to this agreement. We have never had this situation before, the work starts only now.

Cader Asmal in his keynote address to the Essen conference noted that there is a large agenda before us: states have responsibilities and commitments for the treaty, so have international community, civil society and private partners who also might play an important role in the creative industries. The challenge to bring life to this complex convention is a big one, We've been thinking many times, would have somebody imagined in 1973 when the UNESCO World cultural heritage

convention was a new born baby, how much it would change our thinking and how we work together internationally in the field of culture.

One of the key decisions the key negotiators took in 2004-5 was when they opted consciously not only for protecting but promoting for cultural diversity. Realising it's a new space for action that did not only change the title of the convention but indicated readiness to enter the realm of experimentation. Because nobody can now predict the quality of cultural diversity in the year 2020 or 2030. There is the int in terms of how we might nk this to sd.

This instrument is also a limited one, it can't influence huge issues such as climate change, but it has a specific focus placing human being and their creative potential centre stage. This is a relatively new perspective of the potential of human beings to change their lifestyles. The convention is of course political product, a text that follows the language of international law and it does not echo that there is in the academia or in the field of culture.

Nevertheless it important that you see both in the paradigm of this convention that it clearly puts the notion of sustainable development as one of the key concepts and addressing cultural diversity as a resource, as a main spring of wealth of communities, nations and individuals. That is definitely a different perspective compared to culture as luxury which you take time after fulfilling all other human needs. I would say here is quite a huge paradigm change expressed in legal words.

The preamble also continues linking the convention to the UN Millenium declaration with a special emphasis on poverty eradication. If you look at article 13, you see it speaks about rights and obligations of parties. Such a convention is not a roadmap, it's a text which offers space for action, but does not coerce anybody to fulfil duties, it's a political self commitment. One of the interesting challenges is how can we find what has been achieved in say three years after this on the basis of this convention. In the article 13 the negotiating parties state explicitly that one obligation and right is to integrate culture in sustainable development. This is interesting also politically and historically. This debate was also held also in Johannesburg summit in 2002. Then it was relatively difficult to bridge this gap and thinking. My explanation is that the networks of cultural ministries and coalitions of cultural diversity are still relatively separate from the sustainable development community. There is a task for each and all of you to act on that. They are still different ways of thinking and speaking and way of doing things. That's why this is said so explicitly- it's a self obligation of parties to find how to integrate culture in their development policies. This is a global commitment. The question is that how can it become operational.

One important chapter which has long been underestimated is the whole chapter that speaks about culture and development, articles 14-16 and 18. There is a strong focus on cultural industries. It's also inviting the state parties to enable the emergence of viable regional and local markets. In addition there is a whole list of proposals about how this can be done. The key philosophy of these articles is that you urge state parties to facilitate wider access to both global markets and international distribution networks for cultural goods and services. This is a question of human resources, skills and financial mechanisms. One of the most discussed mechanisms is for instance how micro credit schemes might help cultural producers to get their products done. This relates also on how the creative work and mobility of artists can be supported. It's no coincidence that the areas where very interesting cooperation has emerged are music and film.

Here in the article 15 you have the options to examine how public and private sector can develop new models of partnerships in particular concerning infrastructure, human resources and cultural policies. That is maybe a new approach. It is encouraging to hear that in some of your development

agencies you've already embarked for this more strategic approach, for instance working for cultural policy planning and mapping. Here we all could gain from bringing the European experiences, the Council of Europe and their country reports to the southern hemisphere. So this convention is about flourishing cultural activities, but the key message is how we can strengthen public responsibility to ensure the diversity of cultural expressions. If we are honest now, none of us can say how this should be working. In Europe we enjoy a rich and diverse cultural infrastructure that has been built over the centuries. This tradition was built on nobility structures, slowly went into democracy, there were the roles of churches, public actors, it was a whole evolution. This trail of modern cultural policy is a relatively new one, for the last 20-30 years. We must be aware of the many lessons learnt and courageous in throwing that to the global level.

A challenging question is expressed in article 16, the issue of preferential treatments. It's a bit of a surprise as otherwise there is relatively soft language in terms of commitment in the convention. Here it says: if you really want to create a global base for fair culture, you need to remedy market imbalances. One option tested here are preferential treatments of artists and cultural producers and products. This task is not an issue of cultural ministries alone, very often you need to examine your physical structures, trade ministries, make sure you get the best combination to support the sustainable living of artists. There are already interesting examples of world wide networks of artists and musicians doing social welfare schemes with African colleagues. I say we should not think only in terms of direct cultural initiatives, but to be open minded in framework conditions. This is not easy because most countries refrain from building more infrastructure. But it is possible. My recommendation is to map systematically what has been done. We do not start from zero, there is already a lot of valid experience, but it is scattered, we do not know what is happening in other countries. That's why it is very valuable that you share these ideas between the Nordic countries, and it should set a model to other regions too.

One should be modest on linking directly sustainable development and cultural diversity. There is a lot of reflection on how biodiversity and linguistic diversity correlation, but I say we should be cautious. Management of natural resources is a much bigger project, and we should not overstretch the cultural field and ask too much from the artistic community. As Octavio Paz says, artistic activity requires courage to say even unwelcome things. This should not be seen in a too functional way or to connect to MDG's in a very tangible and measurable ways. We should not overburden the artists, they are a precious resource and they need their breathing space.

The convention definitely opens up a mindset to re-examine, and to see how public action can be used to remedy on a certain degree market imbalances. But what needs to be done in the next 1,5 to 2 years is to equip our toolbox accordingly. What can be done knowing the mechanism of overseas development assistance, to introduce more structures and medium term actions. As we know from the creative industries, this sector has been undervalued for a long time, it was made invisible. Now it is a time for reciprocal learning. The European Community I having a debate on the role of creative industries and their potential in the European region. For instance for the partnerships of cultural professionals in the EU countries there is a readiness to develop micro credit schemes as this structure is typically a very small scale, vulnerable and short term. An important challenge is the huge and fast technology innovation that changes the way the cultural content is produced. The situation is changing very rapidly. This might make cooperation on an international level easier, but this is an ambivalence process. Some can enter the market place, but some traditional form of culture depending on their capital intensive position in the market, might face difficulties. This is an ongoing transformation. There are interesting examples emerging hhe music and film industries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We need to co-create best models, which will allow for more diversity around the globe.

Last important subject is that the convention provides a basis for international fund for cultural diversity. Many expectations have been geared to it. It's clear it should be created fast, but more interesting question should be the substance. And also, how can extra resources be encouraged. Interesting programmes that are already in place need to be identified and to see if they can be connected to the convention rather than starting a new action. Also the European community has joined as a regional partner to the convention which shows promising readiness to take international obligation seriously. But the way how in practice this happens is to be worked out, and that needs permanent attention.

In conclusion, I would see that the new challenge in the years to come is to see how public policies can correct market imbalances and what can be done to cater specific needs of the emergence of cultural and creative sectors. This is a very interesting space for creation, but we should not underestimate its complexity, and let too overarching philosophy get in our way. We need both an energetic beginning to put this into practise, and should in 2-3 years see some concrete steps, but it also a long term process. The question of sustainability should be our guideline. We need to make sure that diversity in our societies is seen as a long term resource. This is said in the article 11 which gives the civil society a special role. We are aware of the international cooperation perspective and that there are asymmetries on how civil societies can organise themselves. This is a special responsibility of the European partners: to see how they can support direct action through their way of international cooperation. So in conclusion it's clear that the diversity of cultural expressions can neither be ordered or forced upon people, and its also a reality that can it be ignored. It's really important step to see this as a possible source of wealth and potential for development and as a democratic project for our future. It is vital and gives us a very good stepping stone for the decade to come.

Link to the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001429/142919e.pdf>