The Tracker

CULTURE & PUBLIC POLICY

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

This monthly Tracker is produced by UNESCO to monitor culture in public policy with regards to the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. It highlights developments within national and regional contexts, as well as emerging debates on culture's contribution to sustainable development. Drawing on a variety of sources, it provides a broad overview of cultural policy trends worldwide at the national, regional and international level and looks at ways in which countries integrate culture into other policy areas.

CONTENTS

AT A GLANCE

Culture is a powerful force that bridges differences and brings people together, underpinning social cohesion, peace and security. Notwithstanding this unifying function, the past 20 years have witnessed a growing instrumentalization of culture for divisive purposes. This exploitation of culture has not only contributed to more protracted crises and relapses into conflict, but also the denial of human rights, including cultural rights.

The **Cultural Policy Highlights** section features the latest measures at national and local level.

With culture increasingly at the frontline of conflicts, the **Cutting Edge** section looks at how societies are being prompted to rethink the role of culture in peacebuilding. We draw on UNESCO's cross-cutting work, and examine how broader trends have introduced push-pull factors that are making safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting creative expressions more than a cultural issue, but one of human rights, peace and security.

The **Regional Perspectives** section covers the latest policy trends and developments, and features the regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as efforts to promote peace and social cohesion through culture.

The section **Culture in the 2030 Agenda** looks at culture-based initiatives by Member States in their Voluntary National Reviews in relation to peace, conflict prevention and human rights.

See **Find Out More** for latest publications from UNESCO and its partners, and additional news related to cultural policy.

Timbuktu (Mali)
Oversnap/Getty Images Signature*

CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

This section showcases a selection of the latest developments in cultural public policy from UNESCO Member States. Whilst reactive measures to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural sector are expected to largely guide cultural public policies throughout 2021, there are positive signs that countries and cities are transitioning from recovery measures to longer term strategies to build resilience in their cultural sectors.

Local Initiative

The Ministry of Culture, Crafts and Tourism of **Mali** has organized a cultural week (6 to 12 March) in Bamako to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the death of Malian artist and actor Balla Moussa Keïta, featuring a series of film screenings, lectures and master classes with young actors to celebrate his work.

Cyano66/Getty Images*

In **United Arab Emirates**, the Ministry of Culture and Youth has announced its agenda for the 2021 International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, including hosting a World Conference on Creative Economy at Expo 2020 in Dubai, and launching strategies and legislation to support the cultural and creative industries, independent cultural workers and intellectual property rights.

The **German** Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development has taken steps to boost tourism and heritage recovery through a €2 million envelope to UNESCO for actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Georgia, Indonesia, Kenya, Namibia and Viet Nam. The 18-month project will build on the UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Pledge and will address some of the immediate socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on tourism and heritage.

Zenome/Pixabay

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of **Republic of Korea** has announced an additional budget of KRW 157.2 billion (US$138 million) to tackle the employment crisis in the cultural sector and support the industries hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding relief is estimated to secure the jobs of over 15,000 cultural professionals.

The Ministry of Culture of **Argentina** has launched the initiative "Reactivar Escenas", which will provide financial support to independent live music venues and theatres throughout the country. The Government will allocate 200 million pesos (US$2.2 million) to cover 30% of the capacity of 1,000 venues.

Flisk/Getty Images Pro*

CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

In **Madagascar**, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Handicrafts has joined with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to create a digital platform to promote Vita Malagasy (Made in Madagascar) products in national and international markets. The platform will also allow artists to sell their artworks and buy raw materials for their work.

Pierivb/Getty Images*

Archaeological Site of Al-Hijr (Saudi Arabia)
Gim42/Getty Images Signature*

The Ministry of Culture of **Saudi Arabia** has adopted a new strategy to boost the participation of the non-profit sector in cultural planning and activities. The strategy brings together 16 professional associations working across various cultural fields.

China has approved its policy document "Outline of the fourteenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-term Goals for 2035". The blueprint lays out a range of culture-based actions - including tourism, infrastructure, heritage, cultural industries - to be supported by digital technologies, as well as underlines the need for dialogue and cooperation among cultures, and modern approaches to governance.

In **Denmark**, the Palaces and Culture Agency has launched a pilot project to restore six heritage-listed buildings in outlying areas throughout the country. The project builds on a nation-wide study that showed that the conservation values of some 300 of 7,150 heritage-listed buildings are at risk.

In **Mexico**, the Secretary of Tourism and the National Fund for the Promotion of Handicrafts (FONART) have signed a collaboration agreement to develop craft routes and corridors in various tourist destinations in the country, including Magical Towns and cities inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Salvatierra/Getty Images Pro*

In **Burkina Faso**, the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism has approved a strategic plan for the development of travel and tourism circuits. The plan is the result of a joint collaboration between the General Directorate of Tourism and other public and private tourism actors in Burkina Faso to improve tourism governance and products, and enable the sector better access to resources.

Kacof/Getty Images*

CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

The Ministry of Culture of **Egypt** has opened the Port Said Talent Development Centre for training youth in the cultural and creative industries, which has kick-started over 100 activities planned to take place in Port Said throughout the year to celebrate the city's designation as Egyptian Capital of Culture for 2021.

Dahliamoustafa/Getty Images*

The Government of **Bhutan** has launched its first Creative Industries Export Strategy (2021-2025) that aims to provide a foundation to develop the cultural and creative industries, such as film, music, graphic design and related software development. The Strategy is the outcome of an extensive and multi-stakeholder consultation process, and aligns with the objectives of the country's broader development plans.

The Prime Minister of the **Russian Federation** has approved the new Strategy for the Development of Librarianship in the Russian Federation until 2030, which targets increased public access to libraries and modernization of the institutions. The preparation of the Strategy was a joint collaboration between the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the professional community.

Olga355/Getty Images*

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport of **Guyana** has announced plans to create a National Cultural and Creative Industries Policy, and increase funding to support cultural infrastructure development and upgrading heritage sites.

The Musicians Union of **Ghana** has launched a campaign that unites various Ghanian artists to support national efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19. The Ministry of Information, the National Commission on Culture, the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) and UNESCO back the awareness-raising campaign.

TONL/TONL Imagery

CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

The governments of **Mauritania** and **Oman** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the management of historical documents and archives. The agreement includes provisions for printing and exchanging manuscripts and books, publishing, safeguarding measures and use of technologies

Akdemirhk/Getty Images*

The governments of **Indonesia** and the **United Arab Emirates** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen cooperation in the creative economy, notably in architecture, fashion, design, art and publishing.

Pura Ulun Danu Bratan in Bali (Indonesia)
tawatchaiprakobkit/Getty Images Pro*

The **Lithuanian** Council for Culture has allocated €250,000 to co-fund 30 projects led by cultural and art organizations located in the cities of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda, as part of the Creative Communities Initiatives programme.

In **Panama**, the Ministry of Culture (MiCultura) and the Public Registry have signed a framework agreement for cooperation and technical assistance to develop the National Archive of Panama based on a long-term strategic alliance to safeguard culture and strengthen research in the country.

In **Paraguay**, the Minister of Culture, the Secretariat for Language Policies (SPL) and the Ministry of Labour have announced plans to ensure stronger protection for the Guaraní language and heritage through training programmes and initiatives to fight discrimination in the workplace. The three institutions will also establish a shared complaint reception system in order to detect and prevent conflict and discrimination.

Filipefrazao/Getty Images Signature*

Canadian Heritage has stepped up actions to revive the live arts and music sectors by committing a CAD 40 million (US$32 million) envelope to COVID-19-safe events in the arts and music sectors – both live and digital – and providing work opportunities in these sectors. The fund is part of the Canadian Government's CAD 181.5 million (US$146.4 million) allocation for the live arts and music sectors in 2021-2022.

Overcoming barriers to peace through culture

Timbuktu (Mali). oversnap/Getty Images Signature*

As a powerful force that bridges across differences, culture brings people together, and thus underpins social cohesion, peace and security. Notwithstanding this unifying function, the past 20 years have witnessed a growing instrumentalization of culture for divisive purposes. This negative exploitation of culture has not only contributed to more protracted crises and relapses into conflict, but also the denial of human rights, including cultural rights. Culture is integral to who we are and where we come from. From heritage to creative expression, culture contributes to identity, belonging and meaning. As a resource for community vitality, well-being and expression, it shapes peaceful societies through the recognition of and respect for the diversity of cultures and freedom of expression.

However, by virtue of its significance and deep-rooted connection to people, culture has increasingly been brought to the frontlines of conflict as a tool for division. Across the globe, contemporary armed conflicts are increasingly complex and taking place within national borders. These clashes are stoked by a multitude of drivers, involving more non-State actors and groups, some of which connect to criminal and extremist networks. Moreover, conflicts are increasingly fueled by ethnic and belief differences, grievances and identity misinterpretation. The increased movement of peoples through migration has brought cultures into closer proximity, increasing the points of interaction and friction that can give rise to identity misrepresentation. Growing rifts among communities of different cultural backgrounds, religions and beliefs have often been accompanied by incitement to violence that, at times, have seized culture as its justification. Often rooted in a fear of "the other," these acts are governed by exclusion and a rejection of diversity. Attacks on heritage and people based on their cultural, ethnic or religious affiliation are tragic illustrations of the depths to which fear and exclusion can take root. Instances of disinformation and hate speech have surged, while increasing reports of attacks on artists – both online and offline – contribute to this alarming scenario. Media have also been used for recruitment, manipulation and coordination by non-State armed groups, and to facilitate illicit trafficking of cultural property. The protection of culture is not only a cultural issue; it has become a security imperative.

Culture in the crossfire of conflict

During the past two decades, culture has increasingly been instrumentalized to stir division. Attacks on cultural heritage bear witness to how heritage can be used – and abused – by non-State armed groups in attempts to obliterate cultural diversity or to impose their own symbols and identities linked to a specific community. Attacks on cultural heritage often target significant areas of rich cultural diversity, where communities of different cultural and religious backgrounds have coexisted and forged unique cultural expressions. These attacks on culture can also be part of broader and systematic strategies. Following the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the reconstruction of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Mostar Bridge in Bosnia and Herzegovina was, therefore, highly symbolic. It was not only about rebuilding heritage to its former glory, but also about re-establishing identity and solidarity as part of the post-conflict healing process. The Dayton Accords peace agreement, which brought the war to a close, included in its provisions human rights, the return of refugees and displaced persons, as well as cultural heritage protection. This process was a particular turning point as – for the first time in modern conflict resolution policy – cultural heritage was recognized as a fundamental component for sustainable peace.

Attempts to destroy culture is a bid to wipe out people's past, present and future. Poverty, lack of education and unemployment are key underlying factors driving attacks on culture. Twenty years ago when the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan were destroyed, the event was broadcast around the

world as part of a tactic to spread an ideology of terror and exclusion. This also led to the adoption of the Declaration on the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage in 2003 by UNESCO's Member States. A decade on, when a non-State armed group attacked Timbuktu in Mali, intentionally destroying its mausoleums, the group's first strategy was to destroy the sacred gate of the mosque of Sidi Yahia, a religious and cultural landmark, and to halt all cultural practices and religious ceremonies. UNESCO's work in the reconstruction of the mausoleums and the conservation of ancient manuscripts in Timbuktu demonstrates the successful integration of culture into peacebuilding and reconciliation strategies. Backed by the European Union and Switzerland, the Organization mobilized cooperation to reconstruct and safeguard the cultural property in close partnership with the Malian authorities, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and local communities. Attempts to ban or expunge the cultural life of societies by depriving them of music, heritage or rituals are an affront to freedom and critical thinking. As a response for the recovery of the city of Mosul in Iraq, UNESCO launched in 2018 the Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative to revitalize cultural and intellectual life in the city by empowering local communities in rebuilding their historic landmarks and neighbourhoods to build hope and resilience. Like many of Iraq's archaeological sites, Babylon has endured years of looting and economic crises during which precious artifacts have been sold off. Two years ago the city was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, signaling hope for its recovery and future. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the 12th Century Crusader castle Crac des Chevaliers has been left exposed to damage and was a strategic stronghold for armed groups for some periods of the conflict. When bombs were dropped on the Yemeni capital Sana'a it resulted in loss of lives and damage to one of the treasured urban jewels of the Islamic world, leaving the city vulnerable to ongoing conflict, food shortages and weather shocks. These attempts to attack UNESCO World Heritage sites and to undermine and destroy cultural diversity cut to the heart of communities and draw on media to spread ideological propaganda.

Lack of education and unemployment can also lead young people to enroll in armed groups as a way of making a living. Historic settlements and archaeological sites, both as targets or as collateral damage of armed conflict, can be left vulnerable to looting and illicit trafficking of cultural objects. This can sometimes inflict irreversible damage to a country's collective memory and social cohesion, thus hindering its capacity to recover. This issue has been highlighted in statutory meetings of the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Article 9 of the Convention lays down the conditions for the prevention of irremediable injury to cultural heritage endangered by the pillaging of archaeological or ethnological materials.

This upsurge in conflicts and increasing threats on culture have contributed to a global setback on cultural rights, notably by curtailing the right to practice cultural activities and access to culture, but also by jeopardizing cultural diversity itself. A growing number of alerts formulated by the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations over the past years made reference to cultural rights infringements in situations of violence with regard to attacks on cultural heritage and cultural minorities. Echoing this concern, the 2019 report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reiterates economic, social and cultural rights as essential building blocks for staying on track towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Crossing new frontiers in heritage safeguarding : the humanitarian, security and peacebuilding nexus

UNESCO has taken a leading advocacy role in addressing attacks on culture, and crimes against culture. The magnitude of destruction and long-lasting impacts on communities have acted as a wake-up call to combat the instrumentalization of culture. It has raised awareness among the international community about the need for future generations to know about their identity and where they come from through heritage. Intense advocacy efforts have advanced the concepts of heritage and why it is important for countries to ratify international conventions on culture. The lack of awareness of the value of heritage and the lack of opportunities to engage in preserving and safeguarding heritage in the public sphere puts heritage at risk of being irremediably lost. It also impoverishes young generations' sense of identity and belonging, thereby limiting their ability to engage and contribute meaningfully to society at large, while also weakening the foundations of peace and security. This is why UNESCO carries out a comprehensive programme for heritage education that facilitates the engagement of youth in the promotion, protection and transmission of heritage in all its forms. On a broader level, education plays a critical role in equipping young people with the skills and cultural literacy they need to understand their environment and make informed choices.

Bamiyan (Afghanistan)
Picassos/Getty Images*

The UNESCO-led #Unite4Heritage global campaign launched in 2015 reached millions of people around the world to mobilize against deliberate attacks on cultural heritage during conflict. Civil society and decision-makers alike contributed to the campaign to counter propaganda, sectarian agendas and extreme violence, as well as promote cultural diversity as a positive unifying force. The deliberate destruction of heritage was pronounced by UNESCO as a war crime and a tactic of war in a strategy of cultural cleansing. These efforts made several breakthroughs in the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions for the protection of heritage, and the first International Criminal Court (ICC) ruling on cultural heritage as a war crime. In doing so, it has also contributed to bringing culture to the core of the international security agenda.

The Organization's active commitment has contributed to strengthening the position of culture in humanitarian, security and peacebuilding work. This enlarged cooperation is promoted in UNESCO's strategy adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 2015 to prevent, mitigate and recover the loss of cultural heritage and diversity resulting from conflict. A core idea of this strategy is to engage partners outside the "culture box", and to work closely with local communities. In this respect, UNESCO has strengthened and broadened cooperation in the area of cultural heritage with other UN entities and key IGOs and NGOs, including the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, World Customs Organization (WCO), International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), International Council of Museums (ICOM), International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the Blue Shield, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN Security Council. Human rights education in schools on the importance of respecting one's culture and those of others has further anchored these efforts.

Strengthening international legal frameworks in culture

Setting a historical precedent, in 2016 an international trial regarding the destruction of the mausoleums in Timbuktu in Mali resulted in the first war crimes charge by the ICC for the destruction of cultural heritage. Such deliberate destruction of heritage was defined a war crime under Article 8 of the International Criminal Court's statute. The perpetrator was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment and, in 2017, was ruled to pay €2.7 million in individual and collective reparations. The decision was instrumental in strengthening international justice and re-establishing hope in Timbuktu. A symbolic reparations ceremony was held in March 2021 in Bamako, organized by the Trust Fund for Victims and the ICC in collaboration with the Malian Government, to commemorate the destruction of the cultural heritage of Timbuktu. During the ceremony, the Malian authorities and UNESCO were given a symbolic euro in recognition of the harm caused by the destruction to the Malian people and to all humanity.

The adoption of UN Security Council resolutions for the protection of heritage has given new impetus to multilateral cooperation in cultural heritage protection in situations of armed conflict. The adoption of resolution 2199 in 2015 underlined the link between looting and smuggling of cultural heritage items and financing terrorism activities, as well as introduced legally-binding measures to combat the illicit trafficking of antiquities and cultural objects from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. The recognition of the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage as a war crime was reaffirmed in resolution 2347, unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council in 2017, and marked the first time the UN Security Council adopted a resolution devoted to the protection and recovery of cultural heritage.

This achievement was further underpinned by the policy instruments developed within UNESCO Culture Conventions to prevent and mitigate the impact of conflicts on culture. Over the past 70 years, UNESCO has refined its conceptual frameworks and provided legal provisions to defend culture through its Culture Conventions. The protection of cultural heritage is part of international humanitarian law under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols, which forbids the targeting of cultural property and the use of its immediate surroundings for military purposes. In addition, calling for extreme vigilance to the possible export of illicit property through the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, is part of UNESCO's work to protect and safeguard our world's culture and its diversity.

In addition to shaping a legal framework for culture to be safeguarded, UNESCO's normative instruments have also helped to safeguard cultural diversity and advance cultural rights through various angles, providing an enabling environment for conflict prevention. The protection of cultural rights is central to sustaining peaceful and inclusive societies, and a critical condition for cultural diversity to flourish. The right of access to, participation in and enjoyment of culture – enshrined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further reiterated in the 2001 UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity – is fundamental to peacebuilding efforts. The Declaration brings to the fore the importance of pluralism in societies and that cultural diversity "is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature". These core principles of cultural access and participation have been put into practice through the UNESCO Culture Conventions.

Geralt/Pixabay*

For example, by promoting inclusive, participatory management of World Heritage sites, the 1972 World Heritage Convention places individuals and communities at the centre of conservation efforts, while also ensuring that they can access and benefit from their cultural heritage. The 1970 Convention promotes peaceful societies by stating that communities should not be deprived of their cultural heritage. Likewise, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage ensures – through its Operational Guidelines – that local communities, including indigenous peoples, have access to and can participate in the identification, inventorying, safeguarding and transmission of their cultural heritage. By providing a normative framework and policy instruments, the 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the 1980 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist support countries in protecting, defending and monitoring fundamental freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression and creativity, while also recognizing the importance of intellectual property rights. The concepts and, to some extent, legal provisions provided by the Culture Conventions across different cultural domains have therefore supported Member States' efforts in strengthening national cultural policy frameworks with a view to better protecting cultural rights.

More recently, UNESCO has expanded its scope of work to protect <u>artistic freedom</u>. This is understood as a bundle of rights protected under international law encompassing the right to create without censorship or intimidation, the right to freedom of association, the right to protection of social and economic rights, the right to participate in cultural life, the right to have artistic work supported, distributed and remunerated, and the right to freedom of movement. The rights of artists to express themselves freely are under threat worldwide, especially where artistic expressions contest or critique political ideologies, religious beliefs and cultural and social preferences. These threats range from censorship - by corporations, political, religious or other groups - to imprisonment, physical threats, and even killings. In 2020, there were reports of <u>978 acts of violations of artistic freedom in 89 countries and online spaces</u>. 74% of all documented imprisonments of artists concerned criticizing government policies and practices.

Bfk92/Getty Images Signature*

Other global platforms and policy mechanisms developed over the past two decades have been instrumental in highlighting the importance of cultural rights, notably of indigenous peoples. In a global landscape marked by the urgency of climate change, countries and communities are urged to recognize their interdependence and the critical importance of protecting cultural rights, notably for indigenous peoples. Echoing this recognition, culture is one of six mandated areas of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and integral to indigenous peoples' identity, traditional knowledge, and connection with the natural environment. The Permanent Forum increasingly reflects, in its Recommendations on Culture, the importance of cultural rights. UNESCO's cross-cutting 2018 Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples takes a rights-based approach to ensure that the Organization's work upholds the 2006 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) – including in relation to cultural heritage, environmental conservation, knowledge, expressions, languages and intellectual property rights. In this respect, Member States are increasingly confronted with issues of cultural appropriation, which is further amplified by accelerated digital transformation. Recent cases linked to, for example, the use of traditional medicines by pharmaceutical companies, or the appropriation of traditional cultural expressions by the fashion industry without appropriate remuneration or economic benefits for custodian communities, testify to this growing trend. This aspiration is also increasingly underlined by regional organizations, including the African Union, which emphasizes cultural memory in its Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, as well as fostering a common heritage in its strategic framework Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

Building on these conceptual and normative advances, further work is needed in the coming years to codify cultural rights. Cultural rights remain a rather "underdeveloped" category of human rights, therefore, more efforts will be needed to define their scope, legal content and enforceability. This deficit was recognized by the Human Rights Council, which in 2009 created the mandate of Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. Since then, the Special Rapporteur has produced 21 thematic reports on issues related to cultural rights. The accelerated digital transformation makes these efforts even more critical, as it has deeply reshaped the exercise of cultural rights relating to diversity of cultural contents, intellectual property rights and multilingualism in cyberspace, as well as challenges related to the remuneration of artists. Against this backdrop, wider policy dialogue and concerted action will be required, building on existing frameworks, notably the guidelines developed by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to support Member States in monitoring cultural rights. Although constructing universal frameworks may raise specific challenges, the respect of cultural diversity remains a global commitment, enshrined in all UNESCO Culture Conventions, to frame the scope of cultural rights.

The struggle for inclusion and social cohesion

In a globalized world, migration, urbanization and digital transformation are bringing cultures together into closer proximity. To a growing extent, cultural and religious diversity is an intrinsic component of societies in all parts of the world. This increased diversity, particularly in urban settings, has generated fresh opportunities for exchange, learning and ideas, but it has also brewed tensions. Record numbers of people who are forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, can face persistent barriers in enjoying their cultural rights. Migrants, in general, come up against significant challenges in host communities in terms of stigma, exclusion and xenophobia. Migrations are also fueled by protracted economic crises, youth unemployment and, to an increasing extent, climate change and related disasters.

The digital transformation has introduced new forms of innovation and possibilities for dialogue and creative expression, while also raising new challenges, notably related to hate speech. UNESCO's work with UNITAR/UNOSAT in the use of post-conflict satellite imagery, for instance, has been a gamechanger for damage assessments of built heritage in inaccessible areas, such as in Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. Media, while being an effective advocacy tool that can mobilize the international community around an issue, can also provide spaces for inciting violence and polarization, and channels to spread discrimination and hate. Social media has been used to facilitate illicit trafficking of cultural property, and for recruitment, manipulation and coordination by non-State armed groups. Artists and cultural workers have been turning to the Internet and social media to promote their work and access new audiences, which has introduced underlined new challenges for their online safety. Countering the growing spread and use of hate speech globally underpins the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech launched in 2019. The Strategy and Plan of Action contains 13 commitments to address the root causes and drivers of hate speech and its impact on societies, while upholding the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Golubovy/Getty Images*
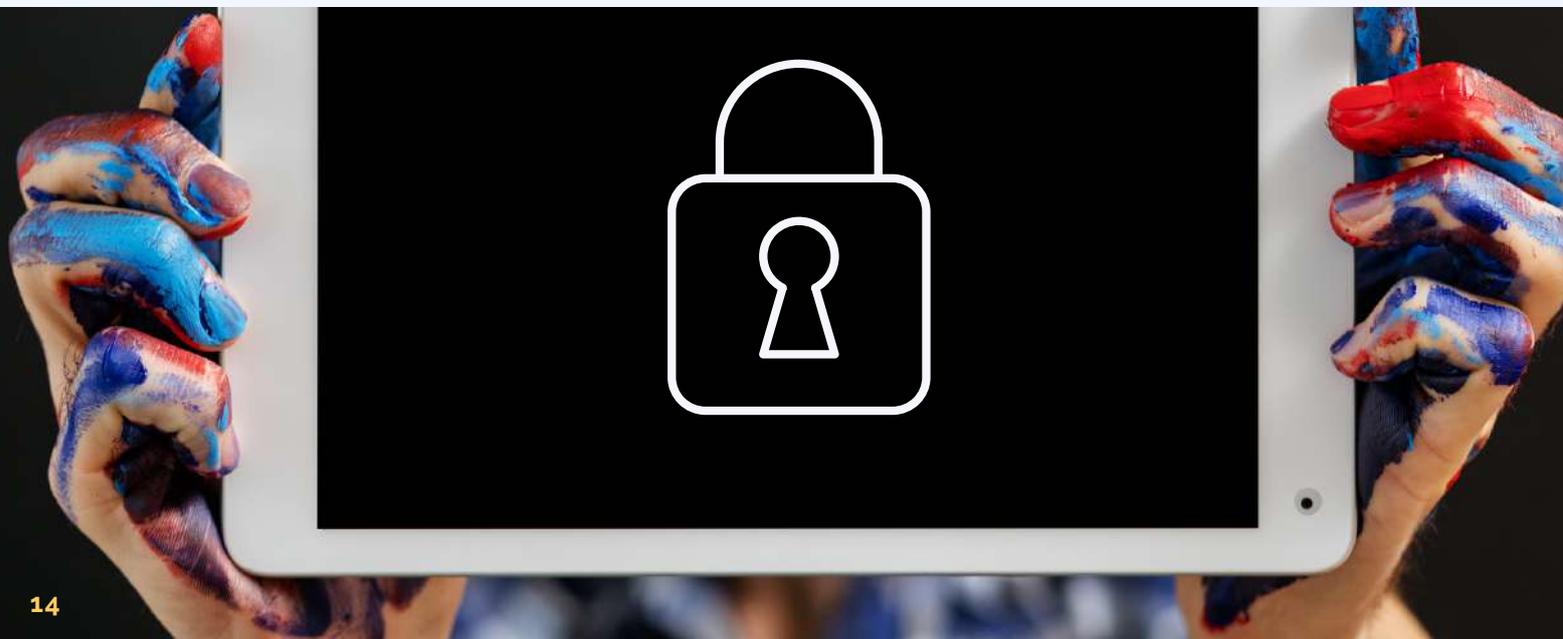
In this regard, engaging youth in culture and boosting their livelihoods are particularly critical to combatting hate speech and nurturing social cohesion. The cultural exclusion and marginalization of youth can indeed generate broader repercussions for social cohesion and peace - stemming from grievances, political distrust, isolation and a sense of hopelessness. Within the UN-wide system, UNESCO leads on the implementation of the United Nations Secretary General's Plan of Action for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) adopted in 2016. This leverages "soft power" in preventing hatred and ignorance through tools and trainings to tackle disinformation, hate speech and violent extremism on social media, and build learners' resilience to violent extremism. Since the start of the conflict in Yemen, UNESCO World Heritage properties have been severely impacted while the vibrancy of cultural life has been suspended. In some parts of the country, this has given way to radical sectarian narratives that erode the pluralist social fabric needed to unify and stabilize societies. Commentators observe that the cultural void caused by the war has produced despair and disillusionment among young people, which incurs secondary political risks, such as an increased likelihood of youth involvement in violent extremism. The UNESCO/EU project "Cash for Work: Improving livelihood opportunities of urban youth in Yemen" recognizes the important value of cultural heritage preservation, but also youth participation and access to culture as confidence-building measures for peace. Through cash-based urban rehabilitation works, the project is currently employing over 1,300 skilled and unskilled youth under 35.
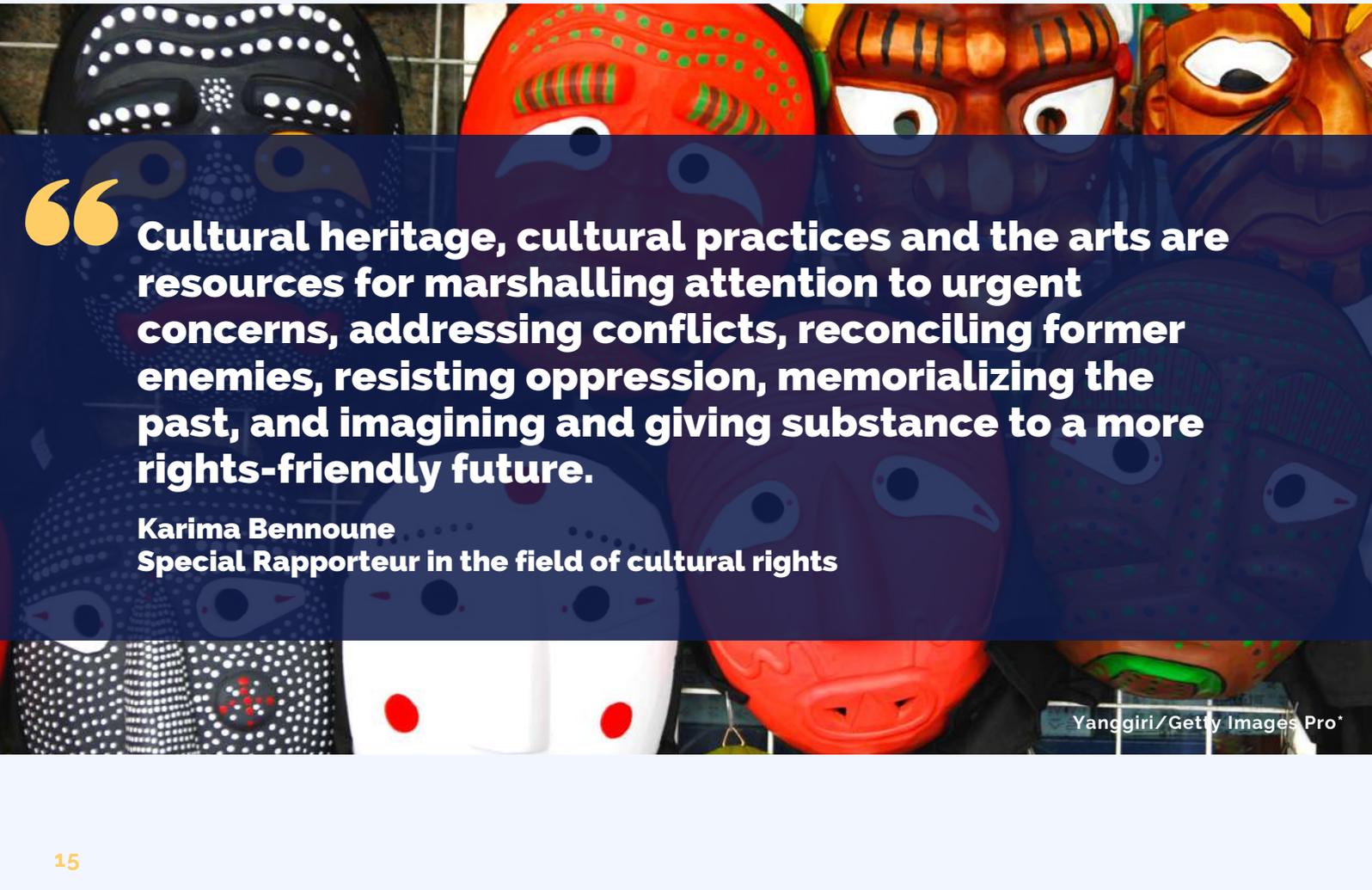
> **Cultural heritage, cultural practices and the arts are resources for marshalling attention to urgent concerns, addressing conflicts, reconciling former enemies, resisting oppression, memorializing the past, and imagining and giving substance to a more rights-friendly future.**
>
> **Karima Bennoune**
> **Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights**

Yanggiri/Getty Images Pro*

Harnessing cultural diplomacy and intercultural dialogue for conflict prevention and reconciliation

Culture should be a force of unity, not division. Numerous experiences demonstrate how culture can provide a crucial entry point for international cooperation to unite people across borders in the protection of shared cultural heritage or cultural exchange. Cultural diplomacy is at the heart of the UNESCO Silk Roads programme, which for more than 30 years has engaged several countries in building links between people from different communities along these routes. Culture was also the catalyst for reopening dialogue to overcome the contentious frontier between Thailand and Cambodia through the safeguarding of the Temple of Preah Vihear. The 2018 joint inscription of Traditional Korean wrestling (Ssirum/Ssireum) on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity brought together the two Koreas in a sign of solidarity and rapprochement. In the Lake Chad Basin region, the UNESCO project "Biosphere and Heritage of Lake Chad" (BIOPALT) has taken a multidisciplinary approach to strengthen national capacities in shared natural resource management across five countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Niger, Nigeria and Chad). In Nigeria, for instance, UNESCO has conducted training in management of transboundary water resources using a "Potential Conflict to Potential Cooperation (PCCP)" approach, thereby strengthening water diplomacy and collaborative natural resource management for peace and sustainable development. Likewise, in Côte d'Ivoire, UNESCO joined United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Culture last October to roll out a series of dialogue and peacebuilding mechanisms to promote inter-ethnic alliances between local communities, including youth. These efforts were followed up in January as part of World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture with the launch of an awareness caravan that provides content on the history of ethnic alliances in order to support peacebuilding. To date, 400 young community relays for peace have been trained, who act as peace mediators for the consolidation of inter-ethnic values throughout Côte d'Ivoire.

Lake Chad
HomoCosmicos/Getty Images*
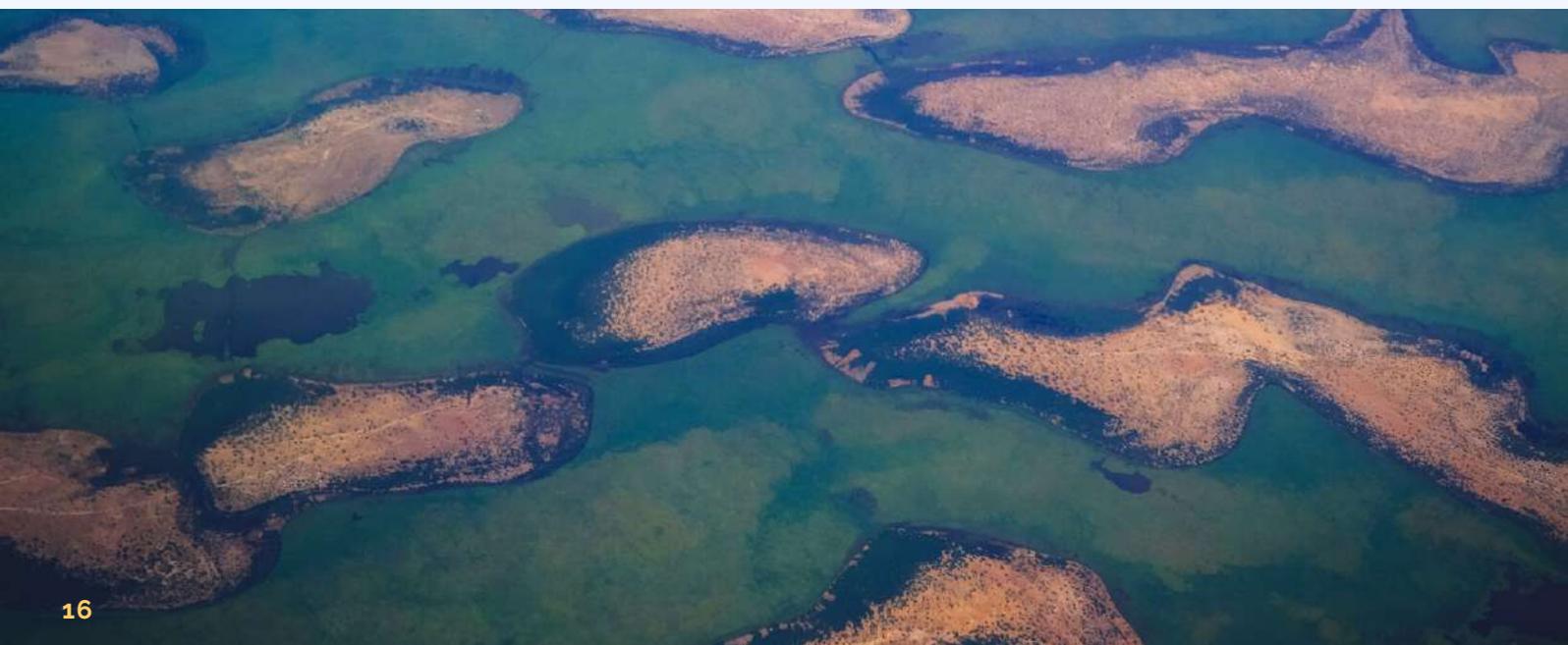
When the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace in 1999, it became the universal blueprint for the international community to promote a culture of peace and non-violence. This was carried forward across the UN with the subsequent International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010) and the Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence. A culture of peace promotes the values, attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies through a range of human rights-based actions, including education, culture and media. The increased recognition of the value of intercultural dialogue resulted in the UN International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013 – 2022), which is led by UNESCO.

Within the UN-wide system, the shift towards sustaining peace and conflict prevention has placed greater emphasis on the role of culture in peacebuilding frameworks. When UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the reciprocal links between peace and sustainable development were brought to the fore in building "peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence". Sustaining peace and conflict prevention are articulated in SDG 16 that focuses on achieving peaceful and inclusive societies and to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere. In the following year, the UN twin resolutions on sustaining peace (A/RES/70/262) and (S/RES/2282) addressing the root causes of conflict defined prevention as the avoidance of "the outbreak, escalation, recurrence, or continuation of conflict". Peace is more than the absence of war, it is a dynamic process, that requires tools, resources and political will. This task is explored in UNESCO's 2018 publication "Long Walk of Peace : towards a culture of prevention", which compiles the experiences of 32 UN bodies and highlights the dynamic reconfiguration of UN peacebuilding from a post-conflict context to a framework of sustaining peace. Responding to crisis rather than investing in prevention generates untenably high human and financial costs. This therefore gives impetus for policymakers at all levels – from local to global – to focus on preventing violent conflict more effectively through culture.

As a critical tool in conflict prevention, education nurtures values of understanding, tolerance and respect. Multicultural and interfaith approaches to education are fundamental, particularly in situations of growing ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. In the long-term, such approaches help build inclusive societies that are resilient in the face of crisis. Based on principles of solidarity, dialogue and respect for diversity, UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education programme empowers learners with the skills, values, attitudes and behaviors to shape more peaceful and sustainable societies. Similarly, UNESCO's intercultural competencies tool "Story Circles" has been piloted in five countries (Thailand, Costa Rica, Zimbabwe, Austria and Tunisia), where it has demonstrated positive results in the inclusion of migrants and dialogue among indigenous peoples.

Likewise, UNESCO is committed to tackling prejudice, racial discrimination and social injustices that have been left in the aftermath of slavery and have long-lasting repercussions on peoples' identities, inclusion and opportunities. The Slave Route Project, launched in 1994, examines the foundations and consequences of this painful legacy in different regions of the world. Through research, pedagogical materials, conservation of archives, oral traditions and sites of memory, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the continued impact of this history. The International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) also promotes the fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent and a greater knowledge of their contribution to humankind.

Intercultural dialogue is increasingly recognized for its role in preventing conflict. Based on a 2017 UNESCO survey amongst Member States, some 71% of countries have policy frameworks in place on intercultural dialogue. However, gaps remain in how intercultural dialogue can be better supported to tackle culture or identity-based grievances that may be reported as triggers of community tension and conflict and - in the worst case - violence and genocide. UNESCO is working with the Institute for Economics and Peace to develop data to better understand the structures, processes and skills needed to render dialogue effective towards these peace-related outcomes.

In addition to supporting intercultural dialogue, the arts can also provide learners with an open environment to exchange experiences and personal worldviews. In times of crisis, the arts can be a significant source of solace and healing to help cope with trauma and loss. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, interactive theatre has been used as part of human rights-based approaches to boost intercultural competences in schools to fight against hate speech and prejudice.

CUTTING-EDGE

The integration of cultural diversity into curricula has also demonstrated benefits in nurturing intercultural understanding and tolerance. UNESCO's Art Lab for Human Rights and Dialogue highlights the power of art for memory, rehabilitation and reconciliation. Launched in 2018 in collaboration with the National Theatre of Chaillot (Paris, France), the programme works to mainstream arts to strengthen human rights across development and humanitarian programmes. Last December, Art Lab put forward recommendations for boosting the arts for inclusion and justice.

Inherently connected to the understanding of community, intangible cultural heritage is a vehicle that enables social cohesion, inclusion and a sense of belonging. It helps intergenerational and inter-ethnic communication, fosters respect for the linkage between intangible and material values, and promotes a balanced approach to the use of renewable natural resources, thus strengthening sustainable development. Intangible cultural heritage can also be a basis for resilience, reconciliation and peace. For example, in the village of Conejo in Colombia's Guajira Department, a UNESCO-funded project led by the Fundación Universidad del Norte from 2018 to 2020 made a difference to the lives of former combatants through their reintegration into civil life and the revitalization of the social fabric, while building on living heritage as a tool for dialogue and reconciliation in this territory affected by the armed conflict. Social agreements for coexistence were established between the two communities (former combatants and the inhabitants of Conejo), which resulted in joint practices, such as a community-based entrepreneurship initiative on rural tourism, and the creation of a community museum.

Indigenous knowledge, in particular, plays a crucial role in establishing dialogue to address conflict and ensure climate and food security. The Los Pinos Declaration [Chapoltepek] – Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) was the outcome of the high-level closing event of the International Year of indigenous Languages (IYIL2019) held last February in Mexico. The Declaration underscores the value of indigenous languages in peacebuilding processes and in creating better futures for peace, development, justice and reconciliation. UNESCO has been working in conjunction with indigenous pastoralists in Africa to promote peace-building in the context of climate stress and adaptation in the Sahel and East Africa, under the umbrella of the Organization's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme. Pastoralists have emphasized that resource conflicts can be eased through understanding indigenous knowledge of weather and climate. Through dialogue with scientists, policy-makers and neighbouring communities there is greater awareness of climate sensitive adaptation. Building on a process that began in 2016, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples stresses the importance of taking a human rights-based approach to the repatriation of indigenous peoples' ceremonial objects, human remains and cultural heritage, in recognition of their rights to self-determination, culture, property, spirituality, religion, language and traditional knowledge.

Moving forward with a rights-based compass

In a world marked by fracture and tensions, both within and between countries, culture should be harnessed as a crucial component of conflict prevention, building on its "soft power" to address their root causes. At the outset, this entails addressing the appropriation of the memory of the past, and the lingering impacts of colonialism and the Slave Route. Teaching about culture and heritage is also crucial to counter stereotypes and help prevent violent extremism. Moreover, inclusion must remain the touchstone of actions to ensure the participation of all segments of society, including through intergenerational dialogue.

Culture – with its unifying quality and capacity to bring people together – should be integral to peacebuilding efforts. This perspective supports the UN Secretary-General's reform of the UN system and peacebuilding architecture and the focus shift to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. It also echoes the vision and rationale of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The benefits of culture for conflict prevention and resolution processes can be seen in practices ranging from the arts, education and media, to mediation and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. This approach should be more firmly enshrined in global policy discussions on culture, such as the upcoming Ministerial Conference on Culture to be held under the Italian Presidency of the G20 in July 2021, which is slated to raise this issue.

When conflicts do happen, culture also contributes to easing tensions and supporting reconciliation and trust. As seen in numerous cases, from the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia Herzegovina to Timbuktu in Mali, or currently in Mosul in Iraq, culture represents a unifying force. In doing so, culture-based actions lay the groundwork to strengthen national unity and reconstruction, and support inclusive, locally-led actions where communities can shape their future societies. For that reason, culture is increasingly taken into account within cultural diplomacy and intercultural dialogue efforts deployed at national, regional or interregional levels, in particular by Member States or regional intergovernmental organizations, both in terms of regional integration and external action, thus signaling that the issue is gaining ground.

Mosul (Iraq)
UNESCO/Moamin Al-Obaidi

Acknowledging and ensuring the respect of cultural diversity must be central to these peacebuilding efforts. Against a backdrop of broader global trends – such as mobility, urbanization, digitalization and trade flows – cultural diversity should not be viewed as a threat or instrumentalized for divisive purposes. Rather it should be understood and promoted as an asset and as an element of cohesion and stability, and defended as such by countries. Leading up to the 20-year anniversary of the adoption of the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity its message still resonates : "respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security". In this regard, States have a key role to play in promoting cultural diversity, as guarantors of fundamental rights but also from an educational standpoint.

As a critical condition for cultural diversity to flourish, the protection of cultural rights is central to sustaining peaceful and inclusive societies. The right of access to, participation in and enjoyment of culture is fundamental to peacebuilding efforts. The disturbing escalation of violence ranging from attacks on cultural heritage and cultural minorities to artists and cultural professionals, increasingly calls attention to the need to develop and uphold cultural rights as a condition for peace, stability and security. The concepts and, to some extent, the legal provisions provided by the Culture Conventions across different cultural domains can support Member States' efforts in strengthening national cultural policy frameworks with a view to better protecting cultural rights.

Looking forward, building on the progress made in upholding individual rights, the subject of collective rights – which has garnered increased attention – also requires further policy engagement. The magnitude and urgency of the climate crisis compels a rethinking of policy action based on a stronger recognition of the relationship between people and their environment, and the intrinsic link between cultural and biological diversity. This is not only critical for shaping more sustainable forms of development, but also peace and social cohesion. Protecting cultural rights, including for indigenous peoples, will be critical in this context to foster climate adaptation and mitigation. Expanding policy discussions on cultural rights, including individual and collective rights, and strengthening related policy and legislation options, will therefore be an important area of policy discussion in the coming years and a critical foundation for harnessing the power of culture for peacebuilding and stability.

**Karnstocks/Getty Images Pro**˙

AFRICA

Christina Morillo/Pexels

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Government of Republic of Congo joined with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the United Nations system to convene the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development "Building forward better: Towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063", held in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, from 1 to 4 March. More than 1,800 participants, including ministers and high-level representatives from 54 ECA Member States, participated in the Forum online and in person. Discussions centred on reviewing progress made, building consensus on development pathways in line with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and enhancing the capacity of the 2021 Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. Member States also stressed that equity, inclusion and non-discrimination should underpin COVID-19 pandemic recovery strategies.

During the Forum, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed for the creation of the African Artificial Intelligence Research Centre in Congo - the first initiative of its kind in Africa. It is based on the premise that Artificial intelligence (AI) could make great strides in the continent's development, contributing to boosting youth employment, innovation, environmental protection and food productivity, among others. The centre will have a Pan-African approach and will benefit from a close collaboration between the Republic of Congo and other countries of the continent. ECA will help establish the centre in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Ugandan and South African government ministers and film professionals came together in a peer-to-peer online exchange in late February to share experiences in establishing film regulations. The exchange provided a platform to create an enabling environment for film professionals and for forging closer bilateral ties in the cultural and creative industries. The initiative is part of the EU/UNESCO-funded project "Support for New Regulatory Frameworks to Strengthen the Cultural and Creative Industries and Promote South to South Cooperation" in Uganda, in the context of UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

ARAB STATES
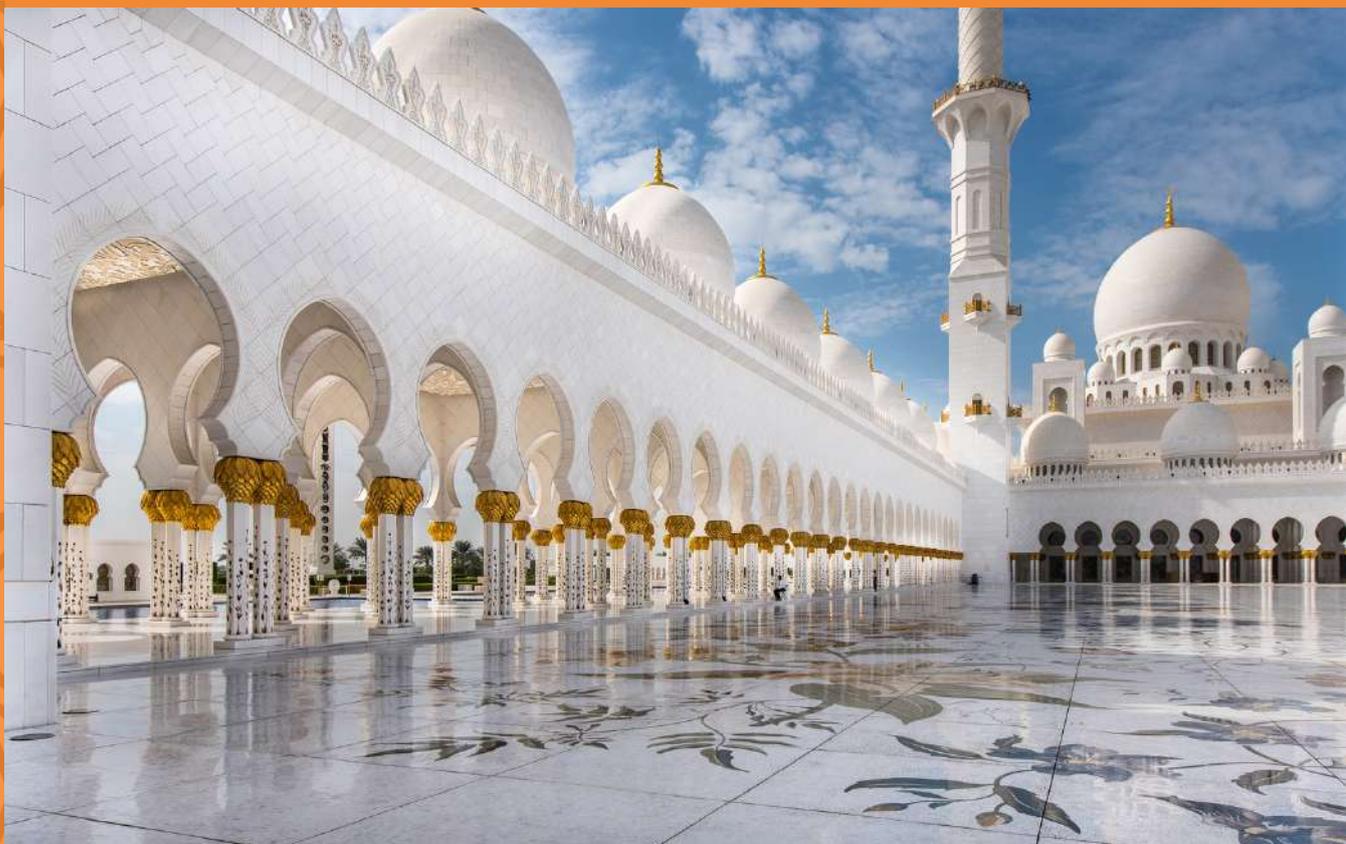
Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)
Jpeter2--697843/Pixabay

The 2nd edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development took place online from 1 to 5 March. Hosted by the Government of Egypt, this year's theme "Shaping Africa's New Normal: Recovering Stronger, Rebuilding Better" placed a spotlight on African-led solutions to deal with challenges of peace, security and development in Africa in the wake of the pandemic. A session on Sustainable Peace and Development through Arts, Culture and Heritage was held at the Forum as part of celebrations for the 2021 African Union (AU) Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage. The Forum concluded by highlighting the critical importance of inclusion, and working together across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus for sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recognition of the United Nations International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, the Culture Summit Abu Dhabi 2021 took place online under the banner of "The Cultural Economy and the Economy of Culture" from 8 to 10 March. The Summit was organized by the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism in partnership with UNESCO, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Royal Academy of Arts, Google, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, The Economist Events, the British Council and Louvre Abu Dhabi. The fourth edition of the Summit brought together cultural leaders, practitioners and experts from the fields of art, heritage, museums, media and technology to generate new strategies and ways of thinking about culture, and how to better harness its transformative potential to benefit societies and communities worldwide. During the Summit, the chairman of Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism announced the launch of a new global study that will be conducted in collaboration with UNESCO to shed light on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural and creative industries.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Byheaven/Getty Images*

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) joined with UN Women and the Government of Canada to launch a five-year programme to strengthen women's leadership and participation in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery in Southeast Asia. The US$6.36 million initiative leverages the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) approach as a powerful tool to pave the way for inclusive and sustainable peace and security in the region.

The 2nd Meeting of the Asian Cultural Council (ACC) "Harnessing Culture and Innovation for Shared Prosperity During COVID-19 and Beyond" was held online on 19 March. The meeting brought together regional experts and policymakers to share practical insights on and solutions for investing in culture and creativity for inclusive growth, and promoting innovation. The meeting concluded with the Phnom Penh Declaration on "Cultural Cooperation and Innovation for Shared Prosperity During COVID-19 and Beyond", which underlines the importance of recovery strategies that are culture-based, rights-based and people-centred.

The Ministry of Culture and Sports of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sport and Youth Policy in Kyrgyzstan have agreed to host the Days of Culture of Kazakhstan in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2021 and the Days of Culture of the Kyrgyz Republic in Kazakhstan in 2022. The initiative contributes to strengthening the cultural ties between the two nations and, more broadly, reinforces cultural cooperation in the sub-region.

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

Mostar Old Bridge (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
**Gorodenkoff/Getty Images Pro***

The Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission issued a joint declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), thereby setting into motion the CoFoE that aims to raise civil society voices in shaping Europe's future. The CoFoE will be rolled out through a series of events in partnership with civil society and stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level, as well as through an interactive multilingual digital platform.

The Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe – Enhancing Culture for Sustainable Development (CoMoCoSEE) met virtually on 25 February under the theme "Digital and ecological cultural policy in light of the pandemic". The CoMoCoSEE discussed how to better harness digital technologies in the field of artistic creation, curation, archiving and collection management and to provide wider access to art education to the public. It also underlined how art and culture builds trust to bridge conflicting views and interests, as well as to overcome barriers and obstacles with innovative approaches.

Also in South-East Europe, intercultural dialogue has been strengthened through several joint United Nations initiatives. For example, youth from Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) gained intercultural competences through the project "The Art of Understanding", organized last month in Tuzla, BiH by the Drama Studio Prazan Prostor and the Association of Citizens AkustikUm- Musical Youth BiH. The project is part of a regional programme for intercultural dialogue implemented by UNESCO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and backed by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. Through theatre and music, the project sends strong messages of understanding between people, dialogue and tolerance.
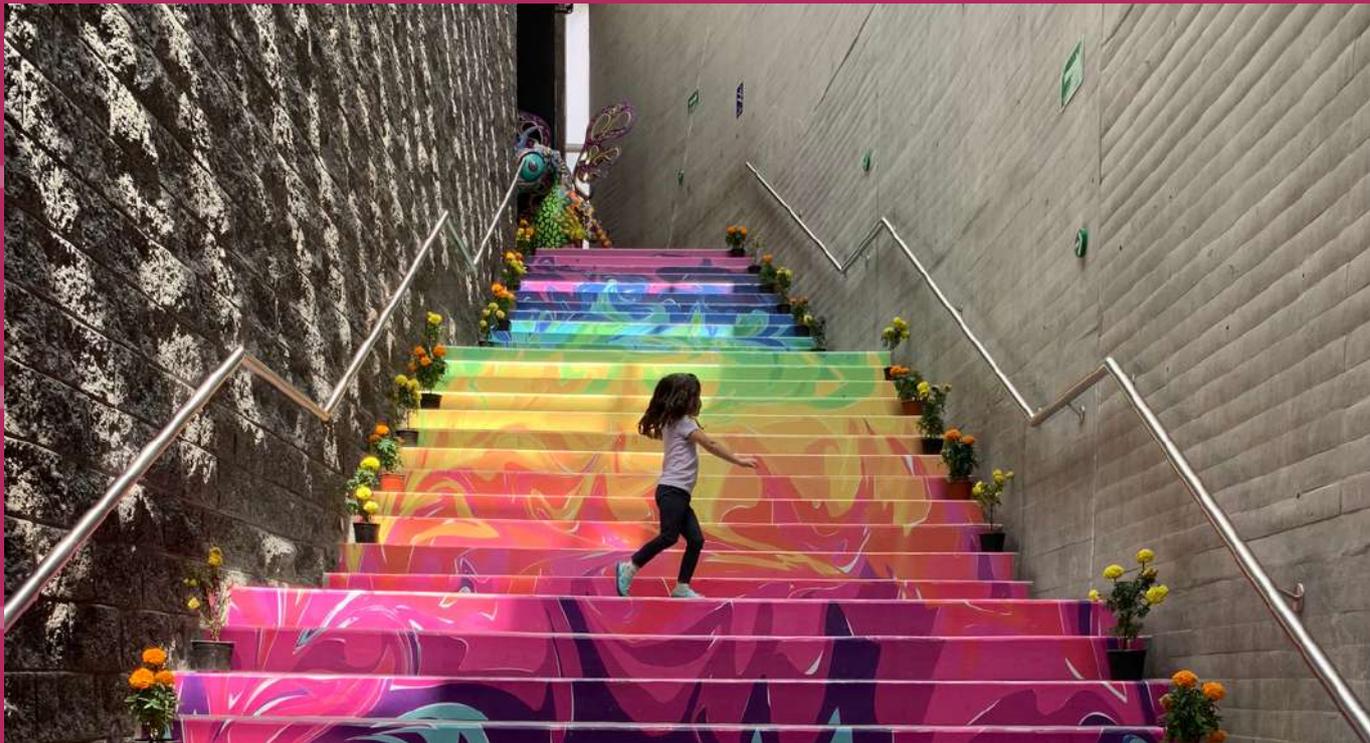
Denis Borgatti/Getty Images*

The Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) and Acción Cultural Española signed a collaboration agreement on 10 March to develop activities to enhance the role of culture in the Ibero-American sphere. The agreement outlines a number of joint initiatives developed around promoting culture's contribution to sustainable development, heritage, pluralism and cultural diversity, artist mobility and exchange, events and celebrations, as well as training in management, digitalization, intellectual property and cultural diplomacy.

The President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and the President of Argentina, Alberto Ángel Fernández have issued a joint statement for bilateral cooperation, including in the field of culture. The statement agrees to take steps to establish the Executive Programme of Cultural Cooperation for the period 2021-2023, to advance cooperation in the cultural industries, cultural and artistic exchanges, film, performing arts and other cultural sectors. They also agreed upon the importance of the creative economy as a generator of employment and added value. The Secretary of Culture of the Government of Mexico Alejandra Frausto Guerrero announced that her office is working in close coordination with the Argentinean authorities to carry out the Executive Programme of Cultural Cooperation across a broad field of actions.

The EU-funded Transcultura Programme : Integrating Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union through Culture and Creativity has agreed upon a roadmap for the year 2021 to continue providing quality training for Caribbean youth whilst adapting to COVID-19 restrictions. Implemented by the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Transultura Programme brings together a diverse range of stakeholders from the European Union and the Caribbean in capacity-building initiatives and dialogue platforms. The Programme also aims to build cross-border exchanges that foster cultural diplomacy, share fundamental values and showcase the regions' cultural resources.

CULTURE FOR PEACE, SECURITY, CONFLICT MITIGATION AND CULTURAL RIGHTS IN THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

Culture plays an integral role in conflict prevention and promoting and sustaining peace. It can build bridges and shape harmonious and inclusive societies, grounded on the respect for cultural rights, pluralism and cultural diversity. Culture is also essential to a community's identity, and is a powerful resource in processes of social change, dialogue and reconciliation. This was underlined by countries in their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) that provide an overview of their implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Based on the VNRs, culture is notably recognized for its contribution to Target 4.7 to promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and cultural diversity through education, and SDG 16 to build peaceful and inclusive societies.

CULTURE AS A CONDUIT FOR PEACE AND DIALOGUE

In conflict and post-conflict contexts, culture is underlined as a factor contributing to peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. **Sudan**, for instance, mentions that the University of Khartoum's Peace Research Institute (PRI) leads the Arts for Peace programme as part of its National Anti-War Campaign inaugurated in 2015. Through a range of creative expressions, the campaign supports non-violent advocacy and a culture of peace. In parallel, the Media for Peace programme focuses on building the capacities of media professionals to spread a culture of peace in the country. Meanwhile, **Côte d'Ivoire** mentions that its National Festival of Arts and Culture in Schools has grown to become a beacon for peace against a backdrop of post-conflict national reconciliation. Peace messenger clubs and early warning cells have also been established in secondary education to raise awareness among students about peace for sustainable development. One of the five central axes of the National Development Programme for Post-War Period in the **Syrian Arab Republic** 2030 is dedicated to re-building education and culture, with projects for heritage safeguarding, infrastructure reconstruction, skills development, rural development, media and religious discourse. Several countries in post-conflict situations underline that obstacles to sustainable peace, growth and development have become hardened through years of conflict, inequalities and economic deprivation. This has been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, to which some countries in the 2020 VNR cycle highlight as a source of fragility and conflict, thus further bolstering barriers to peace and development.

Intercultural dialogue is referred to in several VNRs as a foundation for cultural diplomacy and central policy stream to promote diversity and social cohesion. The **United Kingdom** mentions community relations programmes in Northern Ireland that aim to improve intra- and inter-community relations through providing inclusive spaces that champion cultural diversity, tolerance and reconciliation. In **Colombia,** projects for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, plus the sustainable management of forests, and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) have been developed to improve community governance. Among other programmes, a platform has been created that allows for knowledge exchange and shared experiences between Afro-descendant communities of the Pacific and indigenous communities, thus generating intercultural dialogue and supporting steps towards sustainable development and territorial peace.

Culture is also cited as an integral part of a country's overarching development strategy, social fabric and quality of life. This is the case in the **Solomon Islands**, whose National Development Strategy (2016-2035) aims "to create a peaceful, harmonious and progressive country led by ethical, accountable, respected and credible leadership that enhances and protects peoples' culture, social, economic and spiritual well-being". **Samoa** cites the fa'amatai cultural institution - a community governance system - built on the principles of reciprocity, communal social protection and security to maintain peace and stability in the country in the long term. The country also emphasized that women have a crucial role in the fa'amatai in addressing key issues, such as climate change, human security and food security.

Korean Ssireum Association

A COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL RIGHTS

A rights-based approach to policy and governance is mentioned by numerous countries in their VNRs. Broadly, human rights are incorporated into the constitutional texts of several countries. Some countries make specific reference to cultural rights - individually, in groups and in community with others. **El Salvador**, for instance, cites its national development plan that specifically mentions culture as a right. **Zimbabwe** mentions that the country recognizes language, cultural and environmental rights. **Hungary**, in its "Fundamental Law" of 2012, articulates the principles of the rights of future generations in relation to the "preservation and protection of material, intellectual and natural resources", including heritage, language and biodiversity". **Egypt** includes marginalized groups in cultural policy by underscoring the cultural rights of persons with disabilities. **Finland** underscores the importance of culture "to promote equality, inclusion, well-being and human rights", as well as indigenous people, which is enshrined in their constitution. In this regard, the Sámi are guaranteed the "right to develop their own language and culture, as well as their traditional livelihoods as part of their culture". Similarly, the protection of indigenous rights is a priority for **Australia** and **New Zealand**, the latter which underlines that "Maori indigenous people are fundamental to who we are as a nation."

Maori carving
Filo/Getty Images Signature

PROMOTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH EDUCATION

Education can contribute to peaceful societies through enhancing intercultural skills that foster tolerance and mutual understanding. Strengthening cultural diversity through education is mentioned by the **Central African Republic**, which links the SDGs to its National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding (2017-2021). **Singapore** cites its Character and Citizenship Education programme, based on the development of intercultural skills and nurturing the value of Singapore's socio-cultural diversity among learners. Turning to **Ecuador**, the National Plan for Technical and Vocational Education and Training proposes the implementation of cultural values in school textbooks, strengthening the intercultural bilingual education system, and including Afro-Ecuadorian history and culture in the curriculum. **Kenya** chairs the Inter-Country Quality Node on Peace Education in Africa to advance the role of education in building and sustaining peace in post-conflict or fragile states. The country also promotes a culture for peace through its participation in conflict resolution in peacekeeping missions in Somalia and treaties on cultural exchange programmes with 51 countries to foster cultural tourism, peace and understanding. **Slovenia** finances school and peer mediation in post-conflict areas such as Bosnia and Herzegovina for promoting students' constructive dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes, which have a positive impact on strengthening interethnic and intercultural dialogue. This is done through scholarships for students to study in Slovenian schools.

Jcamilobernal/Getty Images*

A strong commitment to inclusion in education is underlined by **Chile**, which targets education for sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, promotion of peace and non-violence, appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development. Inclusion is also central to the country's National Agreement for Aracaunía, signed in 2018, which involves an intensive dialogue between indigenous communities, regional and ministerial authorities and entrepreneurs to reduce gaps and promote inclusive development. In this regard, reforms for indigenous peoples have been enacted, including constitutional recognition, new government institutions and the "Plan Impulso Araucanía" that considers 491 investment projects for indigenous communities for the period 2018-2026. An inclusive approach to culture also underpins several programmes cited by **Morocco** to strengthen women's participation in cultural events and awareness-raising campaigns, as well as to provide them with spaces for the organization of initiatives. Inclusion is also reflected in the constitutional provisions of several countries, including Lesotho whose policies draw on the country's constitution that provides for "a nonracist, non-sexist and human right-based society where race, class, gender, sex, religion, diversity, age, social security and protection from harm, among others, are primary considerations".

Alessandro Biascioli/Getty Images*

LATEST NEWS

Doha, Qatar
SHansche/Getty Images Pro*

DOHA, THE CAPITAL OF CULTURE IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

On 8 March, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Qatar launched celebrations for "Doha, the Capital of Culture in the Islamic World". Throughout 2021, over 70 cultural, artistic, intellectual and educational events are scheduled to take place in the city. Since the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) launched the Islamic World Culture Capitals Programme in 2005, 50 culture capitals have showcased their cultural heritage and assets through year-long programmes of activities.

READ MORE

RECENT PUBLICATIONS
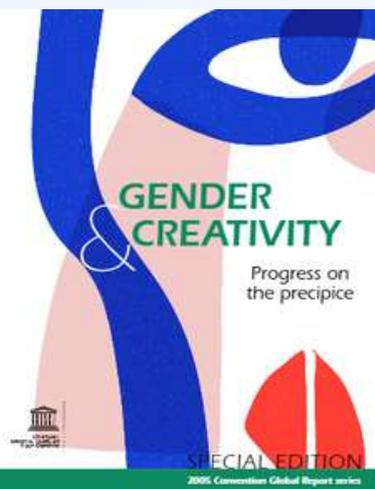
GENDER AND CREATIVITY: PROGRESS ON THE PRECIPICE

Launched on the occasion of International Women's Day (8 March), and in advance of the third edition of the UNESCO Global Report Re|Shaping Cultural Policies, the report takes stock of the current status of gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors.

Report available in English, French and Spanish

EN **FR** **ES**

TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH AND ABOUT INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The report is the result of a recent survey among teachers and school managers carried out by UNESCO Bangkok - Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education and the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICHCAP), bringing to light the current issues and trends of intangible cultural heritage education in the Asia and the Pacific region.

Report available in English **EN**
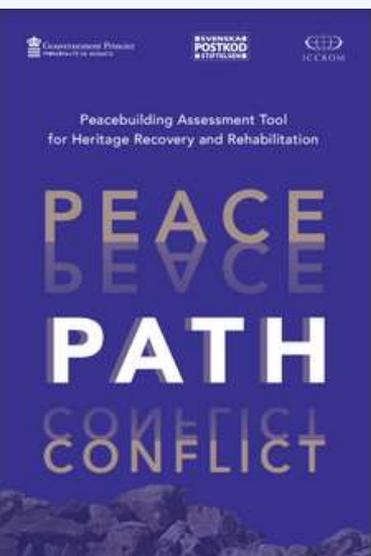
PATH - PEACEBUILDING ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR HERITAGE RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION

PATH is a user-friendly self-assessment tool published by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) that supports practitioners and organizations working in heritage recovery, rehabilitation and enhancement in areas affected by conflict.

Report available in English **EN**
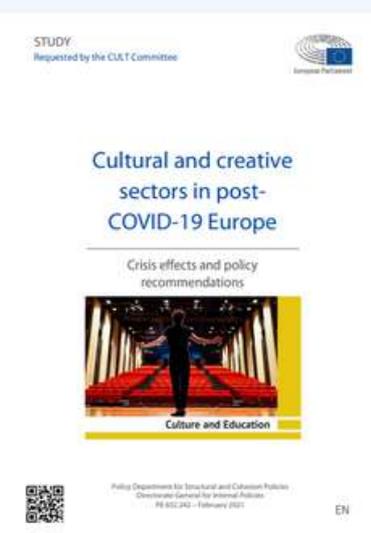
CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS IN POST-COVID-19 EUROPE – CRISIS EFFECTS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Published by the European Union, the study examines the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural and creative sectors in Europe to date, and puts forward policy recommendations for recovery. Among the findings, the study points to the fragmentation of value chains in these sectors, and how the crisis has highlighted the significant contribution of culture to societal well-being, innovation and cohesion.

Report available in English **EN**

Executive Summary available in English, French and Spanish **EN** **FR** **ES**

FREEDOM & CREATIVITY: DEFENDING ART, DEFENDING DIVERSITY

In anticipation of the third edition of UNESCO's Global Report Re|Shaping Cultural Policies, this special edition focuses on one of the overarching goals of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular, artistic freedom.

Report available in
English, French, and Spanish

EN   **FR**   **ES**

This Tracker is produced by UNESCO, in English and French.

We are counting on partners to support its production in other UNESCO official languages, to expand the global discussion on culture and public policy.

Write to
Culture.Forum@unesco.org
to support the Tracker

Follow us on social media: **#ShareCulture**
en.unesco.org/culture-development

Access the previous issues of the Tracker:
en.unesco.org/culture-development/tracker