

## **SYNTHESIS OF THE RAPPORTEUR'S DOCUMENT ON THE 14TH FORUM OF MINISTERS FOR CULTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY-MAKERS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Caracas, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 28 and 29 September 2005.

### **Second day: September 29, 2005**

#### **Morning Session**

At the beginning of the morning session of the Forum's second day, Ms Silvia Díaz, B.A., Chairperson of Venezuela's National Council for Culture (CONAC), informed that the meeting would be chaired by His Excellency Mr. Manuel de Jesús Salazar, B.A., Minister for Culture and Sports from Guatemala and Vice Chairman of the Forum, while the Moderator would be Dr. Alberto Murillo, Director for International Relations from CONAC.

His Excellency Mr. Manuel de Jesús Salazar (**Minister for Culture and Sports from Guatemala and Vice Chairman of the Forum**): He submitted the agenda for the day originally approved, proposing one modification: to begin the meeting with an exchange of ideas on the support to the ***Preliminary Draft Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions***, and it was so approved.

Mr. Herman van Hooff (**Representative of the UNESCO Assistant Vice Director General for Culture and Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean**): He expressed that this Preliminary Draft Convention was part of a whole set of regulating instruments and declarations already adopted by UNESCO and mutually complementary and enriching. The Declaration approved in 2001, for example—a very important reference document, which had become the basis in 2003 to study the feasibility of adopting a convention on cultural diversity, after which there had been a whole series of meetings with groups of independent and governmental experts to study the subject until June 2005, when the Preliminary Draft Convention had been made public.

He then made a brief overview of the structure of said Preliminary Draft.

He added that the Convention was a legal commitment, because it represented an international regulating instrument with common steps for the signatory States; it recognized that cultural objects and services were intrinsic bearers of identities of values and feelings and could not, therefore, be considered mere commodities or consumer goods. He insisted that the text stressed the need for the Member States to adopt all measures possible to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions, guaranteeing at the same time the free circulation of ideas and works of art. He stressed the fact that the document incorporated a new concept of international cooperation related to the integration of culture as part of sustainable development, as well as cooperation for development, which implied preferential treatment for developing countries. On the other hand, he also stressed that diversity in cultural expressions could be recovered only when there were cultural exchanges and real access to the cultural expressions of our world.

He considered that the support of the members of the 14<sup>th</sup> Forum of Minister for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean to the Preliminary Draft Convention would consolidate the success of this whole process.

Mr. Avelino Stanley (**Undersecretary of State for Culture, Creativity and Popular Participation from the Dominican Republic**): He asked what objections had been expressed to the document and what countries had objected.

Mr. Herman van Hooff (**Official UNESCO Representative**): He reported that there had been a major analysis of the definition and the objectives of the Convention, as well as

the right of the member States to define their own cultural policies. He informed that industries of cultural objects and Free Trade had been two of the main subjects.

Mr. Alberto Murillo (**Director for International Relations of the National Council for Culture-CONAC--from Venezuela and Moderator**): He suggested that the support for the Preliminary Draft Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions should appear as a note to the Forum's final document representing a mechanism for our integration, and individually supported by the Member States.

Mr. João Luiz Silva Ferreira (**Executive Secretary from the Ministry for Culture from Brazil**): He expressed that the Ministry for Culture from Brazil and the Brazilian Government supported the Convention; they had participated throughout the whole process, organizing support thanks to their bilateral relations, and they had also created a Secretariat for Cultural Diversity and Identities within their Ministry for Culture. He suggested that besides supporting the Convention, it would be advisable to define a strategy to draft political measures and attitudes that would open the way for the Convention's implementation.

Mr. Eudoro Fonseca Yerena (**Director General for Cultural Coordination, National Council for Culture and the Arts-CONACULTA--from Mexico**): He declared that CONACULTA believed that the text to be adopted complied with the objectives foreseen, as it established an important precedent when it gave a specific treatment to cultural objects and services, taking into account the fact that their double economic and cultural nature made them not only important consumer goods, but also elements that carried intrinsically our identities, our values and our meanings.

He also pointed to the fact that the Convention recognized the fundamental right of each State to freely define its own policies and measures to protect and promote the diversity of its cultural expressions, as stipulated in Article 5, the general rule on rights and obligations.

He added that as far as Mexico was concerned, the document represented the historic occasion to see culture under a different light, not as a subsidized luxury but rather as a source of wellbeing, an atmosphere for meetings and sharing, and where the specific characteristics of each community would be respected.

He stressed that Article 8, on the measures to protect cultural expressions, touched on a major interest of the cultural sector, insofar as it established the right of the different parties to determine when the cultural expressions of their territories were in danger of extinction, seriously damaged, or required urgent measures for their safeguard. He commented that the main aspect of the negotiation on the Preliminary Draft Convention that had provoked some controversies within the cultural and economic sectors of his country had been the juridical challenge, its links with other legal instruments, especially because many other Member States had expressed their concern that this instrument should not be subordinated to other international agreements. He expressed his conformity that the text that had finally been approved after other intergovernmental meetings would imply mutual support between this Convention and other instruments, and that they would complement each other and none would be subordinated to the other.

Mr. Ismael González González (**Vice Minister for Culture from Cuba**): He went back to what the Minister for Culture from Cuba had already said on the importance his country gave this Convention. He also said it was an honor that Mexico, a Member State from Latin America and the Caribbean, had been elected to chair the Fourth Commission of the Thirty-Third General Conference of UNESCO, which would be responsible for the debate on the Preliminary Draft. He believed the Convention was a catalyzing factor that would make us sit around the same table with experts on economy and trade to really define the specific aspects of this product and of cultural works, as well as the role of culture in our national economies—something that had already been debated in other recent cultural forums, where this need had already been recognized.

He stressed the importance for this Forum of Ministers for Culture and Cultural Policy-Makers in Latin America and the Caribbean to adopt this Convention at this specific time, when there are visible signs of hegemony being defined in the cultural field, and he pointed to the importance of being able to implement a Convention that would explicitly protect those Member States that, like Cuba, had fewer economic resources to defend their cultural wealth. He, therefore, expressed his conviction that the region represented by the Latin American and Caribbean Group—GRULAC—within the context of the General Conference of UNESCO, would support the approval of the Convention with numerous arguments, based on very legitimate and solid reasons. He said that, for his country, this Convention constituted a major step and he approved it, therefore, with no reservations whatsoever. Finally, he mentioned that the debate held within the World Trade Organization represented an exercise that unveiled the numerous tensions created on and around culture, but that luckily no consensus had been reached there to address UNESCO and submit their obstacles or objections to this Convention. He qualified this fact as a major step in favor of the wealth and values of mankind, and a victory of culture over trade.

Mrs. Ingrid Kauffmann Morales (**Assistant Executive from the General Department of the Institute for Culture from Nicaragua**): She said that there were situations—such as vernacular languages—that required urgent safeguarding measures.

Her country needed urgent actions to protect endangered languages, particularly those in the Caribbean coastal region. She proposed that they should add to the recommendations that will be included in the Convention, that through their Education or Secretariats for Education, the governments should implement teaching of at least one vernacular language, whether it was the most important one or whichever one was on the way to extinction.

She mentioned the case of El Salvador, which was attempting to safeguard the Nahuatl language, establishing its obligatory teaching in 22 of their national departments.

She also recalled that, within the context of Spanish-speaking America, only Paraguay had recovered from the very beginning its aboriginal Guaraní language.

Mr. Avelino Stanley (**Undersecretary of State for Culture, Creativity and Popular Participation from the Dominican Republic**): He proposed that besides including the Forum's support for the Preliminary Draft Convention, most of the people present, who would undoubtedly represent their Member States during the next General Conference, should travel with the full conviction of defending the authenticity of the document, and preventing any contents variations by the powerful countries who might want to oppose the Latin American and Caribbean countries and the developing countries in general.

Mr. Eric Butler (**Officer from the Ministry for Community Development, Culture and Genre Affairs from Trinidad and Tobago**): He recalled that three Caribbean Member States had actively participated in the preliminary discussions to draft this Convention: Jamaica, Barbados and Saint Lucia. He particularly stressed the work carried out by Jamaica. In his country, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as in the rest of the Member States of the Caribbean region they had decided to fully support the Convention's approval, for this regulatory instrument would have an important role for their cultural policies, particularly as far as cultural diversity was concerned. He stressed the fact that Trinidad and Tobago was immersed at the moment in developing a new cultural policy that would take their cultural diversity into account.

Mr. Thomas Matthew (**Main Cultural Officer from the Ministry for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Culture and the Theatrical Arts from Grenada**): He expressed that together with the rest of the Caribbean Member States, his country had been studying the Preliminary Draft Convention for some time, in their struggle to design and define their cultural policies. He put forth his conviction that if this process became diluted in time, it would be increasingly difficult to design these policies, because of the speed with which our cultures were developing and how flexible our policies must therefore

become. He stressed that this Convention was very opportune, since it covered a wide range of aspects related to how we must protect our heritage. He also expressed his concern about cultural industries and the parameters that must be covered by the Convention. He was not convinced that other Member States were sufficiently aware of this problem: the concern that trade agreements would foresee a preferential treatment for our cultural industries. He was interested in knowing if the Official UNESCO representative considered that during the revision of the Preliminary Draft Convention, the participating Member States were satisfied with the elements that had been included to work for the preservation, protection and promotion of their cultural industries, since it was Grenada's belief that cultural industries were very different and they needed to be increasingly protected or promoted, so these aspects should be taken into account during the discussions of the document. If they took these subjects into account they would all be satisfied with the way the subject of cultural industries was interpreted in the final document.

Ms. Beatriz Parra (**Vice Minister for Culture from Ecuador**): She said that it was very important for her country to adopt the Convention, and that the Preliminary Draft was a very complete document. She supported the proposal that the countries from Latin America and the Caribbean should take a firm stand to defend its integrity.

Mr. Herman van Hooff (**Official UNESCO Representative**): In answer to what the delegates from Mexico and Grenada had expressed about the link between the Preliminary Draft and other international instruments, he explained that there was no relationship of subordination of this Convention—all instruments were on an equal footing. He stressed the fact that cultural industries were specifically analyzed in the Convention, which included a definition of cultural works and services, and of cultural industries. He also explained in detail the procedure to be followed for the discussion and approval of the document during the General Conference.

Mr. João Luiz Silva Ferreira (**Executive Secretary of the Ministry for Culture from Brazil**): He commented on Chapter 8 of the Preliminary Draft Convention about the interrelation in culture, and stressed that this referred to the equitable presence and interaction of different cultures. He expressed that the word *equitable* was a quantitative concept meaning equal parts. And in his opinion it would be difficult for a process of interaction to acquire this quantitative dimension—he thought that the most adequate word would be *voluntary*, since the only positive and healthy interaction was when both parts assimilated the other in their own set of signs, symbols and values in a completely voluntary way, meaning by this the free influence and the free adhesion to aspects of the other culture. He also believed that with the support of this Forum, they had to defend the text in its entirety, since it was very positive for the cultural reality of their region and for the whole world.

Mr. Luis Armando Soto Boutín (**Coordinator for the Group of Cultural Policies and International Affairs at the Ministry for Culture from Colombia**): He recalled that in the preparatory work for this Preliminary Draft, there had been huge tensions between the sectors representing trade, culture and the Ministries for Foreign Affairs, and that these tensions persisted even now, when the reservations of the US delegation had become powerfully evident during the sessions of the Executive Council. He exhorted everyone to be very prepared for the lobbying that would come up during the next General Conference of UNESCO. In his opinion, if there was one important thing for the Forum of Ministers for Culture and Cultural Policy-Makers for Latin America and the Caribbean, it was precisely to be able to work in a coordinated way during the Paris meeting, and he recalled that as Colombia's representative in the first two meetings of experts, he had felt a huge dispersion when the time had come to articulate positions by the Latin American and the Caribbean countries, and he had then felt really lonely. But for this text in particular he had felt a huge cohesion, articulation and organization from the European Union and Canada, which led him to call the Forum to increase their cohesion, for they were not acting as a block to support this draft.

He mentioned that Colombia had been at the origin of the Preliminary Draft, as part of the International Network of Cultural Policies, together other Member States of the region, who had then drafted an international document aimed at the international promotion of cultural diversity; this document had been debated during several international events and they had even considered the possibility that it be hosted not by UNESCO but by the World Trade Organization, for this would give them the possibility of participating in the struggle for a more plural market for cultural works and services. Finally, he explained, it had been considered that UNESCO should be the natural venue to host this instrument and that explained why the proposals had been handed over to the Director General of UNESCO, so he could analyze if they were pertinent or not. Later on, the Executive Council had recommended drafting an international convention.

He expressed his conviction that there should be on-going discussions on these subjects, both within the framework of the World Trade Organization and negotiations to approve Treaties for Free Trade, like those now carried with the United States. He pointed out that in the cases of Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, they had a cultural reserve through which they were able to express their full sovereignty to implement measures and policies aimed at the flowering of their creativity.

His country would closely follow the discussions on this Preliminary Draft, he added, and in spite of different opinions, its great value resided in the fact that it was able to organize and strengthen cooperation to benefic cultural diversity.

His Excellency Mr. Abel Prieto Jiménez (**Minister for Culture from Cuba**): He stressed the fact that any modification to the Preliminary Draft should aim at strengthening the idea of diversity, and the idea that culture was not vulgar merchandise must prevail. He recalled what the Venezuelan Minister for Culture had said: if we aimed for development, if we aimed for civilization, we must take into account respect for biodiversity and respect for cultural diversity.

Mr. Eleston Adams (**Vice Minister for Culture from the Ministry for Housing, Culture and Social Transformations from Antigua and Barbuda**): He asked if all those participating in the meeting understood what cultural diversity was all about, and what had for years been considered cultural diversity. He also asked if everyone in their respective countries had been informed of what had been under discussion on this subject.

He mentioned that during discussions on the Preliminary Draft Convention, everyone had declared that their respective governments were fully informed of the document and supported it. He also asked how many countries participating in the writing up the Preliminary Draft had a cultural policy and how many had revised it as a result of our changing world in order to maximize its benefits. He pointed to the fact that a cultural policy was a road map for the country and its people showing them where to go, how to get there and who should participate in this trip. Every country's specific traditional culture could be preserved if given the necessary support from both the government and the population, he said.

He recognized the importance acquired by Spanish, as well as the knowledge of a second language. He offered his support to exhort the population of his country to learn a second language and communicate more efficiently with others.

His Excellency Mr. Neville W Wisdom (**Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs from the Bahamas**): He ratified the Bahamas' support for the Preliminary Draft Convention and subscribed what previous delegates had said in relation to the approval and later ratification of said Convention. He also referred to the impact of cultural diversity in his country. They supported the document as it was now drafted. He also said that this Convention would interact with other international regulatory documents, there would be no contradictions at all. As far as Free Trade and Intellectual Property was concerned, there should be special care in the implementation of these international regulatory instruments and adequate measures should be adopted for an increased protection of their cultural heritage from the global plunder that could be stimulated by some international agreements in the field of free

trade. He mentioned the challenge represented by illegal migrations for the frontiers of the countries of this region, and considered that specific measures should be approved to protect national interests.

The cultural diversity of the peoples was being constantly redefined for different reasons, and this meant working for an adequate balance in international cooperation between Member States to benefit their national interests.

Her Excellency Mrs. Magali Comeau Denis (**Minister for Culture and Communications from Haiti**): She expressed the support of her country to the Preliminary Draft Convention on Cultural Diversity and considered it necessary to defend the approval of this instrument and its contents. She regretted, however, that the document did not include the diverse realities of each country, though she did recognize that a text such as this must be general and satisfy everyone.

She recalled that her country was going through an internal situation that differed enormously from other realities of the region.

Going back to the text of the Preliminary Draft, she mentioned that though it did put an emphasis on the need to include culture in every process for development, it did not insist enough on the regrettable disappearance of different forms of expression. She explained that in Haiti, for example, specific religious practices had been affected as a result of deforestation, for example, in particular some rites directly related to cyclical harvests, in such a way that cultural practices were being menaced when agricultural policies did not respect the rhythm of these harvests. These negatives results were also provoked when North American sects presented voodoo as the religion of the devil, in such a way that the activity carried out by these sects, which could even reach schools and populations in the poor sectors of Haiti itself, constituted a menace for these religious expressions.

She expressed her hope that united, the Member States would be able to approve the Convention and develop mutual solidarity in order to face the specific difficulties that constituted an obstacle for the policies to preserve our cultural diversity.

Mr. Alberto Murillo (**Director for International Relations from CONAC, Venezuela, and Moderator of the meeting**): He appreciated the consensus expressed in support of the Preliminary Draft Convention and renewed the proposal that the final document of the Forum include a paragraph on the support this Forum expressed for the UNESCO Convention. He requested going on to the second point of the Agenda, "Exchange of Ideas for an Institutional Strengthening of the Forum of Ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean."

#### **Exchange of Ideas for the Institutional Strengthening of the Forum of Ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean**

Mrs. Olga Rufins Machin (**Technical Secretariat of the Forum/UNESCO Regional Office for Culture**): She submitted a presentation on the "Portal on Latin American and Caribbean Culture," and insisted that it was a project already approved during the 12<sup>th</sup> Forum of Ministers for Culture and Cultural Policy-Makers in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in 2001. She explained that originally, it had been conceived as a permanent virtual forum for an exchange among all Member States of the region. At the request of the Member States, she said, the project had benefited and continued benefiting from the support of the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in its implementation, and its first version had been submitted in November 2002 during the 13<sup>th</sup> Forum of Ministers held in Cuenca, Ecuador.

She explained that the portal already had versions in Spanish and English and an Institutional Directory; it was aimed at favoring the exchange, the communication among all the top officers responsible for culture in the region. She presented all the chapters of the Portal, and requested all Member States to send information on their on-going projects and their events to include them in the Cultural Agenda, as well as all other on-going activities they would want to make widely known, so they could also be considered elements for consultation and starting points for contacts between all

Member States. She exhorted them to consider naming National Coordinators, insisting that they should be specialists from the ministries or institutions responsible for culture, perfectly updated on the programs, actions and activities developed by their respective institutions and have a general knowledge of computer science, web sites, etc. According to her report, there were now 13 Member States in the Network of National Coordinators of the Portal, and one of them had been named by the delegation of a Member State present at that Forum, as a result of the debates held during the very first working day of the meeting. She reminded all participants that they would find among their files and documents the latest statistical report on the Portal, dated August 2005.

His Excellency, Architect Francisco Sesto (**Minister for Culture from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**): He proposed to revise and restructure the Forum so it would have the necessary strength and be able to carry out a frank and transparent dialogue, with no withheld aces up the sleeve. He also recalled that there were three major forums for culture: the Organization of American States (OAS) one; the Organization of Iberoamerican States (OIS) one, and the Forum of Ministers, insisting on the fact that this was the most important of the three because it was held at the highest level possible and did not end with a Summit, it was in itself a Summit. He also proposed that the Forum put a great deal of emphasis on the fact that it must be a forum for Latin American and Caribbean integration, and on the need to recover its annual frequency and its democratic nature, where there would be an absolute equality for all, so this region would be free of political or social exclusions. He stressed the fact that the Forum should not last only two days: it should last 365 days a year.

Her Excellency Mrs. Magali Comeau-Denis (**Minister for Culture and Communications from Haiti**): She proposed a slight modification to what Minister Sesto had proposed as the name for the Forum, adding the term “cultural,” so it would be “Forum for Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Integration.” On behalf of Haitian French-speaking minorities, the Caribbean and cultural diversity, she spoke of the need that the “Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture” soon have a French version.

Mr. Luis Armando Soto Boutin (**Coordinator for the Group of Cultural Policies and International Affairs at the Ministry for Culture from Colombia**): He supported the proposal made by the delegate from Haiti and spoke of the responsibility they all had to find resources to edit the Portal not only in French but also in Portuguese. He proposed an appeal to the UNESCO Group from Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) to find extra budgetary resources or some other kind of additional funding for the project. He also congratulated the coordinators of the Portal, which had turned out to be such a useful instrument, to which he offered Colombia’s support. He also stressed the need to end the Forum with a final decision on the venue for its next meeting.

He then made a quick panoramic overview of the intergovernmental agencies and bodies serving culture in the region; called for the Forum’s work to be articulated with some of their projects already under way, and work simultaneously for the Forum to specialize and make a clear quality difference in relation to other forums.

He also recalled that besides the elements mentioned by Venezuela’s Minister for Culture on the Forum of Ministers for Culture and Cultural Policy-Makers in Latin America and the Caribbean, this Forum was the founding one, and therefore the one with the longest history. Without attempting to oppose any changes, he proposed that they should think about the change in name proposed by the Haitian Minister for Culture and Communications.

He suggested that within the framework of this Forum they should analyze three subjects:

1. The importance for this Forum to make a more precise commitment to strengthen national capacities for international cooperation in the field of culture, to contribute to development;

2. The strengthening of foreign cultural policies in their countries, with a comparative analysis of their institutional characteristics:
3. The subject of culture, and the struggle against poverty.

His Excellency Mr. Abel Prieto (**Minister for Culture from Cuba**): He supported the proposal made by Colombia that they should make some progress toward concrete integration projects, and that they should not be in a hurry to change the name of the Forum.

He said that the Member States were a family, though there were different institutional characteristics and very different political situations, which made them proceed with a “fertile caution.”

In his opinion, this Forum would be saved if, in spite of their common lack of funds, everyone were able to make some progress in concrete projects, using their synergies, their union, and what they could create through unity and cooperation.

He supported the proposal of the Haitian Minister for Culture asking UNESCO, which has been supporting the “Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture,” for an additional support for the French and Portuguese versions. This project should be taken more into account. He came back to the aspect related to the Member States naming National Coordinators for the Portal, and stressed the need that everyone be represented in the Network of National Coordinators to guarantee that the web receive information on what was going on in every country’s cultural world; everyone should consult it. Those visiting the Portal were still modest in numbers, and they should promote this further because, thanks to new technologies, it was a very economic way toward integration. He exhorted everyone to use events and send their information to the Portal, thus contributing to a very diverse participation in its services.

On the other hand, he supported Venezuela’s suggestion to create a Virtual Museum for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the offer to finance the project, adding that all Member States interested in the Museum should also name a specialist to start cooperating with its implementation—it would not be necessary for all Member States to have their contributions ready before they started putting things on the web: it would be permanently under construction. This project could be carried out through the “Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture,” or create an independent web for the Museum. This proposal for a Virtual Museum would allow them to use different technical bases of support for the cultural memory of Latin America and the Caribbean, and it was a very good idea to have this virtual museum, for it would reflect their will toward integration.

He mentioned the experience of ALBA editions, the result of cooperation between Venezuela and Cuba.

He went back once again to the need for a bilingual or trilingual anthology of the poetry of all countries represented at the Forum using ALBA editions, and asked the Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos Rómulo Gallegos (CELARG), from Venezuela for support for this project. He also mentioned the idea of preparing a huge anthology for the traditional and popular music of their countries, and encouraging documentary films as a way to approach the living heritage of the region and of stimulating integration.

Finally, he supported the proposal to increase the presence of Latin American Member States in CARIFESTA, as well as in other regional events.

Mr. Herman van Hooff (**Official UNESCO Representative**): He explained that it had always been planned to publish the Portal in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. Right now, however, they had only the Spanish and English versions because they lacked the necessary funds. The Portal had been prepared with very limited resources and it was now one of the priorities of the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture to present it in at least three languages. He stressed the fact that the success and dynamics of the Portal depended on contributions by the Member States—it was supported by the contributions sent in by the National Coordinators named to support the project, and its updating really depended on all members of this Forum. It had been conceived as an open Portal, so it could grow and be enriched through numerous initiatives. He underlined the possibility of holding Virtual Forums



through the Portal. On the creation of the Virtual Museum proposed by Venezuela's Minister for Culture, he mentioned the possibility of incorporating it in the "Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture."

His Excellency Mr. Matthew Walter (**Minister for Community Development, Genre Matters and Information from Dominica**): On behalf of his country he expressed total support for the Preliminary Draft Convention and stressed the importance of making the Member States from Latin America and the Caribbean closer to each other from a cultural point of view, and this in turn would bring about social development. Dominica, he said, had benefited from the development of bilateral relations with countries such as Cuba and Venezuela, their generosity shown in "Operation Miracle" and scholarships for Dominican students to study different careers. He also referred to Venezuela's project PETROCARIBE, which had significantly reduced expenses for oil. In his opinion, these bilateral actions were an example of cultural integration that helped strengthen even more the relations between the peoples of the Member States of the region, and this would bring about an even greater economic, social, cultural and political wellbeing.

Mr. Thomas Matthew (**Head of the Cultural Office, Ministry for Culture from Grenada**): He expressed his concern for the fact that culture was sometimes left behind in national agendas. He stressed his support for this kind of Forum, where ministers and experts met on an annual basis. He considered that the Forum should change not only its name but also its vision, to look toward integration and achieve consensus that would allow them to talk to the rest of the world in one unique language.

Forums promoted relationships, integration and camaraderie among the peoples of the region, he said, while expressing his satisfaction for the fact that the Caribbean would be a future venue for the Forum, even though he recognized that its limited financial resources were the prime obstacle for this.

He stressed the importance of having a Permanent Secretariat for the Forum, which would act as the nucleus for integration and work for a quick dissemination of information, so everyone could be aware of what and when things had happened.

He supported the delegates from Haiti and Antigua and Barbuda, who had mentioned the language barrier as the major obstacle for communication.

He pointed to the need to know a second language, so more people would feel included, since the majority of the Caribbean countries shared similar experiences, history and culture. He also talked about the need to create a network of networks for a real regional integration that could destroy all barriers.

He stressed the importance of using new technologies, in particular digital cultural portals, and how important it was to have them in different languages, which would contribute to access their information.

He asked the Member States of the region to participate more actively in the important event held there.

He recognized the cooperation offered by Venezuela, Cuba and Mexico to different English-speaking Caribbean Member States.

In conclusion, he believed they should increase and improve the articulation of cultural networks in the Latin American and Caribbean region to contribute to their mutual knowledge and understanding.

Mr. Alberto Murillo (**Director for International Relations from CONAC, Venezuela, and Moderator of the meeting**): He introduced MP Filinto Durán Chuecos, Chairman of the Commission for Economic Affairs, Social Debt and Regional Development of the Latin American Parliament, who was going to make a presentation on Venezuela's proposal for the Social Charter of the Americas.

Mr. Filinto Durán Chuecos (**MP of the Latin American Parliament**): He touched on the process of the collective and participative drafting of the Social Charter for the Peoples of America, and explained that it was the result of four editions of the Summit on Social Debt and Latin American and Caribbean Integration held in Caracas

between 2001 and 2005, whose aim was to cooperate in achieving a solidarity and a humanist integration for Latin America and the Caribbean and overcome social injustice.

He went over its origins and the whole process of drafting the Charter, begun in 2001 in different OAS General Assemblies, going through the proposals made by participative democracy and the approval of the Democratic Charter in 2001; the Resolution known as Poverty, Equity and Social Inclusion in the year 2002; its submission and approval as Preliminary Draft in the year 2004, ending in the September 2005 debates previous to its final approval. He also recalled the different national events on this subject, their relationship with the UN Objectives for Development of the Millennium and with Human Rights, which the Venezuelan Government believed could not be placed on different levels for it considered that political and civil rights were on the same level as social, economic and cultural rights. He also mentioned the organization in Caracas, in October 2005, of the huge Continental Meeting: Ministerial Dialogue on the Social Charter for the Americas, with the participation of delegations from all our countries, especially the Ministers and Representatives from the social areas—all this to generate a broad, democratic and free debate on this subject.

Mr. Durán expressed the opinion that this Social Charter of the Americas could contribute to overcome poverty, inequity and social exclusion, stimulating throughout our continent the universalization of Human Rights and the graduation from a State of Law to a State of Justice with social democracy.

Immediately afterwards, Ms Samantha Jiménez, B.A. (**Director of Visual Arts from the National Council for Culture from Venezuela**) made a presentation of a Digital Catalogue prepared by Venezuela, that the general public could manage very easily, which included the 21 000 works of art concentrated in the seven national museums of Caracas. She explained its four categories, the possibility of changing the background, the micro biography of each artist, and the fact that it could also be consulted looking up the artist.

Mr. Alberto Murillo (**Director for International Relations from CONAC, Venezuela**): He explained that Venezuela had about 200 regional and local museums—not just art museums—inspired by the seven national art museums. He explained that they had to prepare special software that belonged to the Ministry for Culture, but Venezuela would be more than willing to donate it free of charge so it could be used as a useful instrument by all Member States.

### **Afternoon Session**

Mr. Alberto Murillo (**Director for International Relations from CONAC, Venezuela, and Moderator of the morning session**): He proposed giving the floor to the five delegates pending from the morning session, before going on to submit and discuss the Social Charter for the Americas, and immediately after submitting the Action Plan.

Dr. Avelino Stanley (**Undersecretary of State for Culture, Creativity and Popular Participation from the Dominican Republic**): Since in his opinion the consolidation of the Forum had been quite debated, he proposed to define the country where the 2006 Forum would be held, and since the last Forums had been held in Spanish-speaking countries, they should consult the English- and French-speaking Caribbean countries and study the possibility of holding one of the Forums there.

Mr. Eric Butler (**Officer from the Ministry for Community Development, Culture and Genre Affairs from Trinidad and Tobago**): As representative from Trinidad and Tobago to the Forum he had been instructed by his Government to offer his country as the venue for the 15<sup>th</sup> Forum. He insisted on the interest of his Government and its commitment to do everything possible for the next meeting to be a great success. During the sessions of the next meeting, all the delegates would have the possibility of

coming in contact with a different culture and the festive atmosphere of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Pilar Entrala (**Coordinator for International Relations from the National Council for Culture and the Arts from Chile**): She considered that the Forum must have a follow-up and it should be coordinated by the Pro Tempore Secretariat, which she congratulated. Without a concrete action plan, however, the work of the Permanent Secretariat of the Forum would be very difficult during the next few years, and she believed that a feasible action plan meant identifying regional priorities.

It was her wish to register the fact that the Forum represented a sense of belonging and identity, and these aspects should be registered in future common and concrete actions. In spite of the dialogues held during this meeting, she was of the opinion that the delegates were not leaving with a sense of belonging.

She thanked the delegation from Trinidad and Tobago for its offer to hold the 15<sup>th</sup> Forum, because this would guarantee its continuity, and she pointed to the need to count on the political will of their ministers.

She submitted a proposal that within the framework of this Forum, the MERCOSUR group should attempt working with a horizontal cooperation and consolidating its approach to CARICOM, offering technical assistance in what CARICOM itself had defined as priority matters.

She mentioned very specifically Mr. Francisco Lacayo, Ex Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Latin American and Caribbean Culture, and welcomed Mr. Herman van Hooff, new Director of that office who had already worked with the MERCOSUR technicians responsible for culture. She expressed heartfelt thanks to Venezuela for the love and responsible attitude with which it had organized the Forum.

She commented on the social rights of artists and the future of cultural specialists. She also talked of the need to incorporate civil society in meetings such as this one to establish priorities, since their main aim was and would always be civil society. She also called for a permanent dialogue and the use of the “Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture.”

Mr. Luis Armando Soto Boutin (**Coordinator, Group for Cultural Policies and International Affairs from the Ministry for Culture from Colombia**): On behalf of the Colombian delegation he thanked Trinidad and Tobago for its welcome and offered the support of his country to organize both the Forum and CARIFESTA, stressing the fact that Trinidad and Tobago was a multicultural country, open to different cultures, with vibrant music, literature, and a spectacular carnival.

His Excellency, Mr. Manuel de Jesús Salazar Tetzagüic, B. A (**Minister for Culture and Sports from Guatemala**): He stressed that Guatemala totally supported, together with other countries, the “Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture.” He also informed that his country would participate in the Virtual Museum project, in poetry and short story anthologies, as well as systems to recover oral tradition, where cosmological vision and the future of our cultures were to be found.

He also gave some complementary elements for Latin American identity: in the first place, the indigenous origin of their countries; followed by their multicultural and intercultural nature, the agreement between their cosmological visions, the wealth of their linguistic and biological cultural diversity, the resonance of their social movements in their search for freedom and dignity—and these movements had sent out a Latin American message to the world; there was also the explosion of popular art, young poetry and the literature of well-known writers who had given the world a vital message, asking technology to become more human and economy more social, for a common wellbeing.

Mr. Guillermo Moranchel (**National Director of Federal Action and Cultural Industries from Argentina**): He recognized the efforts made by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to generate a positive atmosphere where everyone would be heard, and believed the Forum must redefine its evolution and make a greater effort in its search for an identity.

He proposed three aspects that should be taken into account in the near future: (1) the importance of the data in information systems and how to use them more efficiently; (2) creating conditions to make culture the real strength behind our democracies, cooperating with our integration process, but also for it to become a factor in rebuilding societies, with an increasing respect for diversity within these countries; (3) creating spaces where artists from this region can meet and exchange experiences—a key aspect for the integration process.

His Excellency Mr. Neville W. Wisdom (**Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs from the Bahamas**): He expressed his gratitude for Trinidad and Tobago's offer to hold the next Forum, and said his country was willing to support it. In his opinion, many of the decisions related to culture and approved in intergovernmental meetings were never implemented. But he was optimistic that those adopted at this Forum would adequately become concrete measures.

He showed his satisfaction for the "Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture" prepared by the Technical Secretariat with UNESCO support and hoped that the project would stimulate the exchange of all necessary data, for study and research, as well as a practical and organized system for interaction. In his opinion, this was the most important and concrete project carried out by the Forum, as this initiative increased the standards of living of the peoples of the region and gave the occasion to learn about the culture of the rest of the countries of the region. It was an excellent instrument and contributed to satisfy their desire to improve the living standards and the opportunities for all their peoples.

He mentioned other forms of cooperation between Member States, such as the Central American and Caribbean Sports Championships—everything that could strengthen relationships in other cultural spheres of our countries.

Mr. João Luiz Silva Ferreira (**Executive Secretary of the Ministry for Culture from Brazil**): He underlined Venezuela's efforts to promote dialogue, and either create or recreate an integrating instrument like this Forum, and he praised Trinidad and Tobago's attitude of guaranteeing the continuity of this meeting, that will now be held in the Caribbean region.

In his opinion, there was a consensus in the debates in understanding the Forum's role. There were specific moments where politics stood out in relation to what culture could mean for development, the significance of regional integration, and at other times there were practical subjects and references to place these intentions for integration on the road toward concrete actions.

He also considered that a national project must necessarily go through projects for cultural development, and when economy became disconnected from the social and environmental aspects of their countries it became a major problem and was no longer good for its people. He applauded the possibility of being able to talk with everyone from this region, with no exclusions.

This region has immense possibilities; the different experiences in cultural management that have been put forward in profound technical dialogues could become a major stimulating factor for this development. He supported the proposal by the Chilean delegate to articulate MERCOSUR with CARICOM, and suggested other coordinating measures by sector or activity, where there could be great progress. He also mentioned the cultural presence of Africans and their descendants, their socio-cultural problems, and how they had often seen that in spite of the great cultural contribution they have made to their own country and the continent in general, they received no benefits from this. This matter should be brought before this Forum so they could debate it and look for alternatives, and propose politics that would benefit these populations.

He also proposed that cultural works and services should circulate throughout the continent and that they should encourage meetings of local artists where they could exchange experiences. He just mentioned an invitation for Trinidad and Tobago and other countries with strong carnivals to be present at Brazil's carnival, either the Bahia one or the Rio de Janeiro one.

Mr. Rodwell Ferguson (**Minister of State for Education, Youth, Sports and Culture from Belize**): He wanted to explain that though he gave a one hundred percent support to what has been debated and approved, he could not commit himself to subscribe any document without first submitting to his own authorities, who were the ones to make the corresponding decisions. He applauded the delegation from Trinidad and Tobago for offering their country as venue for the next Forum.

On the other hand he stressed the efforts carried out by the Cuban Government to strengthen relations between the countries of the region, and made a special mention of the benefits his country was receiving from “Operation Miracle.”

He stressed the importance of stimulating tourism to promote the knowledge and understanding of the culture of the countries present at the meeting.

He informed that his country was already benefiting from its relations with Central America and its membership in CARICOM. He also showed interest in developing Belize’s relations with South America.

Mrs. Silvia Díaz Alvarado, B. A. (**Chairman of CONAC from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Moderator of the meeting**): She proposed to approve as a whole block all the changes in the Regulations of the Pro Tempore Secretariat that had been proposed by the Secretariat itself and had been circulated among all those participating in the Forum. She also proposed that the members of the Forum should give the Pro Tempore Secretariat a vote of full trust so it could analyze with UNESCO matters related to increasing its cooperation with the Forum—a proposal that was also included in the documents already distributed.

Mrs. Olga Rufins Machin (**Technical Secretariat of the Forum**): She recalled that from the 13<sup>th</sup> Forum to date, there had been three meetings of the Pro Tempore Secretariat thanks to which, at the June 2005 Caracas meeting, a series of proposals had been approved to modify the Pro Tempore Secretariat’s Regulations, and that at the beginning of the Forum they had been distributed among those assisting. She recalled that the proposals had been prepared by the Pro Tempore Secretariat according to Point 1 of the Action Plan of the 13<sup>th</sup> Forum in relation to “Strengthening of the Organizational Structure of the Forum.” She explained that the Chair of the Secretariat had preferred to submit both agreements together as a whole, taking into consideration the fact that most of the subject matter had already been the object of consensus of the delegates to the 14<sup>th</sup> Forum. She then requested the participants to comment on this subject and if they considered this an unnecessary step, they could then proceed to vote.

**(The delegates then expressed their vote of approval to the proposals submitted by the Pro Tempore Secretariat, permanent body of the Forum)** (See Annex No. 1)

Mrs. Olga Rufins Machin (**Technical Secretariat of the Forum**): She spoke on the approval of the documents reflecting the matters discussed and analyzed. After making a special recognition of the work carried out by the members of the Rapporteur Committee, the Committee responsible for the Action Plan, and the Pro Tempore Secretariat, she submitted the proposal of the Pro Tempore Secretariat Chair that the participants should place their confidence in the hands of the permanent body of the Forum and the Technical Secretariat to revise the existing résumés, and after distributing the documents among all those present, establishing a time limit for any opinion on necessary corrections or additions.

Ms. Pilar Entrala (**Coordinator of International Relations from the National Council for Culture and the Arts from Chile**): She expressed her concern that the 14<sup>th</sup> Forum might lack the political declaration necessary for its support. She believed that the Rapporteur’s document had identified some of the regional priorities, but without a political will expressed in the Forum’s final document, there was no legal support.

Ms Silvia Díaz Alvarado, B. A. (**Chairman of CONAC of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Moderator of the meeting**): She believed that what was being suggested was to make a résumé of the Rapporteur's documents for both working days, and a more concrete report on the Action Plan. She recalled the proposal made by Minister Sesto to make more progress with the Action Plan than with a Declaration.

Ms. Pilar Entrala (**Coordinator for International Relations from the National Council of Culture and the Arts from Chile**): She expressed that it was rather strange to have an Action Plan without a Final Declaration and it could make for a deficient Plan. But she said that trying new formulas could help find new horizons for more concrete actions.

Mr. Luis Armando Soto Boutin (**Coordinator, Group for Cultural Policies and International Affairs of the Ministry for Culture from Colombia**): He said he missed the existence of a declaration, and he recalled that historically, this Forum had always published a statement with a summary of the political wills. Right now, when the Forum had reemerged as a political space for dialogue, it was very important to have one. He proposed an intermediary formula: a declaration for this meeting with two paragraphs fully ratifying the importance of the Forum of Ministers for Culture from Latin America and the Caribbean, and he suggested creating a small commission to draft this proposal.

Ms Silvia Díaz Alvarado, B.A. (**Chairman of CONAC for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Moderator for this meeting**): She ratified Colombia's proposal to create a drafting commission for the Final Declaration, and proposed it include Chile, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, Mexico and Venezuela, who could also work on the rapporteur's material and the Action Plan, already well ahead.

Mr. Avelino Stanley (**Undersecretary of State for Culture, Creativity and Popular Participation from the Dominican Republic**): He agreed with the proposal and suggested that while the commission worked on the different paragraphs, the rest could talk about the contents and decisions relative to the Social Charter.

Ms. Pilar Entrala (**Coordinator for International Relations from the National Council for Culture and the Arts from Chile**): In her opinion it was not necessary to make any decision in relation to the Social Charter of the Forum, since it belonged to the OAS Forum and it was right now already being drafted.

Mr. Luis Armando Soto Boutin (**Coordinator, Group for Cultural Policies and International Affairs for the Ministry of Culture from Colombia**): If the rapporteur's document included agreements, they would then be talking about concentrated political wills, which would be more fitting in a declaration than in a Rapporteur's document. He called on those present to establish a difference between the documents that would come forth from the Forum.

His Excellency Mr. Luis Federico Hernández Aguilar (**Chairman of the National Council for Culture and the Arts from El Salvador**): He asked the agenda be respected in relation to the approval of the Final Declaration and the Action Plan of the Forum.

His Excellency Mr. Abel Prieto Jiménez (**Minister for Culture from Cuba**): In his opinion, the rapporteur's document should not have anything to do with any kind of declaration of a political nature, since from his point of view the document in question was only an approximate and synthetic description of what had been debated. He believed the document should be circulated among the participants later on, it should be revised, and there should be an agreement as to whether it truly reflected the debates. He stressed the fact that there was no need for a hurried approval of the rapporteur's document. In his opinion, the most important thing was to draft the Action Plan. He then supported Chile's and Colombia's proposal to choose a

commission that would prepare the final document, which should express in a synthetic way the main ideas on which a consensus had been reached, this would then be submitted to the delegates after the artistic Gala included in the evening program. He recalled that it was not the first time that the final declaration of the Forum was approved at the very end of the meeting.

Mrs Silvia Díaz Alvarado, B. A (**Chairman of CONAC from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Moderator for the meeting**): She invited the Cuban Delegation to participate in the Commission created to draft the final document.

Dr. José Antonio Fúnez Rodríguez (**Undersecretary of State for Culture, the Arts and Sports from Honduras**): He proceeded to read the eight strategies proposed for the Action Plan resulting from the debates and the proposals made by the Member States and subject to modifications. (See Annex No. 2.) He also recognized the contributions to the document and the efforts Mr. Carlos Santos from the Dominican Republic, Ms Felicia Morales from Venezuela, Ms. Riane de Haas-Bledoeg from CARICOM, and Mr. Martín Bedolla Sáenz from Bolivia had made in drafting it.

Her Excellency Mrs Magdalena Úbeda de Rodríguez (**Director General from the Nicaraguan Institute for Culture**): She suggested the possibility that a small commission edit the text to improve it.

Mr. Guillermo Moranchel (**National Director for Federal Action and Cultural Industries from Argentina**): He proposed that a copy of the document submitted by Honduras be circulated so everyone could make some kind of contribution.

His Excellency Mr. Abel Prieto Jiménez (**Minister for Culture from Cuba**): He gave his opinion on the Action Plan he had read and requested it be summarized a bit before submitting it to the members assisting to the Forum so they could revise it, insisting that its results should not suffer in quality because they wanted to accelerate the final draft of certain documents—this Forum had been far too enriching in interventions and proposals to now speed things up. He called on those present to recall that the Action Plan must reflect the proposals made during this meeting as other previous ones that were still being developed, so the document must be seen under a qualitative light in its revision.

He put the example of the Virtual Museum proposed by Venezuela, which would require some kind of responsibility by each country of the region, such as those who would be named to assume this activity. He also mentioned the need to complete the designation of the National Coordinators for the “Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture.” He mentioned the proposal for literary anthologies, of short-stories and poetry. In his opinion, some of these subjects would require further debate, which could take place through the Pro Tempore Secretariat and the Technical Secretariat.

He proposed that they should concentrate on the political declaration to be able to pin down its wording, and later on they could circulate the Action Plan together with the rapporteur’s document, to have a bit more time to work on it, and go to the Forum to be held in Trinidad and Tobago with significant progress.

His Excellency Mr. Luis Federico Hernández Aguilar (**Chairman of the National Council for Culture and the Arts from El Salvador**): He endorsed the proposal made by the Cuban Delegate, for he considered there was no point in “running” with the Action Plan, whereas they should all leave with the Declaration in hand, as short as it could turn out to be. He stressed the fact that they should not discuss only cultural rights, but also the duties and responsibilities involved.

Mr. Luis Armando Soto Boutin (**Coordinator, Group for Cultural Policies and International Affairs for the Ministry for Culture from Colombia**): He also endorsed the proposal made by the Minister for Culture from Cuba and insisted on the need to concentrate on the aspects of the Action Plan. He recalled that had been one of

the weaknesses of the Forum: that it wanted to include everything in this document. He asked for fewer aspects to be included, but with a major impact. He asked for the Action Plan to be revised once again to sum it up and reorder its contents. He proposed that the Pro Tempore Secretariat and the Technical Secretariat should prepare a virtual forum on the rapporteur's document and the Action Plan to be able to finally make a deep analysis of both documents.

Dr. José Antonio Fúnez Rodríguez (**Undersecretary of State for Culture, the Arts and Sports from Honduras**): He explained that what the delegates had read had been strategies for the Action Plan, and asked that no confusion be made between strategies and actions. As an example he said that the anthology proposed was an activity, not a strategy. He stressed that strategies had been defined but a technical committee had yet to draft the document, defining activities and possible dates for their implementation.

Dr. Eudoro Fonseca Yerena (**Director General for Cultural Relations from the National Council for Culture and the Arts—CONACULTA—from Mexico**): In his opinion the delegates were before a methodological problem, even though it was evidently something more serious than that.

He recalled that the agenda and the invitation to the Forum had a very broad tone, and there lied part of its enriching contents, which allowed for a very fruitful dialogue with many contributions—but that very flexibility and open characteristics had caused some very specific difficulties while drafting the documents that should be approved by the Forum.

He ratified the Cuban Minister's proposal to go forward and prepare a declaration, and that according to Colombia's proposal they could also redraft the Action Plan, within a given time limit, sending their criteria through the digital technology of the "Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture."

As far as the Action Plan was concerned, he alerted on the fact that there had been numerous very open and heterogenic proposals, and that in many cases there had been no formal vote for consensual agreements that would allow spotting which of them concerned everyone there.

As far as the proposal to integrate a fund was concerned, he expressed that if an agreement were reached on that subject, there would have to be some specific definitions as far as contributions, magnitudes, time limits, methods to contribute, etc.

In his opinion, the most enriching aspect of the Forum had been the fact that it was up to date and that they had recognized its political importance for cultural promotion and as proof of the solidarity of the Latin American and Caribbean region. He considered that the declaration could be synthetic and strong, not necessarily wordy, but he did stress the need for it to express the importance the Forum had given it, and he considered this to be the essential aspect of the meeting.

He called for a concise, short and strong document with two or three essential political ideas, and to orient the Action Plan to more general aspects, with a less controversial content and therefore able to concentrate everyone's approval. He also asked for virtual actions related to the Action Plan, to contribute to the conclusion of the work emanating from this Forum.

Her Excellency Mrs. Magali Comeau-Denis (**Minister for Culture and Communications from Haiti**): She supported Mexico's and Colombia's proposals to draft the documents for the Forum. She asked for the Final Declaration to be a major reference document for the Action Plan, because it would reaffirm their political wills.

Mr. João Luiz Silva Ferreira (**Executive Secretary from the Ministry for Culture from Brazil**): He was of the opinion that the amplitude of the matters analyzed during the meeting had overcome the capacity to conclude the meeting with a clear product. He supported Cuba's proposal to draft a concrete declaration that would define the political and unitary will of the meeting, an important instrument for building in the



future, and to take the time to draft a document that should be a working plan based on a more developed strategy.

He believed that since there were isolated actions that had apparently received consensus, they should be approved as independent proposals--such as the Virtual Museum and the "Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture"--, that could be consolidated through a network of regional events; these independent proposals could then be approved in general terms and later on, under the coordination of the Pro Tempore Secretariat, they could find the necessary solutions to implement these proposals in the shortest time possible.

Mrs. Silvia Díaz Alvarado, B. A. (**Chairman of CONAC from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Moderator of the meeting**): She listed the consensus that had been reached and announced that the afternoon session of the second day of the Forum was now closed, so the commission that had been elected could work on the draft Declaration, which would be revised and discussed when they returned from the Cultural Gala foreseen in the program. She added that the Commission in charge of the Action Plan would also make some progress in the revision of the document before it. Finally, she said that the Technical Secretariat would support the Pro Tempore Secretariat to present in the "Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture," a virtual forum with the Action Plan and the Rapporteur's document, within the next ten days.

His Excellency Mr. Luis Federico Hernández Aguilar (**Chairman of the National Council for Culture and the Arts from El Salvador**): He noted that in his opinion, they had not implemented what had been approved in the Agenda in relation to the discussion of the Social Charter.

Mrs. Silvia Díaz Alvarado, B. A. (**Chairman of CONAC from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Moderator of the meeting**): She explained that the afternoon session had started later than had been foreseen and more time had been given the subject related to Strengthening the Forum, which explained the lack of time to discuss the social Charter for the Americas. She proposed the possibility to use the space of the Virtual Forum in the "Portal for Latin American and Caribbean Culture" to send the Technical Secretariat of the Forum all the observations and comments the delegates would like to make.

She expressed her conviction, as representative of a Member State of the Pro Tempore Secretariat, that they had come out stronger from this Forum, with a Declaration, an Action Plan and a new venue for the 2006 meeting.

She thanked the team that had supported the work of the event, the translators, all the technical team, and all the personnel from the National Council for Culture and the Ministry for Culture from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the vice ministers who had participated, the presidents of the autonomous institutes, and all those present.

She reminded them that after the Artistic Gala included in the program, all the delegations would gather once again in the meeting hall to revise the Final Declaration.

His Excellency Mr. Manuel de Jesús Salazar Tetzagüic, B. A. (**Minister for Culture and Sports from Guatemala and Vice chairman of the session and Vice chairman of the Forum**): He thanked everyone present for their patience and understanding for the situation that had come up with the final documents of the Forum, and explained that this was due to the fact that usually, they had had texts already drafted before holding the meeting. But he praised the fact that this time, everyone had had the possibility of expressing themselves freely, and they had dreamed of culture. In his opinion, what had been discussed had more weight to it, as well as what each one of them would take back to his respective country and what they would be able to do within the framework of their own laws in relation to the consensus they had reached during the Forum.

He said they had been able to find wise solutions thanks to the existence of two commissions, one in charge of drafting the Declaration and other the Action Plan, which he qualified as an extremely valuable document that should be redrafted within an acceptable time limit so it could be implemented by everyone.

He believed it had been a very rich and strengthening meeting, a unifying and invigorating one for Latin American and Caribbean cultural unity, which was in truth what they had all been dreaming of.

**Epilogue:** At the end of the Artistic Gala held on the evening of December 29, 2005, the delegates met once again, chaired by His Excellency Architect Francisco Sesto, Minister for Culture from Venezuela, and they discussed and approved the Final Declaration of the meeting. They also agreed that the revised versions in the working languages of the Forum should be distributed later on.