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#CULTURECOVID19

# ENSURING CULTURE FULFILLS ITS POTENTIAL IN RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

STATEMENT BY THE **CULTURE2030GOAL** CAMPAIGN  
20 APRIL 2020

*With the world faced with the COVID-19 pandemic today and the need to rebuild our societies tomorrow, culture should be at the heart of the response. Culture brings inspiration, comfort and hope into people's lives. To harness this potential, the Culture 2030 Goal movement, in the context of its engagement in the United Nations 2030 Agenda, calls on UN agencies, governments and all other stakeholders to act.*

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented challenge requiring an unprecedented response. All actors can and should play their part, not least the cultural communities, sectors, actors and agents.

Clearly, the primary concern must be health. We would like to extend our thanks to all those working in the frontlines, in particular the hospitals, public health teams and elsewhere in the health sector who are doing so much to care for the ill and protect the well now, as well as all other essential service providers.

Alongside them, artists, creators and culture professionals, as well as organisations in the culture sector, have a fundamental role in promoting well-being and resilience in individuals and communities, guarantee access to information, encourage awareness, tolerance and build the capacities to imagine the societies of the future, which are already in formation due to the ongoing global upheaval.

The cultural communities have responded. There have been countless initiatives to boost access and engagement and to create together new expressions, meanings and energies. They have all underlined the impressive power of culture to build healthy, resilient communities and improve well-being for all.

Yet we also need to think about the future. Even when the pandemic is declared over, the scars will remain. The challenges that the 2030 Agenda seeks to address are still here. Some have become more challenging still.



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Now more than ever, we need to recognise, incorporate, and support cultural concerns in our response to the crisis and planning for the recovery.

We believe that in doing so, we can contribute to ensuring that the crisis does not exacerbate the already high levels of inequality at the global level and often within national borders. This can particularly affect older people, minorities, women and girls, indigenous peoples and those with less access to health and other basic public services and economic resources. Appropriate cultural responses at the global, regional and domestic levels can take this reality into account, and place equality and non-discrimination at the centre.

We must also strengthen the global mindset and international cooperation that are critically needed, faced with the risk of closed borders and divisions in the international community. At the global level, appropriate resources and collaboration mechanisms including cultural cooperation, should recognise existing barriers and seek to address them.

Overall, responses to this pandemic should aim to be inclusive and look at a broader framework of inequality and challenges to sustainable development, including climate change and disaster risk reduction. The assertion that nothing will be the same in the aftermath of the crisis is becoming commonplace, and there is a call to rethink the way we live, work, produce, consume and relate to nature. But we too often fail to realise that culture is both a source of inspiration and a means of realising our thoughts and ideas, that culture makes it possible to mend the social fabric, to forge new forms of solidarity, to create new spaces in which to draw the energy needed to meet together the intense challenges facing us.

We have an opportunity to build back better, designing policies that allow culture to fulfil its role as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. Doing so will provide a more comprehensive frame to understand our world and make for stronger, more innovative, more tolerant and more resilient communities tomorrow.

Conversely, failing to support culture in this time of crisis will result in potentially irreversible losses to creators, artists and cultural professionals, who already often do not benefit from adequate protections, as well as damage to many cultural practices, resources and organisations. This risks triggering a considerable deterioration in the richness and diversity in all manifestations of culture – from heritage sites, museums, libraries and archives to traditional practices and contemporary cultural expressions – and the ability of culture to contribute to a better future.

Too often, in the past culture has been the first to be compromised in budget allocations and the most heavily affected economically and financially. We cannot accept that this happens again..



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We therefore call on governments and all other decision-makers, in the choices they make now and for the future, to:

- | Act today to support cultural communities, sectors, actors and agents where they are facing negative impacts from the pandemic, in order to ensure that they can survive the crisis, and are able to play their part in the recovery tomorrow.
- | Design and give access to mechanisms that strengthen cultural communities' capacity and to access and make use of the digital sphere sustainably and in suitable conditions.
- | Ensure that appropriate flexibilities in laws, regulations and funding programmes are used in order to facilitate and support the work of cultural actors and the safeguarding of cultural heritage resources where this would otherwise be made impossible by the loss of revenue sources that guaranteed community livelihoods, notably tourism.
- | Ensure the long-term integration of culture across government action at all levels, everywhere, both as an end in itself and as an enabling factor in successful sustainable development, leaving no one and no place behind.
- | Place welfare, solidarity and sustainability at the centre of short-term and long-term cultural policies, programmes and projects, as well as making international cooperation, including cultural cooperation, central in the building of more resilient communities.
- | Reinforce the protection of the cultural rights of all in national and local legislation, in particular through cultural programmes aiming at education, active participation, critical citizenship, gender equality and the empowerment of indigenous peoples.
- | Incorporate culture explicitly into the plans, instruments and reporting mechanisms around the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs to be elaborated in the coming months and years, and especially for the High-Level Political Forum foreseen for July 2020.

*The Culture 2030 Goal movement welcomes endorsements of this statement via the following link, and calls on the culture constituencies to come together to advocate collectively for the role of culture at the United Nations. Together, we can not only strengthen the messages of this statement, but also highlight the importance of integrating culture into implementation of the overall 2030 Agenda.*



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## SIGNATORIES OF THIS STATEMENT (ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

- I Arterial Network**  
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- I ICOMOS - International Council on Monuments and Sites**  
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- I UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) Culture Committee - Agenda 21 for culture**  
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You can use this [link](#) to endorse the Statement.



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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This statement can be reproduced for free as long as the authorship is mentioned. We recommend the following quote: Culture2030Goal campaign (2020), “Ensuring Culture Fulfills its Potential in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic”, published in Barcelona, Brazzaville, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Montreal, Paris and The Hague, on 20 April 2020.

## THE CAMPAIGN

Leading up to the adoption of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, several global cultural networks campaigned under the banner “The Future We Want Includes Culture” for the inclusion of one specific goal devoted to culture, or for the integration of cultural aspects across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This campaign was also known as the **#culture2015goal** campaign. In the final document of this campaign (23 September 2015: “Culture in the SDG Outcome Document: Progress Made, but Important Steps Remain Ahead”), the networks committed to keep their cooperation active.

Building on this commitment, the members of the campaign took the occasion of the first UN SDG Summit (New York, 24-25 September 2019) as an opportunity to re-energise the campaign, now updated as **#culture2030goal**, and published the report “Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda”. The report takes stock of the first four years of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, from the perspective of culture, and expresses concern about the limited presence of culture in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) and in the broader documents emerging from the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) review process.

The members of the campaign understand this global initiative is fundamental in order to advocate for the inclusion of culture in all development frameworks and strategies, raise awareness and bring together local, national and regional perspectives and initiatives.