



FROM SUMMIT TO SUBSTANCE: AN ACTION PLAN FOR CULTURE TO DELIVER ON THE PACT FOR THE FUTURE

SEPTEMBER 2024

The recently adopted Pact for the Future gives the United Nations, and everyone who works alongside them, a new reference point. A little over half-way through the period of operation of the 2030 Agenda – and with progress significantly off-track – the Pact aims to accelerate the ability of the international system to realise its potential and achieve its goals for ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for the global community.

This objective is shared by the Culture2030Goal campaign. Our focus on ensuring the integration of the arts, culture and heritage into policy-making is motivated by a conviction that this is essential to building a better world and better lives.

The Pact for the Future does mark a valuable step forwards, although still falls a little shorter than it could have done in raising culture to the same level as other policy areas.

Calling for culture to be treated as a standalone development goal – as done in an earlier draft – would have been an important signal. It would have underlined to governments and arts, culture and heritage actors alike that culture should not be seen as a second-order policy area or dealt with in a silo.

Nonetheless, what is in the final text – as well as in the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations – is a step forwards. See the annex for more detail on references to culture in these documents.

What matters now is implementation. We need an implementation plan, both in order to achieve the PAct's goal of the integration of culture into wider development policies, and in order to ensure that culture affirms its place as a lever of change.



The Culture2030Goal campaign therefore proposes the following ten-point plan to help achieve this:

- I **1.** Ensure that the UN General Assembly Resolution on Culture and Sustainable Development in 2025 builds on the Pact for the Future, endorses the outcomes of the MONDIACULT 2025 conference, and sets out a concrete roadmap and reporting mechanism for the remaining implementation period of the 2030 Agenda.
- I **2.** Mark the 20th anniversary of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Promotion and the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions with global and multisectoral programming, bringing together wider work around cultural diversity and cultural rights at the UN. This can be an opportunity to highlight other UNESCO instruments, not least the 1954 and 1970 Conventions, as a means of achieving objectives such as combatting damage to cultural heritage.
- I **3.** Update the guidance for countries undertaking Voluntary National Reviews of the SDGs in order to recommend the inclusion of culture as part of the review process, notably including concrete proposals on how to involve arts, culture and heritage actors, as well as to consider cultural drivers of development outcomes.
- I **4.** Ensure regular reporting and information flows between UNESCO and the wider UN system around the preparation for and results of the MONDIACULT 2025 conference, including through a presentation at the UN's Second Committee.
- I **5.** Update the UN's guidance for the development of country sustainable development frameworks in order to integrate the arts, culture and heritage, both in terms of the inclusion of arts, culture and heritage practitioners, and to make cultural factors part of wider planning and implementation discussions.
- I **6.** Building on the recognition of the need to make cultural rights a part of the implementation of the Pact for the Future, commission work from the UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights to explore how this can be achieved concretely. This could include a checklist or other tool as a 'culture check' allowing for the prior assessment of different initiatives in terms of their impact on cultural rights.



- I **7.** Name a special envoy for the arts, culture and heritage, tasked with exploring concretely how to realise the potential of these to support the wider goals of the UN. In particular, the role-holder should develop plans for ensuring a fairer and more systemic mobilization of the arts in the work of the UN, liaising closely with UNESCO and the Special Rapporteur for Cultural Rights.

- I **8.** Echoing the recognition of the role of culture in social cohesion, ensure that plans for the World Social Summit in 2025 include culture from the beginning, so as to lead to outcomes which are culturally informed, culturally relevant, and culturally powered. Similarly, ensure that the Oceans Conference, upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meetings and other events are showcases for the role of culture in advancing policy goals.

- I **9.** Ensure that the review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process includes a meaningful discussion of culture and content, and in particular how to ensure that internet and digital governance can support the goals of diversity of cultural expressions and participation, as well as to ensure the safeguarding of digital culture.

- I **10.** Continue to work to ensure that the voice and needs of Indigenous peoples is reflected in policy-making, in line with the wishes of Indigenous communities themselves.

This proposal is based on the side-event “No future without culture: Reflecting and Imagining on the Place of Culture in Delivering the Pact for the Future”, organised by the Culture2030Goal campaign on 20 September 2024 (see agenda and recording, [here](#)). The proposal is also coherent with our Zero draft of a future Culture Goal, released on 26 September 2022 on the eve of Mondiacult in Mexico City (see [here](#)).

The Culture2030Goal campaign undertakes to publish an in-depth proposal of a Culture Goal (in July 2025, to present it at Mondiacult 2025); it is also committed to the exploration of the feasibility of a Major Group within the UN system.



ANNEX 1 CULTURE IN THE PACT FOR THE FUTURE

The campaign's analysis of the Pact, as well as the Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations annex to it, highlights the following relevant references:

Action 11 of the Pact is a commitment to **protect and promote culture and sport as integral components of sustainable development**. The action highlights in particular the role of culture in giving individuals and communities a sense of identity and fostering social cohesion, and so serving as an enabler of sustainable development.

In terms of concrete commitments, it calls for steps to ensure that culture can contribute to more effective, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, and to integrate it into economic, social and environmental policies and strategies. It also argues in favour of adequate public investment in the protection and promotion of culture.

A second commitment focuses on return and restitution of cultural property, making the case for strengthened cooperation around this, including strengthened dialogue. A final one is a commitment to promote and support intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

It is certainly welcome to see a strong reference to culture at the level of one of the primary actions in the Pact. Although sport, in some cases, can be considered a cultural expression in and of itself, separate actions for culture and sport could have offered more scope to appreciate the depth of contribution that the arts, culture and heritage, or indeed sport, make. Nonetheless, the action is clearly more focused on culture than on sport.

The action does have the merit of both seeing culture as a goal in itself, and as a factor in achieving other goals, as well as implicitly highlighting the importance of the creative arts and heritage. In its call to integrate culture into policy, we can also read the importance of consideration of cultural concerns and factors, another priority of the campaign.

A clear weakness is the absence of a reference to culture as a specific goal (apparently due to a desire not to prejudge decisions around the format/structure of the post-2030 agenda), or as a pillar of sustainable development. Nonetheless, this does represent a valuable step forward for anyone who shares the campaign's focus on securing stronger recognition of the role of culture in wider policy-making.



Action 13 complements the reference to the role of intercultural dialogue by calling for an emphasis on promoting a **culture of peace**. The term is not new of course, but as the campaign has indicated in the past, carries the implication that to achieve a cultural outcome, there may need to be cultural actions. **Action 18** similarly promotes intercultural dialogue as part of the response to intolerance.

Action 14 includes strong condemnation of the **impact of armed conflict on cultural heritage**, alongside civilians and civilian infrastructure. It is important to see heritage as part of the wider peace agenda, although perhaps a shame that the concrete implementation proposed does not refer to the importance, for example, of the UNESCO 1954 and 1970 Conventions or other relevant work.

Action 46 underlines the commitment to guarantee human rights for all, and explicitly references **cultural rights** in this context. The introduction suggests that rights should be treated equally, and stresses the need to protect human rights defenders from intimidation and reprisals. The concrete commitments focus on building capacity in the UN human rights system, and ensuring better coordination. Seizing the opportunity of the operationalization of the Pact for a stronger emphasis on upholding cultural rights across the UN's work would certainly be welcome.

Action 53 highlights the need to develop measures of progress on sustainable development that go beyond GDP. While not explicitly referring to culture, this does open up a potential avenue to stronger consideration of wellbeing, where the evidence is compelling that access to culture and cultural participation can have an undeniable positive effect.

In sum, there is plenty in the Pact for the Future that anyone interested in securing a stronger role for arts, culture, and heritage can draw on in calling for decision-makers at all levels to do so.

CULTURE IN THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT

Adopted alongside the Pact, the Global Digital Compact offers a framework for international cooperation around the governance of the internet and digital technologies. It includes notable references to culture and places an emphasis on the need to work in ways that are consistent with **cultural rights**. It also highlights the need to support **cultural and linguistic diversity in the digital space** (notably through the regulation of AI and in the development of datasets), as well as to ensure that initiatives for promoting digital literacy **take account of the cultural needs of each society**.



The references to cultural diversity help underline the need to recognise and link efforts to implement the UNESCO 2005 Convention more specifically to the work of the UN as a whole. We also strongly welcome the recognition of the need to ensure that policies are culturally informed and relevant.

CULTURE IN THE DECLARATION OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Declaration on Future Generations sets out a commitment to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations, while leaving no one behind. In this context, it includes a recognition that such consideration of future generations is culturally embedded in many societies.

Beyond this, there is a reaffirmation of the need to uphold **cultural rights**, as well as to **honour, promote and preserve cultural diversity and cultural heritage**. The Declaration replicates text from the Pact around intercultural dialogue and restitution, but includes new provisions around the importance of **safeguarding the traditions, spiritual beliefs and ancestral knowledge of indigenous peoples**, as well as **strengthening their cultural institutions**.

Beyond those elements in the Declaration which repeat text elsewhere, it is welcome to see the needs of **Indigenous communities** recognised so strongly. We also welcome the strong connection between consideration of culture and broader questions of sustainability.



ANNEX 2 BACKGROUND

During the process of creation and adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, several cultural global networks campaigned, under the banner ‘[The Future We Want Includes Culture](#)’, for the inclusion of one specific Goal devoted to Culture, and the integration of cultural aspects across the SDGs. In the context of this #Culture2015goal campaign, 4 documents were produced: a [Manifesto – Proposal for a Goal](#) (September 2013), a [Declaration on the inclusion of culture in the 2030 Agenda](#) (May 2014), a [proposal of indicators for measuring the cultural aspects of the SDGs](#) (February 2015), and a [Communiqué on the final 2030 Agenda](#) (September 2015) which highlighted “progress made” but also noticed that “important steps remain ahead”.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the #Culture2030goal campaign released on 20 April 2020 a Statement entitled “[Ensuring culture fulfils its potential in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)”, which was [officially launched](#) on 21 May 2020, on the occasion of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. The Statement has been [endorsed by the President of the United Nations General Assembly](#) and signed by more than 280 individuals and organisations worldwide.

The campaign has published two analytical (and critical) reports on the cultural dimension of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: “[Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda](#)”, analysing the National Voluntary Reviews, in 2019, and “[Culture in the Localization of the SDGs: An Analysis of the Voluntary Local Reviews \(VLRs\)](#)”, in 2021. The campaign has also promoted several discussions in the context of the [2020](#) and [2021](#) United Nations High-Level Political Fora (HLPF).

In 2021, the campaign published its [strategic vision](#). The campaign wants a stronger place for culture throughout the implementation of the current UN 2030 Agenda, the adoption of an explicit Goal for Culture in the Post-2030 Development Agenda, and the adoption of an ambitious and comprehensive Global Agenda for Culture.

In 2022, in the context of the UNESCO Global Conference on Cultural Policies organised in Mexico City, Mondiacult 2022, the campaign launched a [Zerodraft of a future Culture Goal](#), and welcomed the undertaking in the Final Declaration of the Conference to integrate a specific Culture Goal in the post-2030 development agenda, with the Statement “[Commitment to an explicit culture goal in MONDIACULT Declaration welcome: now is the time to deliver](#)”.



In 2023, we have seen five key high-level, cross-governmental declarations that recognise the need for an explicit culture goal.

- | First of all, on 23 August 2023, the leaders of the [BRICS group](#) committed to integrate culture into their national development policies as a driver and an enabler for the achievement of the SDGs.
- | Second, on 9-10 September 2023, G20 heads of state and government released their [G20 Leaders Declaration](#) including a whole heading on culture as a transformative driver of the SDGs. In particular, they called to advance the inclusion of culture as a standalone Goal in future discussions on a possible post-2030 development agenda.
- | Third, all UN Member States, meeting at the [SDG Summit](#) on 18 September 2023, reaffirmed the role of culture as an enabler of sustainable development, contributing to more effective and sustainable development policies and measures at all levels.
- | The Ministers of Culture of the European Union adopted the [Caceres Declaration](#) on 26 September 2023, committing to work for culture to be recognised in and of itself as a new sustainable development goal.
- | The UCLG Culture Summit, on 30 November 2023, in the [Dublin Statement](#) reaffirmed the commitment of cities and local and regional governments in favour of a Culture Goal.

In September 2024, the Ministers for Culture of the G7 released [the Ministerial Declaration "Culture, common good of humanity, common responsibility"](#), in which they commit to "promote the inclusion of culture as a standalone goal in future discussions on how to advance sustainable development beyond 2030".

These declarations point to a strong and positive trend in favour of substantial efforts to integrate culture into development agendas.

The Culture2030Goal campaign and its members stand ready to accelerate work in this area, working in partnership with relevant actors at all levels. The campaign looks forward to leading cross-governmental work programmes around the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the Pact for the Future. This includes the publication of a more in-depth proposal of a Culture Goal (to be published in July 2025 and to be presented in Mondiacult 2025) and the exploration of the feasibility of a Major Group within the UN system.



I Arterial Network
Web: www.arterialafrica.org



I Culture Action Europe
Web: www.cultureactioneurope.org



I ICOMOS - International Council on Monuments and Sites
Web: www.icomos.org



I IFCCD - International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity
Web: www.ficdc.org



I IFLA - International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
Web: www.ifla.org



I IMC - International Music Council
Web: www.imc-cim.org



I UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) Culture Committee - Agenda 21 for culture
Web: www.agenda21culture.net



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