



THE UNESCO CONVENTIONS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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The year 2015 is approaching. The international community, through the United Nations system, adopted the famous Millennium Development Goals and set the targets for achievement by 2015. Today, we know that it will not be possible to meet all these goals because, to a large extent, the development programmes, strategies and policies that were adopted were insufficient or were not appropriately defined.

The planned review of these goals, which will be named Sustainable Development Goals as of 2015, will need to include what was not initially foreseen. Surprisingly, culture was not incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals or their indicators, alleging numerous difficulties to measure its impact on development.

Probably, one of the reasons why the goals set in 2000 will not be met is precisely the failure to explicitly recognise the role of culture in economic growth, resource management, conflict resolution, the approach to social inequities, or the reaffirmation of identities.

Nor was it understood at the time that culture provides an extremely effective vehicle for the transmission of knowledge and the basis for innovation and creation, including scientific breakthroughs. It was ignored, perhaps, that there is no one single development recipe, as cultures

need to determine their development models, and not the other way around.

In short, it was forgotten that recognising, appreciating and sharing culture, the cultures of each of us and of our diverse groups, is an essential step to reduce social inequality and achieve full integration in society.

We must remember that the value of culture lies in the production and consumption of cultural goods, services and activities, and in the knowledge that we pass on to each other through symbols that we first understand and internalize, and later transform and innovate. These shared symbols give a sense of collective belonging and identity, and help to strengthen the social cohesion that is necessary to establish relations, whether commercial, professional or personal.

In addition, understanding the symbols used by other groups through cultural exchange makes it possible to hold relationships far beyond our own group and thus acquire new knowledge. It also makes it possible to resolve conflicts and engage in dialogue to broaden horizons.

Therefore, culture should be recognised as an essential pillar for development, which complements those of an economic, social and environmental nature. Culture is thus viewed as an

economic sector, as a means of transmission of knowledge and identities, and as the basis for enhanced quality of life, social cohesion, conflict resolution and inequality reduction.

Cultural diversity is as necessary for sustainable development as biodiversity. If cultural diversity is reduced or the capacity for cultural exchange between societies is restricted, cultural resources would be destroyed. These resources, unlike those occurring in nature, are unlimited if they are protected and promoted; they arise from people themselves and from the exchange between them.

That is right in theory. However, in practice, there is a systematic under-utilization of cultural resources, whether patrimonial or contemporary, terrestrial or marine, movable or immovable, and tangible or intangible, due to the lack of or, what is even worse, the failure to implement standards, measures and policies for their protection, management and promotion.

The destruction of, damage to, or illicit trafficking in cultural heritage does not only lead to economic loss but also violates the collective right to gain access to knowledge, hurts feelings of identity, undermines our collective development capacity, and impairs our quality of life.

There are protection, safeguarding and promotion measures under implementation. The General Conference of UNESCO at its 37th session will adopt in November 2013 the short- and medium-term programme of the Organization, which will incorporate two strategic priorities in the field of culture: the protection, promotion and transmission of heritage, and the promotion of creativity and of the diversity of cultural expressions.

In the 2014-2017 period, UNESCO will implement its programme in the cultural sector through two lines of action that reflect the medium-term objectives. Priority will be given to the effective implementation of its conventions in the field of culture for the purpose of:

- identifying, protecting, monitoring and managing tangible heritage, especially through the effective implementation of the 1972 Convention (world heritage);
- promoting political dialogue to prevent the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property, through improved and more effective international cooperation, including the implementation of the 1970 Convention (prevention of illicit trafficking) and the upgrading of museum capacities;
- developing and implementing global, strategic and forward-looking policies through the effective implementation of the 1954 Convention and the two Protocols thereto (protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict), and maximizing their multiplier effect;
- developing and implementing global, strategic and forward-looking directives through the effective implementation of the 2001 Convention (underwater cultural heritage), and maximizing their multiplier effect;

- strengthening national capacities for safeguarding the intangible heritage through the effective implementation of the 2003 Convention (intangible cultural heritage); and
- enhancing national capacities to develop and implement policies and measures seeking to promote the diversity of cultural expressions through the effective implementation of the 2005 Convention (cultural goods, services and activities).

The UNESCO conventions are not just international treaties. They are tools for the development and implementation of effective heritage conservation, safeguarding and promotion policies and creative industries, complementary to economic, social or environmental measures. The governing bodies under these conventions, supported by UNESCO's Secretariat, are continuously developing the conventions by updating the operational guidelines for their implementation.

THE CONVENTIONS AND THEIR DIRECTIVES PROVIDE A STANDARD-SETTING AND PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK WITH A WIDE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL POLICIES AIMED AT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE, MANAGING THE CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL, GENERATING INCOME, RESOLVING CONFLICTS, STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION, PROMOTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND, THEREFORE, INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE, MUTUAL RESPECT AND A CULTURE OF PEACE.



1ST INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE RECOVERY OF GOODS OF PUBLIC USE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Cartagena de Indias
28 – 30 October, 2013

The seminar aimed at analysing the most adequate strategies for the recovery and conservation of goods of public use and of cultural interest. Experts from the host country, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Netherlands, Panama and Spain shared their experiences on strengthening public policies and strategies in this field.

The seminar aimed to foster respect for goods of public use and archaeological, historical and cultural heritage, among national and local authorities as well as the social organisations and the community in general, in the hope of making a significant contribution to the ongoing debates in the region on the important role of culture in the achievement of sustainable development.

The event was organised by the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Colombia, with the support of a group of national institutions and the Organisation of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI).

The UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and



the Caribbean was invited to make a special presentation on the section International Experiences: Policies and strategies for the recovery of goods of public use and the protection of cultural heritage, which was offered by Fernando Brugman, Culture Programme Coordinator at the Office. A summary of his statement is the article on the UNESCO Convention and its contribution to sustainable development published in the previous pages. 