

First Meeting of Coalitions and Cultural Professional Organizations from African member countries of the Commonwealth

Botswana, Canada, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa
Swaziland, Switzerland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia

Johannesburg Declaration

Between the 9th and 11th of September, 2007, delegates of national coalitions for cultural diversity and cultural professional organizations from 11 Commonwealth member countries in Africa, joined by colleagues from Switzerland and Canada, met in Johannesburg, South Africa, for a two-day meeting and seminar focusing on the UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions—and specifically, on the opportunities this important new international treaty presents for the development of domestic cultural industries in Africa.

The participants hailed the March 18, 2007 entry into force of the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, which affirms in international law the distinctive nature of cultural goods and services and the right of states and governments to adopt and implement policies they judge appropriate to support domestic cultural production in their countries.

During their discussions, the participants emphasized that while entry into force of the Convention represented an important step, it is essential that the 24 members of the Intergovernmental Committee and all the countries that have ratified the convention so far, rapidly take concrete steps so that the principles of the Convention are effectively translated into concrete steps in favour of the development of cultural industries.

The participants were encouraged by the progress in the international campaign to ratify the Convention, noting that to date some 67 countries have deposited their ratifications with UNESCO.

However, the participants emphasized that ratification by a much greater number of countries (125-150 within 2-3 years), combined with a balanced representation from every region of the world, will be needed to invest the Convention with the weight and scope to ensure a genuine protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions around the world, making it the definitive international legal instrument on matters of cultural policy.

Therefore, the coalitions and cultural professional organizations gathered in Johannesburg agreed to:

- Commit to vigorously continue their mobilization efforts and maintain their support for the international ratification campaign, as well as engaging in the process for implementing the Convention both at the national level with their respective governments, and in their exchanges with relevant regional and international bodies;
- Urge Member States of the Commonwealth in Africa and elsewhere in the world, and more broadly the member states of UNESCO that have not yet done so, to complete as quickly as possible their ratification of the UNESCO Convention.
- Encourage States to exercise the right affirmed in the convention to adopt and implement a broad range of national cultural policies in order to support significant levels of domestic production in all sectors of culture;
- Urge the Member States of the Commonwealth to refrain from liberalization commitments in the field of culture, whether in the context of multilateral, regional or bilateral trade negotiations, assuring in this manner coherence between their engagements in trade agreements and the principles set out in the UNESCO Convention;

- Ask the Commonwealth member states who will attend the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting in Kampala, Uganda, November 23-25, 2007, to promote the ratification and the effective implementation of the UNESCO Convention;
- Call on developed countries, in the context of implementing the Convention, to actively engage in international cooperation initiatives to support the development of viable cultural industries in developing countries as provided for in Article 14 of the Convention, notably by making significant contributions on a recurring basis to the International Fund for Cultural Diversity provided for in Article 18 of the Convention;
- Commit to support whenever possible civil society organizations within UNESCO member states who, for various reasons, struggle to organize themselves in their efforts to ratify the UNESCO Convention;
- Ask UNESCO member states and civil society to undertake research on all aspects of cultural industries to strengthen the effectiveness of policies which affect them. This should include amongst other measures, the development of a uniform set of cultural statistics and cultural indicators;
- Recalling the important role played by civil society, in particular by coalitions and cultural professional organizations in the process of elaborating and adopting the Convention, the participants urge the Member States of Commonwealth to ensure meaningful participation of the coalitions and cultural professional organizations in the implementation of the Convention at the national level, as provided for in Articles 11, 12.c and 23.7 of the Convention;
- Request that the Commonwealth and its Member States support the coalitions approaches to the authorities of UNESCO with the goal of enabling meaningful participation by representatives of coalitions during meetings of the implementing bodies for the Convention;
- Noting with satisfaction that the movement now numbers 40 national coalitions for cultural diversity within the International Liaison Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity (ILC), the participants undertake to further strengthen the coalitions movement by bringing their support to the creation of new coalitions in every region of the world, notably among the countries of the Commonwealth.
- Invite the coalitions to structure themselves at the regional level in a manner appropriate to each continent, as well as at the international level, starting with the creation of an International Federation at a Founding Congress to be held in Seville, Spain September 18-19, 2007. This Federation will better enable the voice of the coalitions to be heard by States and international organizations.

Finally, the participants wish to thank the Commonwealth Foundation, the Governments of South Africa, Canada and Quebec, as well as the South African Music Rights Organization (SAMRO) and the Canadian branch of the Secretariat of the International Liaison Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity for making this meeting possible.