# General Assembly

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**Globalization and interdependence**

## Culture and sustainable development

### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in accordance with General Assembly resolution 76/214.

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* A/78/150.

# Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

*Summary*

      The present report was prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in consultation with relevant stakeholders. It provides an overview of the progress made in culture and sustainable development and covers the reporting period from June 2021 to June 2023.

# I. Introduction

1.      The present report was prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/214, covering the reporting period from June 2021 to June 2023. The report is the result of a consultation conducted across 193 UNESCO member States, 12 associate members, 76 intergovernmental organizations, 440 civil society organizations, 134 academic institutions that are part of the UNESCO Network of Chairs focused on culture and 77 United Nations system entities.

2.      A major turning point in global policy dialogue on culture, the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022), held in Mexico City in September 2022, revitalized political commitment to harnessing the transformative impact of culture across the policy spectrum. The Conference brought together 2,800 participants, including 150 States, of which 135 were represented at the ministerial level, and hosted 100 side events, in addition to 50 ResiliArt debates.[1] The unanimous adoption of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration affirmed culture as a global public good, with the international community being called upon to further invest in culture as a driver of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals as echoed in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet" (A/78/80-E/2023/64). In the Declaration, the Secretary-General was called upon to firmly anchor culture as a global public good and to integrate it as a stand-alone goal in the development agenda beyond 2030 in the wake of the Summit of the Future, in 2024.

3.      Culture's transformative impact has gained prominence, as shown in the United Nations resolutions on culture and sustainable development, as well as resolution 74/198 on the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, 2021. That resolution placed emphasis on improving the resilience of the creative ecosystem as part of post-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic recovery strategies. The recognition of culture as a global public good was further promoted in the UNESCO report *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good*, part of the Global Report series.

4.      Across the United Nations system, other initiatives supported global advocacy towards demonstrating the role of culture as a driver and enabler of sustainable development. The Transforming Education Summit, held in New York in September 2022, emphasized the Vision Statement of the Secretary-General on Transforming Education, which further calls for equipping learners with an awareness of history and the diversity of cultures as positive resources. The protection of cultural rights has also gained increased attention as part of the implementation of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) coordinated by UNESCO, under which many initiatives are reported by countries and intergovernmental organizations.

5.      The inclusion of culture within the Group of 20 (G20)[2] as a standing policy track under the presidencies of Saudi Arabia (2020), Italy (2021), Indonesia (2022) and India (2023) confirmed the global policy commitment to investing in culture as a driver of socioeconomic development and resilience. The G20 Rome Leaders' Declaration in 2021 recalled the importance of international efforts to safeguard and promote culture. Under the chairmanship of Cuba, the Group of 77 and China, in a declaration adopted at the meeting of ministers of culture in 2023, recognized culture

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[1] See www.unesco.org/creativity/en/activities/resiliart.
[2] See www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/culture/g20.

as a global public good and called for a specific culture goal in the post-2030 sustainable development agenda.

6. At the regional level, culture has also gained ground in ministerial forums and policy frameworks related to sustainable development. The Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the Economic Community of Central African States are developing a strategy to promote the African cultural industry globally, while the Economic Commission for Africa launched a regional capacity-building programme on heritage management, whose first phase targets Benin, Ethiopia and the Gambia. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development implemented regional funding mechanisms to boost the creative economy and cultural governance. In 2021, the South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization approved a regional culture agenda linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. At the Twenty-Eighth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Santo Domingo in March 2023, the role of culture in advancing socioeconomic development was also recognized. The Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture approved a declaration on arts and culture as promoters of sustainable development. The Davos *Baukultur* Alliance 2023 brought together ministers of culture and private sector entities under the theme "Common good – shared responsibility".[3]

7. The UNESCO Inter-Agency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development was launched in 2021 to foster a structured dialogue to strengthen the relevance and coordination of international organizations' interventions towards culture and sustainable development. As a jointly owned community of practice bringing together around 30 international and regional entities, including United Nations organizations, regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations, and development banks, the Inter-Agency Platform developed joint workstreams on human rights, education and environmental sustainability, as well as culture as a global public good.

8. The recognition of culture as a global public good was accelerated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted policy investment in culture. Mainstreaming culture across various development areas has also been promoted at the United Nations. The World Health Organization European regional action framework for behavioural and cultural insights for health, 2022–2027, was adopted in 2022 with the aim of capitalizing on cultural insights for health policy. UNESCO continued to develop policy guidance tools[4] to monitor the socioeconomic impact of the crisis. Likewise, international normative instruments on cultural heritage and creativity were leveraged to integrate culture into development frameworks. The funding mechanisms under the UNESCO culture conventions provided approximately $10.6 million to support countries in this regard. As a result of the ratification by Tuvalu of the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Convention became one of the most ratified legal instruments worldwide with 195 States parties.

9. Over the past two years, voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews have highlighted the contribution of culture to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2022, 73 per cent of the 57 Member States that submitted voluntary national reviews reported that cultural policies were aligned with national sustainable development plans. Culture was increasingly integrated into national sustainable development frameworks, including common country assessments and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. In Peru, the Pact for Culture 2030 positions culture as a core axis of national sustainable development

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[3] See https://davosdeclaration2018.ch/en/dd;nav/index/davos-2023.
[4] See www.unesco.org/en/articles/disruption-and-resilience-unesco-reports-reveal-new-data-impact-covid-19-culture.

plans through strategic alliances with the private sector and international organizations.

10. Measurement and monitoring of the impact of culture on sustainable development have been strengthened at the global, regional, national and local levels. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics released data for 57 countries for global Sustainable Development Goal indicator 11.4.1 on cultural and natural heritage expenditure. The UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators are being rolled out in 13 countries and 17 cities, including in Colombia, Morocco, the Philippines and Viet Nam, measuring the contribution of culture to social cohesion, climate action, gross domestic product (GDP) and employment, among other areas. On the initiative of the United Arab Emirates, efforts were made to strengthen and standardize the collection of data on the creative economy. The knowledge platforms World Heritage Canopy: Heritage Solutions for Sustainable Futures and "Dive into intangible cultural heritage!" also map the multiple relationships between cultural heritage and sustainable development.

## II. Culture as a driver and enabler of sustainable development

### A. Supporting the protection and exercise of cultural rights to build inclusive, democratic societies

11. The global commitment to the protection and implementation of cultural rights gained traction over the reporting period. The MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration frames a comprehensive approach to cultural rights in cultural policies. As part of the UNESCO Inter-Agency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development, a dedicated working group led by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was initiated in 2023 to strengthen advocacy and joint action of United Nations country teams, while also supporting the protection and promotion of cultural rights through human rights treaty bodies and monitoring mechanisms, notably the universal periodic review. A workshop on the theme "Bringing forward cultural rights: what's next after MONDIACULT" was organized by Switzerland in cooperation with OHCHR and UNESCO in April 2023 to bridge policy and academic discussions. The forum "Culturopolis: international days on cultural rights" was hosted in November 2022 by the City Council of Barcelona, Spain, to address cultural rights from a local-level perspective, with a focus on access and participation in cultural life.

12. At the global level, significant setbacks are reported regarding cultural rights. In some countries, increasingly monolithic notions of culture and identity have a negative impact on cultural rights, as underlined by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights in her report on cultural mixing and cultural rights (A/76/178). The Special Rapporteur also documented infringements on cultural rights linked to access to cultural sites, as well as prior and informed consent of Indigenous communities in her report on cultural rights and sustainable development (A/77/290). Likewise, an increasing number of violations of artistic freedom are reported worldwide, reaching 1,200 in 2021, according to the 2023 UNESCO report *Defending Creative Voices*, citing data from Freemuse.

13. At the policy level, 60 per cent of the countries reporting on this topic have raised cultural rights to a constitutional level. Significant policy developments are reported, particularly on artistic freedom and the socioeconomic rights of culture professionals. While Côte d'Ivoire and Romania have each adopted a decree on the status of the artist and an emergency ordinance on the status of cultural workers, participatory consultations are under way in Czechia and Mauritius towards the

adoption of a national law on the status of the artist. Institutional mechanisms to register artists, such as a national registry of art and cultural workers in El Salvador, were developed. To enable fair remuneration of culture professionals, Austria set up a fairness codex and fair pay grant. Artistic freedom is also encompassed in external cooperation mechanisms, such as the strategy for promoting freedom of expression in the foreign and development policy of Norway. Local governments have also made progress in framing and promoting cultural rights, as reflected by the cultural rights plan approved by the city of Barcelona.

14. The commitment to promoting artistic freedom is supported by international organizations and networks. Pursuant to the 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist, UNESCO launched a global survey to monitor progress and gaps. The UNESCO-Aschberg Programme for Artists and Cultural Professionals supported 15 countries in designing regulatory frameworks for artistic freedom. The topic was also addressed by the ILO governing bodies through a technical meeting on the future of work in the arts and entertainment sector in February 2023. The ninth World Summit on Arts and Culture, held in Sweden in May 2023 and organized by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies and the Swedish Arts Council, focused on advancing artistic freedom.

15. Redressing historical wrongs is at the core of ongoing policy discussions relevant to cultural rights. The global dialogue on the return and restitution of cultural property to countries of origin is gaining traction, in recognition of the need to ensure people's access to and enjoyment of their cultural heritage and identity. This topic was among the priorities of the G20 Culture Working Group under the presidency of India in 2023. National and regional policy developments are also reported, among which are a national policy on the repatriation and restitution of human remains and heritage objects approved by South Africa, an interministerial committee on the repatriation of illegally exported cultural property created by Cameroon and an independent advisory committee established by the Netherlands to assess requests for the return of cultural property. Numerous cases of restitution were processed across all regions, including 26 objects from the Abomey Treasures returned to Benin by France, leading the latter to launch the elaboration of a national framework law. The preparation of a common African position on restitution of heritage resources is under way under the aegis of the African Union, and a symposium was organized on this topic in 2023 by the Economic Community of West African States to assess progress and strengthen advocacy. Similarly, issues related with the misappropriation of the cultural heritage of Indigenous communities and the protection of collective cultural rights are increasingly prominent. The report on collective intellectual property and the appropriation of the ideas and creations of Indigenous Peoples (E/C.19/2022/8) submitted to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues reiterates the need to advance collective intellectual property frameworks. In the framework of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, a guidance note is being developed on safeguarding measures and good practices that address the risk of decontextualization and overcommercialization of living heritage. Some countries have adopted pioneer national legislation, such as the Federal Act on the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples and Communities of Mexico. Safeguarding the culture of Afrodescendants is also at the core of national or regional initiatives, notably supported by the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination in the field of living heritage.

16. Tackling social inequalities through culture is increasingly being addressed in public policies. For example, the new cultural policy of Australia entitled "Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place" relies on rights-based principles, fostering inclusive access to and engagement in culture, and enabling the restitution of First Nations peoples' ancestral remains. Likewise, Brazil ensures the inclusive

participation of all communities in cultural governance through its national council of cultural policy. Guinea is developing, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, a programme to strengthen social cohesion and job creation in the culture sector. Numerous initiatives are reported by civil society organizations to foster access to culture in disadvantaged areas, the accessibility of cultural institutions, including for persons with disabilities, and the empowerment of vulnerable communities.

17. Fostering gender equality and youth engagement remains a key priority. While countries report progress in achieving gender equality in the culture sector, such as the gender incentives developed in Finland with a focus on the film industry, gender-transformative cultural policies remain scarce. Samoa is building on culture to deconstruct gender stereotypes with a view to tackling domestic violence as part of a joint United Nations project. To enable youth engagement through culture, the Cook Islands prioritized culture within its national youth policy for 2021–2026.

## B. Promoting cultural diversity in learning environments to foster inclusive and quality education

18. The role of culture and the arts in human and societal development is gaining recognition worldwide. Culture is increasingly integrated into education systems, practices and pedagogies. Policies and initiatives include effective curriculum revision, collaboration between educational and cultural institutions, and programmes designed to bolster diverse, inclusive and accessible culture and arts-based learning in formal and non-formal settings, including through digital means. In this context, UNESCO member States adopted a decision in 2021 calling for the development of a global framework on culture and arts education to support integrated policies on education and culture. The framework is intended to be adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on Culture and Arts Education, in the United Arab Emirates in February 2024, with support from Chile, Indonesia, Kenya, Lithuania, Oman, the Republic of Korea and Spain.

19. The reporting period witnessed progressive enactment of legislation and national policies to cement the inclusion of culture and arts in education systems. Belgium adopted a decree on a cultural and artistic education programme to integrate culture and arts into education curricula. In Myanmar, culture and arts have been integrated into primary and secondary education, and in Seychelles, the National Institute of Culture Heritage and the Arts has strengthened cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

20. Countries are engaged in integrating culture and arts, with a focus on traditional knowledge, into formal and non-formal education systems, by adopting interdisciplinary methodologies. In Cambodia, a partnership with UNESCO and the Chengdu Culture and Tourism Foundation in China has led to the development of educational materials and testing of pedagogical approaches to integrate living heritage into the education system. The national education policy of Nepal underscores the role of cultural heritage and education for community-based development by advocating for Indigenous knowledge in vocational training and community learning centres. In response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries have demonstrated adaptability by leveraging culture and the arts in their learning environments. The Latvian School Bag programme demonstrated this agility by including digital cultural events in its offerings. In Japan, a culture school offered online lessons in traditional art. In Sri Lanka, higher education institutions have recently included courses on digital technology for artists and culture professionals.

21.     Culture and arts education has been recognized as critical to promoting inclusive access, especially for those at risk of marginalization. It has been acknowledged that providing a wide range of educational opportunities for communities can help to foster creativity, critical thinking and personal development. Launched in April 2023 as a collaboration between the United Nations Children's Fund, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Uruguay and the National Public Education Administration of Uruguay, the "Music in support of educational processes" programme aims to strengthen curricula in the deprived neighbourhood of Casavalle in the city of Montevideo. In Nicaragua, more than 300 communities in rural areas have benefited from dedicated arts and cultural schools as well as training centres.

22.     Increased interministerial and intersectoral cooperation enables a conducive environment for culture and arts education policies and strategies. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Cultural Education Partnerships programme encourages cooperation between schools, cultural institutions and local authorities. Research and inter-university cooperation mechanisms play an important role in supporting culture and arts education. An inter-university network of intangible cultural heritage of Latin America and the Caribbean was created in 2022 under the aegis of the University Twinning and Networking Programme (UNITWIN)/UNESCO Chairs Programme, together with universities from Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, to enhance institutional capacities through knowledge-sharing and collaborative work.

23.     There is a growing focus on professional training in the arts and cultural sectors, leading to an increased demand for the formalization of arts and culture education, particularly through technical and vocational education and training programmes. The Senegal Talents Campus is the first certified technical and vocational training centre in arts and culture, offering courses in production management, sound, lighting, and cultural administration. In Nigeria, the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization conducts training programmes in arts and culture.

## C.     Boosting the cultural and creative economy for sustainable livelihoods

24.     The recognition of the creative economy as an economic engine and an enabler of social development is demonstrated by the inclusion of culture in G20 and in global public-private policy forums, including the United States-Africa Leaders Summit 2022, held in Washington, D.C., in December, during which private sector entities and Governments outlined the economic potential of the creative economy across the Africa region through a dedicated panel. Cultural and creative industries are among the fastest-growing sectors of the world economy, with an estimated contribution of 3.1 per cent to global GDP in 2022, generating 6.2 per cent of employment and 50 million jobs worldwide and representing the largest source of employment for people aged 15 to 29 years. [5] Increased efforts were made to monitor the socioeconomic impact of cultural and creative industries and related trends, particularly in Africa, where their potential is increasingly acknowledged. These include a study on the role of sports, arts and cultural services in economic growth and development commissioned by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, which recognizes culture as a crucial pillar of economic and regional integration, the report *The African Film Industry: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for Growth*, published by UNESCO and the African Union, which maps

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[5] UNESCO, *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good*, Global Report Series (Paris, 2022).

the film industry in 54 countries, and a study by ILO, the African Union and UNESCO on promoting decent work in the African cultural and creative economy.

25.    The 2023 ILO report entitled *The Future of Work in the Arts and Entertainment Sector* emphasizes the importance of culture for youth employment and the need to adapt skills, notably digital skills. The adaptation of the culture sector to the future of work has been a core component of national and regional initiatives, as exemplified by the UNESCO-European Union Transcultura programme launched in 2021 to deepen integration between Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union. Likewise, Jordan has launched training programmes to support youth talent development; Egypt has launched the "Cinema between your hands" project to develop youth skills in filmmaking; and Sint Maarten has included professionalization in the cultural and creative sector as part of its scholarship programme. Many countries have invested in incentive measures to support the creative sector, particularly through enhanced State support for the film industry, such as the law on cinematography of the Russian Federation.

26.    The impact of the COVID-19 health crisis on the creative economy prompted recovery strategies towards strengthening the resilience of the sector's value chain, particularly regarding the social and economic rights of culture professionals and artists, including in the informal economy and in the digital sphere. For example, Gabon adopted a bill on the status of the artist to improve their professional and social conditions in May 2023, while Jamaica adopted a COVID-19 relief programme for small and medium-sized enterprises in the culture sector. In 2021, the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development brought to the fore the dividends of the sector for the global economy, leading countries to reform their policies, diversify their economic models and strengthen public funding mechanisms. In 2021, UNESCO led a series of dedicated advocacy initiatives with Member States, including the establishment of the UNESCO-Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman International Prize for the Creative Economy, which was awarded to the MoTIV Creations Limited of Uganda, among other projects.

27.    Strategies of economic diversification through culture are reported. A joint United Nations programme involving ILO, the International Telecommunication Union, OHCHR, UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Office for Project Services in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu harnesses culture towards economic diversification and digital transformation to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable communities. Many countries have not only increased the diversification of their cultural institutions' business models but also integrated the cultural and creative economy as part of their revised tourism plans and strategic actions, such as Uzbekistan, which focused on community-based, cultural ecotourism in the Aral Sea region, as well as the Comoros and Suriname, which are implementing sustainable tourism programmes at UNESCO-designated sites. The notion of cultural tourism has been progressively expanded to encompass all cultural domains through strengthened cooperation with trade organizations and cooperatives, particularly in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. The *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism: Regional Focus on the Americas*, published in 2023 by the World Tourism Organization and the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance, underlines the contribution of culture, and living heritage in particular, in empowering communities, notably women, through entrepreneurship and tourism opportunities. Many countries have featured living heritage as part of their policies and initiatives in this field, such as Ukraine with its national and cultural programme for the development of folk arts and crafts for 2022–2025, which stimulates entrepreneurship and decent work, and Bahrain, which has enabled enhanced opportunities and training for professionals in the crafts sector. The International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in

the Asia-Pacific Region harnesses living heritage within cultural and creative industries in its strategy for 2022–2031 to promote the sustainable livelihoods of communities.

28.    The wide scope of the creative economy allows for cross-sectoral cooperation across policy areas such as economy, trade, labour, education, innovation, digital and tourism, as well as renewed dynamics of public-private or regional collaborations. The national cultural reactivation plan of Chile relies on interministerial cooperation between the culture, health and economic sectors, while Azerbaijan has prioritized cultural and creative industries in its national strategy for socioeconomic development for 2022–2026. The Coordinating Commission of Creative and Cultural Industries in Panama, created in 2023, supports interdisciplinary cooperation between the public and private sectors. Guinea-Bissau and Senegal signed an agreement on cinematographic works to stimulate economic development between the two countries. Innovative funding mechanisms were developed by investment banks and non-profit organizations, supporting more systemic public-private partnerships and civil society engagement. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), through its affiliate IDB Invest, has developed financial mechanisms based on new technologies such as financial technology (fintech), non-fungible tokens and equity crowdfunding to meet the needs of freelancers, small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups. Likewise, the Creatifi initiative of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States has provided small and medium-sized enterprises with access to capital and debt financing.

## D.    Addressing the digital transformation in the culture sector

29.    The acceleration of digital transformation has been a game changer for the culture sector across all domains, as evidenced by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report *Creative Industry 4.0: Towards a New Globalized Creative Economy*. Digital technologies opened up opportunities to support access to culture, enhanced learning and visitors' experience in cultural sites, supported the conservation of cultural heritage, including in emergency situations, and fostered innovation, skills development and more inclusive and balanced cultural trade. Meanwhile, digital transformation poses new challenges to the exercise of cultural rights, notably as regards equal access to culture in the face of the widening digital divide; fair remuneration of online cultural work; and the protection of cultural and linguistic diversity. These challenges call for strengthened investment in upskilling and the adaptation of public policy schemes, as well as expanded multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on culture in the digital environment.

30.    Some countries have revised their cultural policy frameworks to encompass digital technologies, such as the national cultural policy for 2022–2032 developed by Papua New Guinea. Policy schemes have also focused on the digitization of culture, such as the national digitization strategy of Spain and the ministerial decree on e-culture of Mongolia. Others address specific subsectors, seeking notably to support greater diversity and inclusion in the audiovisual sector, such as the Online Streaming Act of Canada, or making cultural heritage data more accessible, such as the national database of artisans of Tunisia. In some cases, the digitization of culture is captured in national strategies such as the recovery and resilience plan of Portugal, which supports the digital transition of cultural institutions; the national digitalization strategy for 2021–2030 of Hungary, which also encompasses museum collections; and the newly created technology policy department of Denmark, which enhances online cultural life to support digital democracy. Countries also engage in the digitization of culture through national databases or inventories, as in Costa Rica, and

through public support schemes intended to help culture stakeholders to develop their online presence, as reported by Albania.

31.    In the field of cultural heritage, UNESCO and other organizations and networks have worked to leverage digital technologies. The UNESCO Dive into Heritage platform, currently being developed in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and in collaboration with Saudi Arabia, is intended to make world heritage sites explorable through digital technologies and to develop international standards on the digitization of cultural heritage. To support the implementation of the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, a virtual museum of stolen cultural objects is being developed. In 2022, the Committee of the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict endorsed principles relating to the use of remote sensing data for monitoring of cultural property. Meanwhile, some UNESCO Chairs are engaged in the digitization of cultural heritage, including supporting a digital heritage research lab (Cyprus), awareness-raising (Türkiye) and digitizing heritage through laser scanning and 3D visualization (Singapore).

32.    As regards the creative economy, policy guidance is provided by the 2017 operational guidelines on the implementation of the Convention in the digital environment and the 2020 Open Roadmap for the Implementation of the Convention in the Digital Environment, in the framework of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. While a growing number of countries are engaged in the preparation of digital road maps, the digital skills gap hampers implementation. Strengthening the digital skills of creative professionals is central to countries' priorities. The UNESCO-led Digital Creativity Lab assesses digital skills to develop training packages and provide business support to female entrepreneurs, while Georgia, Zambia and Zimbabwe are engaged in strengthening the digital capacities of creative professionals in the music and audiovisual sectors. The role of civil society organizations and creative hubs remains central to supporting upskilling. Key examples are the Mawaba Lab and the Papricai incubators in Togo, as well as the Tamana Technology and Animation Production Factory, developed by the University of Trinidad and Tobago. At the regional level, Ibero-American States approved the Ibero-American Charter of Principles and Rights in Digital Environments, targeting culture as a priority sector in 2023.

33.    The global dialogue on artificial intelligence directly relates to culture. The adoption of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence in 2021 marks a strategic step forward as the first international standard-setting instrument in this area, encompassing culture. Several policy developments are reported by international organizations, including the Conversation on Intellectual Property and Artificial Intelligence, launched by the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the priority given to "connectivity in diversity" in the declaration of the 2022 Summit of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

34.    The adaptation of cultural institutions and museums to digital transformation is a critical priority to support the conservation and management of their collections and enhance the social and educational role of museums. A digital strategy is being developed by the International Council of Museums to inform museum policies, while training toolkits on digital basic cataloguing and digital learning and education in museums were developed by the Network of European Museum Organisations. Efforts are also being made at the country level, targeting the digital inventorying of museum artefacts in Pakistan and the development of a virtual museum of archaeological objects in the State of Palestine.

## E. Harnessing culture for peacebuilding and recovery in the face of multifaceted crises

35. In the face of protracted crises, including conflicts, culture is a driver of social inclusion and dialogue as part of peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. However, deliberate attacks on cultural heritage have directly threatened cultural diversity and cultural rights. A holistic approach to the protection of cultural heritage and the rehabilitation and restoration of cultural heritage destroyed or damaged in conflict can play an important role in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. Furthermore, culture and creativity play an important role in enabling narratives of peace to emerge that go beyond the entrenched roots of conflict. As there is increased recognition of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, culture is of vital importance to all pillars of United Nations action.

36. In this context, global efforts continue to be made to protect culture as a foundation for peace. Implementation of Security Council resolution 2347 (2017) was reinvigorated by an Arria-formula meeting on the theme "Protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts" held by the members of the Council in May 2023. Efforts to monitor damages of cultural heritage resulting from conflicts were expanded with a view to informing post-conflict reconstruction and recovery. UNESCO and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research have strengthened their cooperation to leverage satellite imagery to allow comprehensive damage assessment, bridging knowledge on history, archaeology and architecture in countries such as Iraq, Libya, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen, among others. Real-time damage assessment and inventorying of cultural sites in Ukraine are ensured by UNESCO and its partners through an online database. Over the reporting period, the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund supported 40 projects in 36 countries through a total funding of $3 million, primarily providing emergency response and supporting policy developments in conflict situations. The International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH) currently implements approximately 200 projects in 30 countries. Efforts to support living heritage bearers were also amplified, including through the assistance provided by UNESCO to metal cutting artisans in Noailles, Haiti, to sustain their practices in the midst of the security crisis.

37. Illicit trafficking of cultural property, aggravated by natural disasters and armed conflicts, poses a serious risk to the collective memory of future generations, weakening the prospects for peace, social cohesion and post-conflict reconciliation. In December 2021, the General Assembly adopted resolution 76/16 to urge Member States to introduce new legislation to strengthen the safeguarding of cultural heritage and fight the illicit trafficking of cultural property. To enhance international cooperation, resolution 11/4 on strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to protect cultural property, especially with regard to its trafficking in any situations, including in the context of all armed conflicts and natural disasters" was adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in October 2022. UNESCO, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Customs Organization and the International Council of Museums have continued to join forces to build capacities of national stakeholders on the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property, seeking to achieve universal ratification of the 1970 Convention while also supporting emergency protection measures for museum collections. In 2022, the European Union adopted a new action plan against trafficking in cultural goods for 2023–2025. The UNESCO thematic programme "Heritage for peace", launched in 2020 by the Committee for the Protection of

Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict as part of the 1954 Convention, was continued. UNESCO also launched a joint programme with INTERPOL using the mobile app ID-Art to identify stolen cultural property.

38. During the reporting period, the cultural dimension of peacebuilding and development was harnessed for conflict prevention, reconciliation and post-conflict recovery, with a particular focus on sustaining livelihoods and youth employment, notably towards the prevention of violent extremism. In Iraq and Lebanon, progress continues to be made on the implementation of the UNESCO initiatives "Revive the spirit of Mosul" and "Li Beirut" to revitalize cultural life by empowering local communities, particularly young people, to rebuild their historic landmarks, neighbourhoods, schools, museums and creative spaces. In Yemen, the UNESCO-European Union cash-for-work programme employed 6,000 urban youth to support the restoration of cultural heritage. In Mali, through an unprecedented decision of the International Criminal Court, $420,000 was granted to Timbuktu communities as part of the collective, individual and symbolic judicial reparation to compensate for the destruction of cultural heritage in 2012. A project launched by Iraq, Jordan, the European Union, UNESCO and ILO has contributed to supporting livelihoods through cultural heritage for the benefit of Syrian refugees, as well as vulnerable Iraqi and Jordanian internally displaced persons. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia partnered to support peacebuilding and reconciliation through the joint development of a permanent exhibition in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

39. Growing attention is being paid to the cultural rights of refugees and internally displaced people, as reflected in the 2023 report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights (A/HRC/52/35). Numerous initiatives are intended to foster the socioeconomic integration of migrants through culture, such as MADE51, which was developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and supports the production and distribution of crafts and arts by migrants, allowing them to sustain their cultural practices, and civil society organization-led initiatives targeting intercultural dialogue.

40. The capacity of culture to promote tolerance, inclusion, democracy and citizenship has been affirmed in regional and national policy initiatives. The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Mohammadia League of Scholars launched the first volume of the Encyclopedia on Deconstructing the Discourse of Extremism. In Sweden, the city of Malmö convened international peer learning on culture and anti-racism. To strengthen the analytical basis for intercultural dialogue, UNESCO, in partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace, produced the conceptual and technical framework for enabling intercultural dialogue to measure the enabling environment needed to support effective dialogue, and the global analytical report *We Need to Talk: Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Inclusion*.

41. Cultural diplomacy has been enhanced to support subregional and regional integration and strategic partnerships. Angola, the African Union and UNESCO organized in November 2021 the second Biennale of Luanda, a Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace. In Asia-Pacific, the Arab region and Europe, the UNESCO Silk Roads Programme has been instrumental in strengthening regional cooperation among the 40 participating countries, while also supporting cultural tourism.

## F. Leveraging synergies between culture and nature for climate action and biodiversity protection

42. Climate change has become the main threat to the conservation of cultural and natural heritage worldwide, affecting 33 per cent of the 1,157 UNESCO world heritage sites.[6] A total of 70 per cent of marine world heritage sites suffer from increased ocean temperatures, acidification or coral bleaching induced by climate change.[7] Such impacts endanger underwater cultural heritage, leading to bacterial spread which accelerates the degradation of shipwrecks. Under current emissions scenarios, 60 per cent of UNESCO world heritage glaciers[8] and most world heritage coral reefs sites may disappear by 2100 while 60 per cent of world heritage forests are at risk.[9] Fires, floods, droughts, rising sea levels and accelerated erosion have an impact on cultural and natural sites, while increased soil temperature jeopardizes archaeological sites. Climate change and biodiversity loss also imperil the safeguarding of living heritage, spurring loss of knowledge, relocation of populations and hampered access to natural resources and sites. Such impact on cultural heritage is increasingly acknowledged by the scientific community and encompassed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change within "non-economic losses".

43. Meanwhile, the agency of culture for climate adaptation and mitigation is increasingly acknowledged. UNESCO-protected sites act as carbon sinks. Marine world heritage comprises 21 per cent of the global area of blue carbon ecosystems and 15 per cent of the global blue carbon assets, while world heritage forests absorb 190 million tons of carbon dioxide each year. Likewise, UNESCO world heritage sites harbour more than 20 per cent of global species richness. Cultural and natural sites provide learning laboratories for studying the impact of climate change and experimenting with resilience strategies.

44. The contribution of traditional knowledge to environmental sustainability, including Indigenous knowledge and languages, is critical, notably as regards geoscience, water and land management, construction techniques and food systems. Such linkages are documented in the sixth volume of the *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, to be published by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2023. Small island developing States are increasingly engaged in harnessing living heritage for biodiversity conservation, food security and disaster risk management, as exemplified by the ongoing UNESCO regional project implemented in the Bahamas, Belize, Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu. The engagement of Indigenous communities in safeguarding cultural heritage is critical, as illustrated by the recent explorations of underwater cultural heritage conducted in Guatemala and Micronesia (Federated States of).

45. International normative, programmatic and policy instruments were leveraged to harness culture for climate action and biodiversity protection. Consultation on the revision of the policy pursuant to the 1972 Convention on the impact of climate change has been sustained. Policy instruments were developed, such as the UNESCO guidance for the world heritage "no-go" commitment, engaging the extractive,

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[6] UNESCO, "Climate change now top threat to natural world heritage – IUCN report", 2 December 2020; and Elena Osipova and others, *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 3: A Conservation Assessment of All Natural World Heritage Sites* (Gland, Switzerland, International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2020).

[7] UNESCO and International Union for Conservation of Nature, "Ocean science road map for UNESCO marine world heritage", 2021.

[8] UNESCO and International Union for Conservation of Nature, *World Heritage Glaciers: Sentinels of Climate Change* (Paris and Gland, 2022).

[9] See https://whc.unesco.org/en/review/100/.

finance, insurance and hydropower corporate sectors around protection standards. Similarly, pursuant to the 2003 Convention, a survey was conducted on the linkages between living heritage and climate action, notably targeting small island developing States, to harness culture for disaster risk reduction. This commitment was reflected in other United Nations frameworks, such as the renewed mandate of the Linking Biological and Cultural Diversity programme, operated by the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNESCO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, among others, as well as the continued development of the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which have encompassed 12 new systems. The World Food Programme implemented a project in the Plurinational State of Bolivia to strengthen the resilience of Indigenous communities around Lake Poopó.

46. Knowledge-building and monitoring efforts on culture and environmental action were strengthened. In December 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, UNESCO and the International Council on Monuments and Sites co-sponsored an international meeting on culture, heritage and climate change, bringing together scientists and experts to advance heritage and culture-based actions for climate adaptation and mitigation. The flexible mechanism set up by Greece in cooperation with UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization connects scientific knowledge providers with decision makers. The Group on Earth Observations has continued to run the Urban Heritage Climate Observatory with UNESCO. In addition, knowledge-building efforts have been observed at the local and site levels. For example, the "Ocean science road map for UNESCO marine world heritage", issued by UNESCO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, engages world heritage site managers in identifying science gaps and securing science-based management. Data extracted from UNESCO-protected sites also feed into the United Nations Environment Programme InforMEA data portal.

47. To address climate-induced hazards, countries have strongly invested in prevention, disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies. Bangladesh set up a decentralized monitoring system, supported by the Green Climate Fund, to track the impact of climate change on Bagerhat. In the southern lagoon of the Rock Islands, Palau, local communities and rangers collaborated to adapt fishing practices to protect habitats, while the United Republic of Tanzania uses water quality monitoring to protect coral reefs. Resilience plans were also deployed in heritage sites affected by the rainfall in Pakistan, as well as in archaeological sites such as Jabal Barkal, in the Sudan. Similarly, early warning and flood risk management systems are being developed in Sana'a and Shibam in Yemen; in the Niger through the Kandadji Programme; and in Honduras through strategies launched by the Permanent Contingency Commission. Meanwhile, Armenia and Serbia developed training modules addressing disaster risk assessment and management of cultural sites.

48. Cultural institutions, civil society organizations and private entities have demonstrated increased commitment to climate action by greening the culture sector and harnessing culture to support behavioural change and sustainable production, with a view to promoting social justice. National public policy schemes have also supported this commitment, among them the network of ecological pioneers developed by Germany; dedicated financial schemes in Ireland; green labels for cultural events and infrastructure; and policy instruments such as carbon footprint calculators targeting the film industry and cultural infrastructure. International organizations have also advanced action in this area, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change initiative Entertainment and Culture for Climate Action, which engages practitioners from the film industry, and the SHIFT eco-certification developed by the International Music Council for the music industry.

49. The nexus between culture and climate action is being increasingly addressed in international and regional forums and policy frameworks. The agency of culture for climate action was reiterated in the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Harnessing culture for climate action is also a core priority of the Pacific Regional Culture Strategy 2022–2032, which focuses primarily on the role of Indigenous knowledge and languages.

## G. Leveraging culture towards building sustainable, inclusive and resilient cities and human settlements

50. Sustainable Development Goal 11, whose target 11.4 is to "strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage", is a strategic entry point for culture in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Pursuant to the review of Goal 11, UNESCO continued to make progress in documenting the role of culture towards forging innovative, people-centred and place-based urban development strategies. The contribution of culture for sustainable cities has gained recognition by decision makers, notably towards increased decentralization and transfer of competence to local authorities, from enhanced access to culture and arts education and the provision of training, to urban heritage inventory and conservation, cultural tourism and support to the creative economy. In 2022, the National Secretariat for Culture of Paraguay launched a training series within the departmental councils for culture as part of the campaign to implement the national system of cultural heritage. Likewise, Burkina Faso supports the decentralization of cultural action in 15 municipalities of the Hauts-Bassins region.

51. In response to the COVID-19 health crisis, culture has been increasingly integrated in local development strategies cutting across various Sustainable Development Goals, as demonstrated by the 2022 compendium of good practices entitled *UNESCO Creative Cities' Response to COVID-19: From Immediate Action to Long-term Recovery*. The analysis for *Culture in the Localization of the SDGs: An Analysis of Voluntary Local Reviews*, undertaken in 2021 by the Culture 2030 Goal Campaign, also provides evidence of the increased integration of culture in sustainable development frameworks and reinforced ownership at the city level, particularly by civil society organizations. The analysis shows that 74 per cent of the 73 voluntary local reviews produced between 2016 and 2021 include a cultural perspective. Synergies between culture and education have been particularly reinforced in the UNESCO creative cities of Florianópolis, Brazil; Norrköping, Sweden; and Québec, Canada, through the implementation of cultural projects in formal education aimed at raising awareness on cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual respect. Urban strategies have also been harnessed to streamline rights-based agendas to foster social cohesion, inclusion, citizenship and the full recognition and exercise of cultural rights within increasingly multicultural urban societies. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the cultural rights agenda has also been included in the UNESCO Creative Cities reporting mechanism as of 2023.

52. A number of policy tools were developed by UNESCO, such as the World Heritage City Lab, which brings together experts to discuss innovative strategies to address contemporary challenges, and the Urban Notebooks, for the World Heritage Cities community. This work is undertaken in the framework of the UNESCO 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, which is intended to guide policymakers in integrating policies and practices of conservation of the built environment across the Sustainable Development Goals. To enhance cross-cutting approaches, the UNESCO Cities Platform has provided policy guidance and technical

assistance at the city level by maximizing the impact of its specialized city networks in the fields of education, culture and the sciences to accelerate the local implementation of the Goals.

53.    Enhanced engagement towards culture at the city level was also spurred by a growing recognition and evidence of culture as a driver of diversified economies and job creation. As reported in the UNESCO-World Bank 2021 publication *Cities, Culture, Creativity: Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth*, up to 13 per cent of urban employment in major cities is based on the creative industries, as the largest share of those cultural and creative industries – which account for 3.1 per cent of global GDP – are hosted in urban settlements. Cultural tourism is another core component of urban economies. Cities are increasingly investing in culture to explore more inclusive, locally based economic patterns, while others seek to leverage culture and creativity to transition to post-industrial economic patterns, focused on knowledge and innovation. World cities and metropolises are increasingly turning to culture to renew their development models, as illustrated in the *World Cities Culture Report 2022*, which provides concrete examples of the transformative impact of culture on urban economies and societies. One example is the Revitalization and Innovation Project, launched in the Gansu Province in 2022 by China with the support of the World Bank and in collaboration with UNESCO, which plans to leverage urban development through the development of cultural and creative industries.

54.    The growing recognition of culture's agency for sustainable urban development by local governments is also demonstrated by the continuous growth of the membership of culture-related cities networks and the expansion of their scope of action, from climate action to education and social inclusion. Among them, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network has grown from 180 cities in 72 countries in 2018 to almost 300 cities in 90 countries in 2023,[10] reflecting a growing aspiration, both in the global North and in the global South, to harness culture and creativity for sustainable urban development. The global network of World Heritage Cities is equally expanding, reaching 323 cities at the end of 2022.[11] They account for a third of world heritage sites worldwide, making urban heritage the most represented category on the World Heritage List. Likewise, some 1,060 cities and other constituencies were reported by the United Cities and Local Governments to be engaged in the network's culture agenda in 2022, against 750 in 2017,[12] highlighting not only the level of cities' engagement towards culture but also the diversity of partnerships and alliances at the local, national, regional and international levels mobilized in that endeavour.

## III.    Conclusions

55.    The present report depicts an upward trajectory towards anchoring culture in sustainable development prospects and outlines a global momentum to inform future policy developments. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the culture sector's existing vulnerabilities while also highlighting its importance to resilience and sustainability, culture can inform the much-needed reshaping of public policies towards social justice and environmental sustainability. In the face of global challenges, including the climate crisis, protracted conflicts and deepening inequalities, there is a strong aspiration to build on culture with a view to renewing development patterns towards people-centred and inclusive global governance.

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[10] See https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/creative-cities-map.
[11] See https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/.
[12] See www.agenda21culture.net/who-we-are/members.

56. Over the reporting period, member States in all regions have demonstrated an increased commitment to harnessing culture for sustainable development, which is reflected in the increased inclusion of culture in national and local voluntary reviews and sustainable development strategies. Culture is also increasingly integrated in the sustainable development strategies of diverse stakeholders, including United Nations entities, regional organizations, local governments, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector. The private sector has indeed been a critical player for the inclusive sustainability of the cultural sector as a whole, as exemplified by the level of participation in the consultation and the diversity of programmes and initiatives displayed in the present report, cutting across various development targets, including decent jobs, social inclusion, climate action and peacebuilding, thus clearly highlighting culture's transversal agency.

57. The time has come to integrate culture as a specific objective in the international development agenda. This aspiration was unequivocally voiced by ministers of culture through the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, in which they called upon the Secretary-General to anchor culture as a global public good and a stand-alone goal in the post-2030 agenda. Reiterating this call, UNESCO is elaborating a policy brief on culture to inform the shaping of the post-2030 agenda with the support of the Nordic Cultural Fund. UNESCO is also further advocating for the sustainable financing of culture, addressing culture as an investment, not a cost. A number of regional and interregional policy forums, such as the Group of 77 and China, G20, the Pacific Community, the Andean Community and the Economic Community of Central African States, have echoed this appeal. The positioning of culture as a key objective of sustainable development relies on its capacity to underpin rights-based public policies, to contribute to diverse development targets, including decent work and climate action, and to sustain peacebuilding, conflict prevention and reconciliation.

58. Finally, the contributions that served as input to the present report highlight that culture is the expression of peoples and communities, constituting thereby an imperative for their sustainability. The diversity of cultural ecosystems offers a reservoir of creative, innovative and sustainable solutions, which is driven by civil society and increasingly supported by local governments, national policies and the private sector. A more systemic inclusion of civil society organizations in the elaboration and implementation of cultural policies, as well as more robust public-private partnerships and related governance adaptation, is necessary to effectively anchor culture in sustainable development policies in sustained ways.

59. Looking forward, building on cultural diversity as a transformative and positive force towards a multilayered global governance, culture has the power to inform a more inclusive and networked multilateralism that empowers peoples and communities to collaborate for a sustainable common good.

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