



UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies – Mondiacult 2022

Concept Note for the Regional Consultations

Summary

The UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies – Mondiacult 2022 will be convened by the UNESCO Director-General and hosted by the Government of Mexico from 28 to 30 September 2022. Forty years after the first Mondiacult World Conference on Cultural Policies held in Mexico City (Mexico) in 1982, and 24 years after the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies for Development held in Stockholm (Sweden) in 1998, the World Conference will provide new momentum for the global policy dialogue on culture for sustainable development, spearheaded by UNESCO in line with its cultural mandate to advance the free exchange of ideas and knowledge by encouraging cooperation among countries as enshrined in its Constitution.

Over the last four decades, the global landscape – and the cultural sector itself – have profoundly evolved. Newly emerged fault lines in the international order as well as overarching transnational challenges, such as inequalities, conflicts, technological revolution or climate change, have pushed countries to adapt their public policies to better fulfill their role in ensuring the provision of global public goods – an imperative which is particularly relevant to culture. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has starkly exposed the shared vulnerability of countries in facing emergency situations while continuing to provide basic services and at the same time ensuring social and economic sustainability. In this context, the cultural sector has faced widespread disruption, bringing to the forefront the urgent need for adaptation of the sector within the broad public policy spectrum.

Despite these prevailing challenges, the nexus between culture and sustainable development has gained clear recognition for its role in supporting continuity, engagement, employment, resilience, and well-being, while also revealing the value of culture in our societies and the weight of the cultural sector in advancing social and economic development at the global and national levels. This momentum has opened up new opportunities for a renewed vision of cultural policies to gain ground in the broad public policy spectrum. It is against this background that UNESCO is reinvesting in the global policy dialogue in the field of culture, building on its historic and constitutional legacy of fostering multilateral cooperation and policy dialogue in the wake of its landmark conferences on cultural policies held respectively in 1982 and 1998 – whose conceptual and policy outcomes laid the ground for major advances in the conceptualization and architecture of cultural policies. As we entered the last Decade of Action for the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals agreed by the international community as our common aspirational roadmap, UNESCO is engaging its Member States and the international community to embark on a renewed reflection on cultural policies to tackle global challenges and outline immediate and future priorities in order to shape a more robust and resilient cultural sector, fully anchored in public policies and sustainable development prospects.

I. Background

1.1. A challenging global policy landscape, which also raises new opportunities for culture

Over the last few decades, the world has witnessed the emergence of global challenges, whose scope and complexity have urged countries to reshape their public policies. Rising inequalities, climate change, the digital transformation, accelerated urbanization, or the upsurge in conflicts and migratory flows are among the overarching challenges that now shape the global policy landscape. **These policy trends directly impact the cultural sector**, bringing up both challenges for its resilience and opportunities for its transformation. The cultural sector, more than any other policy domain, has a capacity to adapt its patterns across time, building on the dynamic essence of culture itself. More substantially, the global policy landscape sheds a fresh light on the fundamental and transformative role of culture in our societies. **The urge to shift the focus of public policies towards global public goods** – an imperative recently reiterated by the UN Secretary General in the *Our Common Agenda* report – cuts across all policy domains but **is particularly relevant to culture**.

In this more fragmented and volatile world, the foundations of multilateralism have also been eroded. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these fault lines, while also exposing the deep interdependence between countries and the need to forge common responses to transnational phenomena that are also affecting the cultural sector. In a very uncertain, unregulated global environment, **multilateral dialogue is needed more than ever before** to address issues that transcend national borders. This aspiration was clearly reflected in the UN world consultation *Shaping our Future Together*, whose 1 million respondents around the world, particularly youth, have expressed an unequivocal yearning for international cooperation and global solidarity. **What culture has to bring, in that context, is its power to bridge people and countries**, offering more inclusive, participative and collaborative patterns, to foster mutual understanding and forge a renewed paradigm for multilateralism, which places human dignity at its heart. **Shifting international relations from competition to cooperation is a global endeavor, in which culture should fully contribute.**

1.2. A more structured, yet vulnerable and rapidly evolving cultural sector

The global landscape of cultural policies has also profoundly evolved over the past decades. Unlike the global context which prevailed in 1982, many countries around the world have now set up culture ministries and institutions and have enacted cultural policy documents and frameworks – although to an uneven extent across the different regions. While cultural policies have tended to remain relatively isolated from other policy areas, their scope has expanded to encompass more comprehensive approaches to culture – including cultural diversity, intangible heritage and the creative economy

– and interact more broadly with other domains, as reflected by the growing policy investment in cultural tourism or cultural diplomacy or novel approaches such as cultural literacy. While the role of the State remains central to devise public policy, guarantee fundamental rights, and regulate the cultural sector, cultural policies have gradually transitioned towards multilayered governance patterns, involving a multiplicity of stakeholders – from local governments and civil society organizations, to subregional and regional organizations – which are increasingly engaged in and influential on cultural policymaking. **Cultural policies have gradually incorporated the conceptual approaches which took shape in Mexico in 1982 and Stockholm in 1998**, thus highlighting the historical significance of such world conferences and their profound impact on cultural policies over the following decades.

This upward trajectory has been directly supported by the gradual commitment of countries towards expanding regulatory frameworks in the cultural sector – an endeavor that was supported by UNESCO through its normative function by the development of a set of soft law and binding normative instruments over the past decades. Concepts around the definitions of cultural heritage, cultural expressions, creativity and their significance for peoples and societies were subsequently refined, systematized and translated into international legal instruments through the emergence of the UNESCO Culture Conventions in 2001, 2003 and 2005, adding themselves to the already existing “first generation” normative instruments and frameworks such as the 1954, 1970 and 1972 UNESCO Conventions. These global policy discussions also triggered the “first generation” Conventions to evolve their approaches in light of contemporary challenges, leading to the emergence, for example, of concepts such as historical urban landscapes or underwater heritage. Overall, UNESCO Culture Conventions, Declarations and Recommendations provide Member States with a robust set of policy instruments, whose ratification and implementation has been instrumental in strengthening and updating the cultural sector’s legislative frameworks at the national level. In recent years, the implementation of UNESCO’s Culture Conventions and programmes at country level have also allowed States to review their policy approaches to better demonstrate the impact of the effective implementation of these regulatory frameworks on sustainable development, notably by integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their assessment and monitoring mechanisms.

Despite these fundamental structural advances, the cultural sector remains vulnerable – a fragility which was starkly exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. While bringing out the essential role of culture – as well as the undisputed economic and social value of the cultural sector in the sustainable development paradigm – the pandemic also served as a reality check, exposing preexisting vulnerabilities within the cultural sector. As millions of artists and cultural professionals were abruptly left out of work, the necessity to consolidate social security to build a more resilient and thriving cultural sector was particularly highlighted. With many cultural venues and institutions

now facing permanent closure, putting cultural diversity at risk, renewing and stabilizing their economic models emerged a key priority. As international travel was put on hold, the dependence of the cultural sector on the tourism industry and the need to forge more inclusive and sustainable tourism models was made more pressing. Likewise, although the accelerated shift to online cultural content highlighted the opportunities brought about by the digital revolution – in terms of access to culture or innovation – it also unveiled the reality of social inequalities and the digital divide.

1.3. **A renewed momentum on culture and sustainable development**

Linkages between culture and sustainable development were already at the core of both the 1982 and 1998 UNESCO World Conferences on Cultural Policies, reflecting the historical grounding of this rationale, as soon as the notion of sustainable development itself took shape in global policy discussions in the early 1980s, notably fostered by the United Nations World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997), with UNESCO as the lead agency. The World Decade was aimed at broadening development concepts to lay greater emphasis on its cultural dimension, fostering creative skills and cultural life, thus redressing the limitations of a development concept that had been based primarily on quantitative and material growth since the end of the Second World War, towards a more global concept of development, embracing the aspirations of peoples and societies to shape the twenty-first century. However, in the following decades, the nexus between culture and sustainable development – which was inherently conducive to a transversal and holistic vision of culture – was overshadowed by a more sectoral approach to cultural policies that was deemed a better fit to responding to globalization targets, thereby also hindering the effective integration of the cultural sector across public policies at the national and global levels, up until the adoption of the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration by the international community and the launch of the Millennium Development Goals which preceded the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Over the past few years, however, policy engagement around harnessing culture for sustainable development has gained significant momentum at both the global, regional and national levels, further highlighting the undisputed recognition of the social and economic weight of the cultural sector and its multidimensional impact on resilience, wellbeing and prosperity. This momentum was further strengthened by a number of global policy processes led or supported by UNESCO. **The reinvestment of global policy dialogue on culture for sustainable development** at the global and regional levels, echoing a growing aspiration of countries to engage in culture-led multilateral dialogue, was illustrated notably by the UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Culture in November 2019. Likewise, the unprecedented inclusion of culture in the G20 in 2019 and 2020, under the respective presidencies of Saudi Arabia and Italy, marked a major step forward, leading to the first ever G20 ministerial Declaration on culture in July 2021. **Regional and sub-regional organizations also proved instrumental in**

amplifying this momentum, notably through supporting regional culture ministerial dialogue, data collection, policy monitoring and evidence-building, as well as joint advocacy efforts to document and demonstrate this rationale.

Equally, culture has gained ground in sustainable development frameworks in more robust and systemic ways. The paradigm shift entailed by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda – whose logic relies on a comprehensive approach to public policies beyond a silos approach guided by sectoral policies, to pose the vision of sustainable development as a set of interrelated variables thereby opening up a new perspective and novel approaches in harnessing culture as a critical dimension in development processes. Although culture does not have a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), it pervades all the 17 SDGs, reflecting its impact across the public policy spectrum, from social inclusion and economic growth, to education, climate action or urban policies. At the UN level, this policy trend is testified, in particular, by the momentum propelled by the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development in 2021 or the upcoming adoption of a strengthened UN Resolution on Culture and Development, which further reflects and amplifies countries' commitment. The trend is further strengthened by the integration of culture as a crosscutting dimension in the work of UN agencies, funds and programmes whose core mandate relate to education, migrations, gender equality, labor, trade, intellectual property, human rights, tourism, and social development. Likewise, **the growing inclusion of culture in national sustainable development planning and monitoring** – notably as part UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, Common Country Assessments, Voluntary National Reports, as well as COVID-19 national impact assessment and recovery plans – **testifies to a more solid and articulate anchoring of culture within sustainable development thinking and practices.** To give impulse to this drive, UNESCO has put in place an Interagency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development in May 2021, bringing together 24 UN agencies as well as international and regional organizations to foster a structured dialogue and strengthen joint action. Building on these converging dynamics and **as we enter the last Decade of Action for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the transversal nature of culture and its transformative impact will be instrumental to fill implementation gaps and shape sustainable development pathways.**

II. **Mondiacult 2022: Objectives and outcomes**

The UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies - Mondiacult 2022, generously hosted by the Government of Mexico, will open a broad reflection on overarching issues which are critical for the future of the cultural sector, with a view to ensuring its prosperity and resilience while, at the same time, encouraging a stronger movement towards anchoring culture in the achievement of sustainable development. The objectives of the World Conference are more specifically:

- (i) **to stimulate the global reflection on culture as a universal public good**, notably in view of challenges pertaining to the protection of cultural heritage and cultural diversity, social inclusion and fundamental rights;
- (ii) **to support the adaptation of cultural policies in the cultural sector itself**, for it to be better equipped to address sustainable development challenges, notably in relation to digitalization and climate action;
- (iii) **to advance countries' strategic priorities pertaining to cultural policies**, notably the strengthening of public support, funding schemes and regulatory frameworks – including existing normative instruments in the field of culture – the adaptation to the digital transformation, the investment in vocational training and culture-related employment, or the promotion of a comprehensive approach to culture, beyond the traditional fragmentation of the cultural sector;
- (iv) **to strengthen the role of culture for peace building and conflict prevention**, building on culture as a dynamic and positive resource which fosters inclusion, including through cultural diplomacy and the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property;
- (v) **to bring together international cooperation platforms** – under UNESCO's aegis – on emerging critical areas for the cultural sector such as the sustainable protection of cultural heritage, the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property, the inclusive development of the creative economy, the digital transition and the regulation of the digital environment, the nexus between culture and education or the measurement of the contribution of culture to sustainable development.

The outcomes of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies will be two-fold: on the one hand, to draw a roadmap of critical priorities identified by the Member States in the area of cultural policies that will guide UNESCO's action and policy advice in the coming years; on the other end, to anchor culture in the global public policy agenda with a view to provide new impetus to multilateral dialogue, by framing, under UNESCO's aegis, a global platform on culture's aspirational role to shape future societies.

The conference will be structured around a Ministerial Plenary Session, complemented by a number of parallel panel workshops and side events involving a diversity of stakeholders. In accordance with established practice for intergovernmental UNESCO category II conferences, Mondiacult should lead to the adoption of a **Final Declaration**, to be endorsed by Member States at ministerial level. The Final Declaration will be of a political and substantial nature. It is expected to be a prospective, vision-based policy document to be endorsed in a spirit of consensus. The Final Declaration will be elaborated in close consultation with the Member States through UNESCO's facilitation, and will be framed on the basis of critical priorities identified by the Member States across countries and regions in the context of the

Regional Consultations that will take place between December 2021 and February 2022.

Regional Consultations will play a critical role in three key areas (i) to map current trends pertaining to cultural policies, notably in the context of the post-pandemic recovery strategies; (ii) to identify key areas for the adaptation of the cultural sector to address current challenges; (iii) to identify specific priorities that require urgent attention and policy investment, with a view to formulate some recommendations stemming from this regional dialogue. An overview of main trends and global policy discussions pertaining to culture in public policy is provided in the following parts of the present document – regarding both the adaptation of cultural policy frameworks and the contribution of culture across the public policy spectrum – with a view to inform and contextualize the identification of regional trends and specificities across the five regions in the context of the Regional Consultations.

III. Adapting cultural policy frameworks: state of play and prospects

3.1. Adapting and strengthening public policy schemes

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, public support and funding schemes that frame the cultural sector have clearly shown their limitations. Even in countries with relatively established public policies for culture, cultural professionals, institutions or sites have proven particularly vulnerable; the volatility of economic models, the insufficiency of social security frameworks, the lack of agility or responsiveness of certain public schemes or their insufficient adaptation to the evolution of the sector, the fragmentation of the cultural sector itself, all point towards the need to adapt and strengthen cultural policy frameworks over the coming years to ensure the resilience of the cultural sector and support its adaptation to a challenging, rapidly evolving global environment, where unexpected external shocks are likely to become more recurrent. **More agile and responsive cultural policies will therefore be needed,** including through stronger engagement of local government and civil society in cultural policymaking, as well as sustained efforts to build knowledge and data. **More robust investment in technical and vocational training for will be critical** to upgrade skills and competencies in the cultural sector and adapt to fast-evolving labour markets and work patterns, thus enabling a more agile and resilient sector. Finally, **addressing the fragmentation of policy mechanisms pertaining to culture is of paramount importance.** The sectoral segmentation of culture-related institutions and support schemes by cultural domains, together with the scattering of related public resources, represents an obstacle, in many countries, to designing bold, impactful cultural policies, building on a comprehensive vision of the cultural sector.

Funding mechanisms and economic models will also need to be reshaped – a broader conversation that goes beyond the realm of culture and should build on the

widely acknowledged economic impact of the cultural sector. Culture is now recognized as an undisputed source of growth and employment, whose documented impact should be supported by appropriate funding mechanisms. In most countries around the world, public funding towards the creative sector or cultural tourism, for example, does not rise to the level of ambition formulated by policymakers, nor to the scope of economic and social benefits generated by these sectors. Beyond advocating for additional public funding to be channeled to the cultural sector – a policy target that still remains critical in many countries – **the challenge is also to converge existing resources earmarked for other policy areas** among which education, urban policies, social development, employment, including as part of official development aid. In that sense, the recently renewed interest of development banks for the cultural sector, or the growing engagement of local authorities, civil society and the private sector, testify to positive trends that should be further supported and translated into policy schemes.

40 years after the first Mondiacult conference, the cultural sector has been deeply transformed by the digital transition, a transformation that was accelerated by the pandemic and is expected to unfold in the coming years, drawing up a contrasted landscape of benefits and risks. Overall, the digital transformation impacts cultural production, distribution and consumption across all cultural domains from the creative economy and cultural heritage, to museums and cultural tourism. **The digital transition opens numerous prospects** for broadening access to culture and education, strengthening documentation, safeguarding and mediation of cultural heritage, driving innovation and creation, as well as propelling the development of new economic models. **However, it also brings about threats of setbacks in terms of equal access to culture, online cultural and linguistic diversity and fair remuneration** of cultural work – all risks that are exacerbated by the massive rise in online culture-related platforms. **Adapting cultural policies to the digital transformation will therefore be one of the major areas of work** in the coming years, which will require a broader conversation with other related policy areas as well as wider international policy discussion, notably, as regards the critical role of the State as a guarantor of rights and fundamental freedoms, in view of a more robust regulation of the digital environment, including digital platforms, with a view to strengthen online cultural diversity and better protect copyright and cultural professionals' livelihoods.

3.2. Consolidating legal frameworks and monitoring tools, including through UNESCO normative instruments and programmes

Legal frameworks for culture should be adapted to encompass global trends. Since the 1982 and 1996 World Conferences, UNESCO normative instruments have proven instrumental to accompany the gradual development and consolidation of national policy frameworks, providing internationally agreed upon concepts, norms and standards to guide the development of legislation and regulatory frameworks. Looking forward, Conventions and Recommendations will also need to adapt their operational

mechanisms and policy guidance instruments to support the necessary adaptation of cultural policies. Supporting countries in fully encompassing the digital transformation, climate action or the rise in conflicts and inequalities, the strengthening of human rights, including cultural rights, or promoting sustainable tourism and urban development patterns are among the overarching issues which directly intersect with the scope of UNESCO Culture Conventions, Declarations and Recommendations, and will require further attention and monitoring in the coming years. This process is already underway, as reflected notably by (i) the recently updated Policy Document on the impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage properties; (ii) UNESCO's Rules of Procedure for Mediation and Conciliation related to the implementation of the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; as well as (iii) with regard to the ongoing reflection on updating the Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist of 1980 to encompass concerns related to the social and economic benefits of artists in the digital environment. These processes should be further pioneered by UNESCO in a sustained consultation and dialogue with the Member States in the coming years to ensure that these policy instruments remain relevant and operative, fully responding to Member States' needs.

Likewise, measuring and strengthening evidence on the impact of culture on sustainable development remains critical to inform public policymaking. In a context where culture-related data remains fragmented and scattered across diverse institutions, transversal monitoring and statistical instruments are needed to measure and document the impact of culture across public policies. The current roll-out of the UNESCO Culture 2030 Indicators, the UNESCO Culture and Public Policy Tracker, complemented by the survey launched by UIS on the prioritization of global cultural indicators to support SDG monitoring, as well as data-related efforts brokered by other international or regional bodies will support Member States' efforts in that endeavor. Countries will also need to further invest in data collection, production and analysis on the social and economic outputs of the cultural sector both at the international, national and local levels. Data collected and produced by civil society organizations could also be more systematically integrated as part of public policies. A proactive, comprehensive approach, building on both globally comparable data and a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data will be instrumental to provide a more accurate picture of the economics of culture, encompassing at the same time its economic weight and its contribution to sustainable development.

3.3. Forging new alliances towards a multi-stakeholder commitment

While the role of the State in cultural policies remains essential to ensure the regulation, support and planning of the sector, the multilayered nature of contemporary challenges, their systemic and multidimensional nature is substantiated by the diversity of actors in the realm of cultural policies. Such an

inclusive approach is vital in today's multicultural societies, which call for the need to engage a plurality of voices, and particularly, due to the increasing constraints on national public financing. A multiplicity of stakeholders have arisen to give greater impetus to policy actions, to commit to sustaining the implementation of cultural policies and to raise them up to scale. At the same time, the State maintains its responsibility for the preparation and implementation of cultural policies tailored to the needs of all citizens, respecting fundamental rights, while also guaranteeing respect for cultural diversity as a public good.

To allow a more agile, impactful and reactive policymaking, stronger collaboration should be sought between the State and other stakeholders. Local authorities, civil society and the private sector, in particular, are key partners in policy design, implementation and assessment, building on their agility and capacity for innovation. This alliance is already enshrined in some of UNESCO normative instruments and should be more systematically expanded and supported by public policy schemes at the national level while ensuring the proper oversight and accountability of the State. **Expanding multistakeholder partnerships at global and regional levels will be equally crucial**, particularly as regards development banks as well as regional and sub-regional IGOs', which are instrumental in supporting data collection, policy analysis, policy advice and advocacy, while also supporting regional exchanges and markets. Equally, the cultural sector, and in particular cultural activities, are privileged bridges to expanding alliances between the public and private sectors, and the civil society at the national and local levels notably fostering dialogue, collaboration and social inclusion in the public space. **Renewed modalities of collaboration platforms should therefore be developed to converge these efforts and scale up the role of culture across public policies.**

IV. Anchoring culture across the public policy agenda: areas of global reflection

Anchoring culture across the public policy agenda will be another major area of reflection at the World Conference Mondiacult 2022. Beyond cultural policies *per se*, culture speaks to numerous policy areas across the policy spectrum. Growing areas of interest for countries – including the creative economy, cultural diplomacy, quality education or cultural tourism – are transversal to several policy areas, from trade, education and labour to foreign affairs planning and finance. This broader, more agile approach to culture requires comprehensive policies, beyond those specifically entrusted to line ministries of culture, as well as more integrated and adaptive policy models. Dedicated policy mechanisms should be established to facilitate inter-ministerial cooperation, joint programming and financing, thus also supporting, more broadly, the contribution of culture to the achievement of sustainable development.

Leveraging culture to foster inclusive economic growth and address inequalities is a core priority, echoing the overarching requirement and aspiration of the 2030 Agenda to 'Leave no one behind'.¹ In a world marked by increasing disparities characterized by inequitable access to basic services – such as healthcare, education, culture or the digital realm – culture should be further leveraged as a driving force towards a more inclusive world, by promoting inclusive growth patterns and creating job opportunities – including for the most vulnerable – notably through the creative economy and cultural tourism, as well as fostering a more equitable digital transition. Regulation and public support schemes should also be strengthened to ensure fair remuneration of cultural professionals online and offline, providing an enabling environment through social security, improved intellectual property frameworks and enhanced mobility and freedom of expression. Likewise, synergies should be sought across the policy spectrum to foster inclusive, socially and environmentally responsible cultural tourism patterns. Culture also contributes to greater societal wellbeing, through upholding cultural rights and benefits linked with decent work and the full participation and enjoyment of culture. Furthermore, the cultural sector is particularly strategic to foster gender equality and active engagement of youth, especially as more young people aged 15-29 are employed in the sector than any other fields of economic activity.

An area which requires a more determined policy engagement is unquestionably the need to strengthen the linkages between culture and education, which is gaining growing interest in the face of rapid social change and the rise of the knowledge society, which calls for stronger and more adaptive competencies and skills in the longer-term. While strengthening the synergies between culture and education plays a vital role in employment and entrepreneurship in the cultural sector, particularly for women and youth, such synergies should be equally deepened so as to enrich educational contents, expand people's choices encompassing social, environmental and cultural dimensions for people from various social backgrounds, and at all ages, and be further leveraged as a pathway towards greater engagement, participation and social justice. Linking culture and education, in both formal and non-formal settings, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and lifelong learning, accelerates learning outcomes by providing meaning and relevance, enhancing participation, nurturing creativity and thereby contributing to the quality of education. It prepares learners to adapt to the fast-evolving labour markets and provides an agile workforce that renews not only the cultural and creative sectors but also other domains of work. Furthermore, culture and education together speak to learners' multiple intelligences, thereby improving the reach and depth of learning and enlarging people's choices beyond the economic perspective, to encompass social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions that sustain alternative development paths and foster well-being. In the context of increasingly interconnected and multicultural societies, where public policies continue to play an important role in constructing inclusive and peaceful societies, integrating culture, cultural heritage and the arts into

educational systems, including in both pedagogies, curricula and materials as well as strengthening the educational role of non-formal education spaces and institutions, such as museums, will foster appreciation of cultural diversity as a positive force that counters ignorance, discrimination, prejudice and violence and promotes dialogue, peace and stability.

Harnessing culture for climate action is another major area of focus. The effects of climate change on cultural heritage are already manifest around the world, threatening the safeguarding of cultural sites and local practices. Meanwhile, culture provides a widely untapped reservoir of responses both to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts. UNESCO's designated sites – World Heritage properties, biosphere reserves and geoparks - protect some 10 million square kilometers of cultural and natural sites around the world, offering laboratories to test climate adaptation and mitigation, as well as disaster risk preparedness strategies. Living heritage, in the form of local and indigenous knowledge, is a vital source of resilience and adaptation strategies, including through traditional food security mechanisms and water and land management techniques. While cities account for more than 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions, they also lead creative and innovative efforts to promote more sustainable production and consumption patterns, as well as by tapping into innovative approaches building on creativity and design. Most of the 246 members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network demonstrate how cities can adopt more sustainable practices for individual or collective action, reduce the carbon footprint of the cultural and creative industries, or spark debate about climate change in the urban context through a wide array of creative fields from literature and design, to gastronomy. Culture-based approaches can also help shift the focus of climate negotiations from competing interests to shared values and the common good. In that perspective, building and sharing knowledge on the linkages between culture and climate action will be particularly critical to inform public policies, requiring notably broader investment in research and technologies, as well as expanded partnerships. Supporting youth and civil society leadership on climate action through culture-based education will be equally instrumental to spark engagement and transformational change.

Building on culture to sustain dialogue and peace will be particularly critical. As the magnitude, length and complexity of protracted crises and conflicts persist around the world, culture's role as an important lever to harness empowerment and dialogue – while enabling conflict prevention and contributing to reconciliation and national unity – must be fully acknowledged and nurtured. In this context, the inclusion of the cultural dimension into peace-keeping actions should be more systematically contemplated beyond the protection of cultural heritage to address the root causes of conflict and to strengthen the linkage between culture as a resource to build peace, including through the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property. Within a post-conflict or reconciliation context, cultural diversity should be harnessed as a capital for social

cohesion and stability that can help reduce communities' vulnerability to external shocks, rather than a threat or an instrument for division. Such soft power of culture can be unleashed notably through building on the significance of heritage sites and museums, as places of exchange and knowledge that can enable a better understanding of cultural identity and cultural diversity and lead to the appropriation, safeguarding and transmission of cultural and heritage values, identities and memory that can help regain self-confidence and unity. As a critical condition for cultural diversity to flourish, the protection of cultural rights, including in the expressions of intangible cultural heritage, is equally central to sustaining peaceful and inclusive societies, building on existing achievements and mechanisms, notably embedded in the UNESCO Culture Conventions and in strengthening synergies between culture and education. Looking forward, expanding policy discussions on individual and collective cultural rights, notably those that relate to the access to, participation in and enjoyment of cultural activities, as well as strengthening related policy and legislation frameworks can lay a critical foundation for harnessing the power of culture for peacebuilding and dialogue.

Looking forward, highlighting culture as a universal public good will be a major, prospective achievement in the future to ensure human-centered development based on the trust and moral solidarity that guides multilateralism, thus echoing the call launched by the UN Secretary-General in his report *Our Common Agenda* (UN, 2021) to prepare the Summit of the Future and nurture multilateral cooperation and dialogue. In a context where the notion of global public goods has gradually taken ground in international policy discussions across several areas from education to new technologies – thus echoing the call for more people-centered and sustainable policy models – culture should be promoted as a universal public good, in view of its multifaceted social, economic and environmental benefits, as well as its transformative impact on societies as a whole. The concept of culture as a universal public good, and the modalities of its practical implementation, should be further reflected upon, building on existing policy engagement from countries around the world. Ensuring inclusive access to and participation in culture, allowing the safeguarding and regeneration of cultural heritage and culture-related knowledge across time, promoting cultural pluralism and the respect of cultural diversity, promoting social justice through the implementation of human rights, including cultural rights are among the overarching aspirations to shape a sustainable future.