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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 [74/230](#).

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\* [A/76/150](#).



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

### *Summary*

The present report, prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders, presents an overview of the progress made in culture and sustainable development since the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution [74/230](#). The report includes an assessment of progress made in the compilation of quantitative data, the development of national capacities and international cooperation instruments to strengthen the nexus between culture and sustainable development.

## I. Introduction

1. The present report was coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). A global consultation was implemented involving 193 States members of UNESCO, 11 associate members, 96 intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), 360 civil society organizations (CSOs), 101 UNESCO culture Chairs, 8 University Twinning and Networking Programme (Unitwin) networks and 43 United Nations system agencies. The report contains details about the progress achieved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 74/230 from June 2019 to June 2021, and highlights the transversal role of culture in advancing sustainable development at the international, regional, subregional, national and local levels. Country-specific figures have been provided by member States as part of the consultation, unless otherwise stated.

2. As we enter the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, harnessing the transformative power of culture is more important than ever, as was demonstrated by the manifold impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The worldwide health crisis accentuated social inequalities, yet was also testimony to the power of culture to support resilience through people-centred approaches and highlighted the urgent need for climate action. Although culture has no stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal, it is a powerful enabler in shaping sustainable development pathways across the public policy spectrum. National reports issued in response to the consultation have demonstrated that culture pervades all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and can help to fill implementation gaps.

3. Since the previous report was issued in 2019, policy engagement around harnessing culture for sustainable development has gained significant momentum. Pursuant to its global and specialized mandate on culture, UNESCO has spearheaded these efforts. Strengthening the global policy dialogue on culture for sustainable development has been a core component, as demonstrated by the UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Culture, held in November 2019, which brought together 130 ministers, 39 years after the historic World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mondiacult) was held in Mexico City and 21 years after the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development was held in Stockholm. Regional and subregional ministerial forums on culture and the inclusion of culture in other policy mechanisms have further strengthened that momentum. In particular, the unprecedented integration of culture into the summit meetings of the Group of 20 (G-20) of 2020, held under the presidency of Saudi Arabia, and 2021, held under the presidency of Italy, helped to raise the profile of culture as an uncontested driver of social and economic development. Other international initiatives, such as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, 2019, the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, 2013–2022 and the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, 2021, have equally testified to the growing commitment of Member States to investing in the economic and social benefits generated by and through culture. Those benefits were highlighted during the high-level event on culture and sustainable development hosted by the President of the General Assembly on 21 May 2021 to mark the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.

4. The pandemic has hit the cultural sector particularly hard. The massive closure of museums and cultural sites, and the cancellation of cultural events has had an impact on the entire cultural value chain, which affected the creation, production, distribution and access to cultural goods and services. The film industry lost 72 per cent of its revenue worldwide in 2020, or \$32 billion. At the height of the crisis, 90 per cent of world heritage sites were totally or partially closed, while museums recorded a 40 to 60 per cent decline in revenue compared to 2019. The pandemic also brought the living heritage practices of many communities to a halt, which weakened

intergenerational transmission. The crisis exposed pre-existing vulnerabilities within the cultural sector, notably the lack of protection of artists and cultural professionals, the prevalence of the informal economy, the dependence on tourism revenue, the insufficient adaptation to digital opportunities and the need to review and adapt policy mechanisms.

5. Yet, the pandemic has also brought to light culture's fundamental role in our societies and its impact on national growth and employment, which prompted world leaders to acknowledge the dividends of the sector for the global economy. The role of culture for well-being, resilience and social cohesion was harnessed for the policy response to COVID-19, including in prevention campaigns. Around the world, countries strove to provide continuous access to culture online during lockdowns, which contributed to an increase in cultural consumption in some subsectors, particularly music streaming services.

6. There has been an increasing integration of culture into country-level sustainable development strategies and mechanisms, as reflected in United Nations common country programming documents such as the common country assessments and United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks developed by United Nations country teams. In 2020, of the 47 countries that submitted voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, 63 per cent reported on the integration of culture in their development policies. Culture has provided policy responses that are relevant for sustainable development, notably on quality education (Sustainable Development Goal 4), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), reduced inequalities (Goal 10), sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11) and climate action (Goal 13). Several countries have taken significant steps to integrate culture into their sustainable development policy frameworks, policies and plans: for example, Norway and the Russian Federation have included sustainable development in their cultural policy documents, while Poland and Romania have mainstreamed culture in their sustainable development strategies. Some countries are spearheading international policy debates on culture and sustainable development. This is the case for Peru, where the initiative "Pact for Culture 2030" was launched.

7. United Nations system agencies, development banks and regional and subregional organizations have proven instrumental in bolstering culture for sustainable development by expanding policy dialogue, data collection, and policy advice and analysis, notably as part of their response to the pandemic. For example, the Ibero-American Conference of Heads of State and Government adopted a strategy for culture and sustainable development. The African Union has declared 2021 the Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want, to highlight the crucial role culture plays in achieving the African Union Agenda 2063. Likewise, the European Commission launched the open method of coordination on the cultural dimension of sustainable development.

8. Instruments to measure the impact of culture on sustainable development have expanded. UNESCO developed the Culture 2030 thematic indicators with support from Spain, Sweden and the European Union. This framework of 22 thematic indicators is used to measure the contribution of culture to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional, national and local levels. The Pacific Community intends to integrate Culture 2030 indicators into its new regional culture strategy. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics released the first set of data for indicator 11.4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which is used to monitor cultural and natural heritage expenditures, based on 62 member State survey responses. Among numerous examples, a study on the cultural and creative industries in South American countries was conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization of Ibero-American States, the South American Common Market and the Ibero-American General Secretariat.

9. Likewise, international normative instruments on cultural heritage and creativity were leveraged to enshrine culture in sustainable development processes. The UNESCO Culture Conventions and programmes further embedded sustainable development through the alignment of their monitoring mechanisms and policy instruments with the Sustainable Development Goals. The “Dive into living heritage” platform was developed under the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to highlight the links between intangible heritage and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Under the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted in 2005, an open road map was adopted to guide digital strategies for the cultural and creative industries. Overall, 78 States parties to the Convention reported approaches to mainstreaming culture into development policies. The UNESCO cultural funding mechanisms provided approximately \$9.8 million to support developing countries in harnessing culture for sustainable development; 44 per cent of those funds went to Africa and 8.7 per cent to small island developing States.

10. Policy guidance instruments were developed, including as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response. UNESCO monitored world heritage site closures and carried out surveys among member States, site managers, living heritage bearers and local authorities to track the pandemic’s impact. Monitoring and guidance tools include the monthly UNESCO tracker on culture and public policy, the UNESCO publication *Culture in Crisis: Policy Guide for a Resilient Creative Sector*, and the publications *Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals: Policy Guidance for Heritage and Development Actors* and *Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: A Report by the Culture 2030 Goal Campaign* of the International Council on Monuments and Sites.

11. Local authorities and CSOs continued to increase their role in harnessing culture for sustainable development. CSOs reported on a wide range of activities across various cultural domains including education and tourism at the national, regional and international levels. To support active dialogue as part of the COVID-19 response, UNESCO launched the ResiliArt movement, a participatory mechanism for civil society, artists and cultural professionals. Two hundred seventy debates were held in 110 countries, which resulted in recommendations for cultural policy decisions in priority areas, such as fair remuneration and social protections.

## **II. Culture as a driver of sustainable development across the public policy spectrum**

### **A. Bridging the gap between culture and education to reduce inequalities and expand skills for the future**

12. During the reporting period there was a growing engagement of policymakers aimed at strengthening the nexus between culture and education and thus to address gaps in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and devise strategies, policies and approaches to equip learners with future-proof knowledge and skills. Synergies between education and culture across its manifold dimensions, from heritage, to arts and creativity, as well as synergies with other sectors, are increasingly promoted in order to strengthen inclusive quality education and learning outcomes for all.

13. This growing policy interest is reflected at the global, regional and national levels. With the support of UNESCO, the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination launched a subregional strategy aimed at strengthening the culture and education nexus to guide countries in developing more inclusive and context-relevant

educational models. The growing interest is also reflected at the national level: more than 80 per cent of the countries participating in the present consultation reported on programmes for capacity development in the cultural and creative industries. Likewise, 65 per cent of the countries reported initiatives to integrate culture into formal educational programmes through technical and vocational education.

14. The presence of culture and the arts in education is being expanded across countries to shape human capacities for the future. As part of the UNESCO landmark initiative entitled “Futures of education”, which is aimed at rethinking the role of education with 2050 as a time horizon, the UNESCO governing bodies have endorsed several strategic initiatives for which it has garnered a broad consensus. In that connection, the United Arab Emirates engaged member States to establish a framework for culture and art education by 2023 aimed at enhancing cooperation between education and culture at the national level. The aim of the framework is to expand employment and competencies by developing cultural institutions and related curricula and training and building on digital opportunities in anticipation of the need for a more adaptive and skilled labour force. In the same vein, Bahrain and the Republic of Korea catalysed support from member States for promoting linkages between culture and education to enhance knowledge and skills as fundamental dimensions of sustainable development.

15. Education in fields related to culture, such as heritage and the arts, is increasingly harnessed to overcome social, economic and gender disparities by expanding professional opportunities across generations. In Indonesia, 400 young people living near iconic heritage sites received training on business development and heritage conservation. In Pakistan, UNESCO worked with provincial departments of education and tourism to boost heritage-related entrepreneurship among young people around selected sites. Similarly, in northern Thailand, Hmong artisan women received digital and entrepreneurial training under the UNESCO project entitled “Women e-nspire culture” to safeguard their living heritage. The competence framework for cultural heritage management is aimed at supporting universities in the design of curricula and training programmes on cultural heritage management and conservation. It was developed by a partnership of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization. In Yemen, UNESCO and the European Union launched a project entitled “Cash for work” under which employment is created for vulnerable young people in urban rehabilitation and cultural programming in response to damage and socioeconomic disruption caused by the pandemic and the conflict in the country. Finally, the establishment of 16 UNESCO Chairs at higher education institutions in 14 countries has expanded opportunities for research, innovation and cooperation on culture and education.

16. The programme entitled “Education through culture” and the arts are increasingly considered an effective inroad into reimagining education. Under its programme entitled “Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in formal and non-formal education”, UNESCO has started an online platform known as the clearing house for living heritage and education aimed at showcasing the linkages between traditional knowledge, skills and practices, and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNESCO has developed guidance materials for educators to integrate living heritage into education programmes that have been used in 41 countries, including 8 small island developing States and 22 African countries. In Senegal, a network of educational institutions was created that has supported the development of teacher training materials on intangible cultural heritage. As part of another multi-country project, this time in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi,

Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe, living heritage was integrated into teacher capacity development. In Bulgaria, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Science have developed curricula on culture and the arts with a focus on knowledge, expression and living heritage. Belgium has defined specific goals for arts education. Finally, the Republic of Korea held two online events with artists and arts educators to celebrate the anniversary of the UNESCO Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education.

17. The “Education through culture” programme remains the key to fostering learners’ critical and creative thinking and cognitive competences, as well as to broadening the understanding of sustainable development. The National University of Costa Rica has launched a capacity-development programme for professional artists and students on the links between the arts and the Sustainable Development Goals. CSOs have engaged in leveraging culture in education to promote sustainable development, such as through the partnership between the non-governmental organization Eko Centar Delfin and the Regional Development Agency for Herzegovina, and two primary schools in the cities of Risan, Montenegro, and Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aim of the partnership is to carry out an informal educational programme aligned with national goals on education for sustainable development.

18. Countries have developed policies and initiatives to leverage cultural institutions, in particular museums and cultural sites, to expand knowledge and the appreciation of cultural diversity. In China, a countrywide initiative was launched to enrich educational content by creating partnerships between museums and primary and secondary schools. In Mali, the National Directorate for Cultural Heritage focused on raising awareness of cultural heritage among young people through educational guided tours of cultural sites. In Indonesia, the Batik Museum in Pekalongan offers non-formal education in and training on traditional textiles. In Serbia, the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Museum of Vojvodina introduced the eMuseum to connect schools and museums by means of digital technology.

## **B. Sustaining the cultural and creative economy to promote sustainable livelihoods**

19. The economic and social contribution of the cultural sector, in particular its transformative impact in creating decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods, is now undisputed around the world. Testimony to that recognition is the unprecedented inclusion of culture in global economic forums and the proclamation, at the initiative of Indonesia, of 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. Indonesia will hold the presidency of the G-20 in 2022. UNESCO has worked closely with its international partners both in the United Nations system and outside it, notably the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and regional IGOs and development banks. It has supported the progressive integration of culture as a standing policy area in the deliberations of the G-20. Throughout the present consultation, member States expressed their support for culture and development as a follow-up to earlier resolutions of the General Assembly on the subject.

20. The creative economy remains among the fastest-growing sectors globally, estimated in 2015 to account for 3 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) and employing some 30 million people, including more young people aged 15 to 29 than any other sector. Although no updated global figure is available, the contribution

to national economies is testimony to the dividends generated by the cultural and creative industries. For example, the cultural and creative industries are estimated to employ 1 million people in Malaysia and 3.8 per cent of the workforce in Ukraine, while the film industry is the second largest employer in Nigeria and the cultural economy accounts for 6.72 per cent of national employment in South Africa. Likewise, the cultural and creative industries account for approximately 4.8 per cent of the GDP of Jamaica and 4.62 per cent of the GDP of Montenegro, while the design sector alone represents 3.5 per cent of the GDP of Lebanon.

21. Around the world, cultural tourism is another core sector of the cultural economy. While the travel and tourism sector, as a leading component of international trade, contributed 10.4 per cent to global GDP in 2019, cultural tourism was among the fastest-growing segments. According to a 2018 survey by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) involving 69 Member States, cultural tourism accounted for an estimated 40 per cent of world tourism and was a core priority for national Governments, as reflected in 90 per cent of those countries' tourism policies. Cultural tourism is also increasingly mentioned in voluntary national reviews, which reflects a growing understanding of its transformative impact on the prospects for sustainable development. However, global tourism figures for 2021 are expected to remain negative compared to the levels from before the pandemic, with international tourist arrivals down by 83 per cent in the first quarter of 2021 by comparison to 2020.

22. While the pandemic massively disrupted the cultural economy, it also exposed the magnitude of culture-related employment and revenue. The economic repercussions extend beyond the cultural sector itself, given its interaction with many other economic sectors that contribute greatly to the global economy, such as travel, food, leisure and hospitality. In low- to middle-income countries whose GDP and employment largely depend on cultural tourism, this impact has been felt even more heavily. Mass vaccinations against COVID-19 are resulting in an increase in domestic tourism and the reopening of countries to international tourism, notably in Europe. The pandemic exacerbated the vulnerability of cultural professionals and businesses, which made the economic and social impact of culture more visible to policymakers. This incited countries to adapt their policies.

23. Countries have increasingly invested in the cultural and creative economy, including as part of national COVID-19 recovery strategies, to accelerate sustainable development. Among the numerous newly developed or revised national policy frameworks for the creative economy are culture and creative industries strategy of Zimbabwe, the national strategy for culture of Albania, the creative circles initiative of Egypt and the national know-how strategy of Portugal. Culture and tourism are core components of the economic diplomacy strategy of Cambodia and were integrated in the Law on Investment adopted in 2020 in Viet Nam. Finally, cultural tourism is a key aspect of the master plan for sustainable tourism of Panama. Many countries provided emergency support to cultural organizations and individuals affected by the pandemic through financial support schemes for economic recovery or cultural sector-specific mechanisms. For example, Germany approved a comprehensive economic stimulus package for the cultural sector of up to €2 billion over 2020 and 2021, while in Tunisia, the culture revival fund provided an innovative public-private endowment. Other forms of support, such as the participation of investment banks, non-profit organizations and crowdfunding, have shifted the lines on funding for culture towards more robust public-private partnerships and civil society engagement. Countries are also supporting wider policy debates on the creative economy through international forums such as the Great World Forum of Arts, Culture, Creativity and Technology, organized by Colombia, or the Culture Summit Abu Dhabi, hosted by the United Arab Emirates.

24. These efforts to harness culture for sustainable economic development are increasingly supported by international and regional organizations, which have scaled up their support to the creative economy, cultural tourism and museums by providing financial assistance, policy guidance or monitoring instruments. Through its Culture Conventions and programmes, as well as its 21 specialised category II centres, UNESCO continues to support countries and communities in harnessing culture to promote sustainable livelihoods. Over the reporting period, the International Fund for Cultural Diversity has financed 17 projects in 16 of the least developed and developing countries, for a total of \$1.2 million. The UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme serves to support the transition towards more resilient models of tourism through initiatives such as the UNESCO sustainable tourism pledge, created in partnership with the Expedia Group, by which businesses are required to promote local culture. Likewise, online platforms such as those entitled “World heritage journeys of Europe” and “World heritage journeys Buddha” in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, were developed by UNESCO and National Geographic with support from the European Union and the Korea International Cooperation Agency, respectively. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development continues to monitor data on the creative economy at the national and global levels. Regional development banks are increasingly involved in the cultural sector: the African Development Bank supports that continent’s fashion industry through the Fashionomics Africa programme, while the Caribbean Development Bank awards cultural organizations grants of up to \$1.4 million. Likewise, the Inter-American Development Bank launched a massive open online course to build skills in the cultural and creative industries, which it refers to as the “orange economy”. The Organization of American States supported sustainable heritage tourism programmes across the region. An increasing number of national and regional development projects are focused on the creative economy, among them the UNESCO Transcultural programme and Creative Caribbean project funded by the European Union, which are aimed at stimulating the cultural economy through job creation and foster sustainable development in the Caribbean.

### **C. Safeguarding cultural heritage and mobilizing culture for peace and reconciliation**

25. Over the past decade, the safeguarding of culture has increasingly become a security imperative. Culture has been instrumentalized for divisive purposes as a target in conflict. Deliberate attacks on cultural heritage are attempts to obliterate cultural diversity. Likewise, the growth in trafficking in cultural property, which is closely linked to international crime, looting and smuggling as referred to in Security Council resolution 2199 (2015), deprive communities of their cultural memory, which weakens the foundations of social cohesion. The amount of disinformation and hate speech has surged. In 2020, a total of 978 violations of artistic freedom were reported in 89 countries. Overall, the upsurge in threats to culture has contributed to a global setback in the realization of cultural rights by curtailing the right to practice cultural activities and access to culture, a global trend documented through the 21 annual thematic reports issued since 2009 by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. In recent years, the United Nations and other IGOs have referred to attacks on cultural heritage and cultural minorities as infringements of cultural rights. Echoing this concern, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in its global report for 2019, reiterated that economic, social and cultural rights were essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. In that context, global efforts to protect culture as a foundation for peace have been scaled up. UNESCO has taken the lead in countering attacks against culture in

line with Security Council resolution 2347 (2017), the first Security Council resolution focused solely on cultural heritage. In so doing, UNESCO is building on its Culture Conventions and programmes by mobilizing the international community and strengthening the cultural dimension in humanitarian, security and peacebuilding actions. Cooperation with other United Nations system entities and international partners in the areas of cultural heritage and the fight against trafficking was broadened. Those entities and partners included the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Task Force, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (Unidroit), the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, the International Council of Museums, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, Blue Shield International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Criminal Court and the Security Council. As a reflection of those efforts, the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict launched a programme entitled “Heritage for peace” programme to strengthen the role of cultural heritage in conflict prevention and resolution and as a tool for post-conflict recovery. UNODC incorporated culture into local programmes on crime prevention. UNESCO, UNODC and the World Customs Organization jointly conducted several training activities on the prevention of trafficking in cultural property in Cambodia, Cuba, Jordan, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Panama and Thailand.

27. During the reporting period, the cultural dimension of peacebuilding and development was harnessed for conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery through several national and regional initiatives. In Iraq, progress has been made on the UNESCO flagship initiative named “Revive the spirit of Mosul”, which was launched in 2018 to revitalize the cultural life of Mosul by empowering local communities, particularly young people, to rebuild their historic landmarks and neighbourhoods. Following the explosion in Lebanon of August 2020, UNESCO launched the “Li Beirut” initiative to rehabilitate historical buildings, schools, museums and creative spaces, harnessing the power of culture for reconstruction, resilience and inclusion. Such efforts are increasingly integrated into national policy frameworks such as the national committee that Afghanistan recently established for the conservation of cultural property in wartime. At the regional level, the Ministers of Culture of the Group of Five for the Sahel highlighted in their Ouagadougou declaration the positive role culture plays in preventing and combating violent extremism. The role of culture in promoting regional dialogue and security is at the core of the mandate of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-Eastern Europe. The Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on peace mediation and on cultural heritage in conflicts and crises.

28. Culture is also increasingly being leveraged to support reconciliation. In Colombia, following the 2016 peace agreement, a UNESCO-funded project led by the Fundación Universidad del Norte enabled the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life through the use of living heritage as a tool for dialogue. In Mali, a symbolic reparations ceremony organized by the Trust Fund for Victims and the International Criminal Court was held in March 2021 in Bamako in collaboration with the Government to commemorate the destruction of the cultural heritage of Timbuktu. In Côte d’Ivoire, 400 young community agents were trained to act as peace mediators in an effort to build on traditional inter-ethnic partnerships as part of an initiative of the Ministry of Culture launched with support from UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

29. The strengthening of intercultural dialogue has gained impetus as part of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures. UNESCO has conducted research, capacity development and advocacy initiatives, and has been preparing the report of the Secretary-General on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace. Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, the International Council on Monuments and Sites has launched a think tank on anti-racist heritage practices. In partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace, UNESCO has developed an framework of indicators for measuring intercultural dialogue. During the International Year of Indigenous Languages (2019), 882 events and activities for the safeguarding and promotion of indigenous languages and cultures were held around the world to strengthen respect for cultural diversity. The Los Pinos Declaration [Chapoltepek] – Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages, adopted at a high-level event jointly organized by UNESCO and Mexico, laid the foundation for the upcoming International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032 proclaimed by the General Assembly in December 2019 (see [A/74/396](#) and General Assembly resolution [74/135](#)), for which UNESCO serves as the lead agency.

30. The promotion of cultural diversity as a positive resource for dialogue and social inclusion and in the fight against discrimination was at the heart of several national policy developments. Canada established the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat and the Deputy Minister Committee on Diversity and Inclusion to lead a cross-government approach to tackling systemic racism, discrimination and hate speech. Malaysia created the Ministry of National Unity and adopted a national unity policy to foster unity within communities of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. In South Africa, a social cohesion and nation-building compact is being developed as a collective agreement to address societal issues. Some countries leverage education to promote cultural diversity by fostering multicultural and interfaith approaches to education and global citizenship or investing in heritage education. For example, in Chile, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples are at the centre of cultural and linguistic policies; the Netherlands has adopted a diversity and inclusion code. Likewise, in Egypt, following the opening of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in 2021 with the support of UNESCO, educational strategies were developed to foster appreciation among young people for cultural diversity by encouraging them to learn about their heritage, thus laying the foundation for peaceful coexistence.

31. The growing commitment to cultural diplomacy at the national and regional levels has been enhanced to support for subregional and regional integration processes and the promotion of strategic partnerships. In the Central American countries, the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination of the Central American Integration System approved a subregional policy strategy on culture for regional integration. The joint inscriptions of living heritage practices – such as the art of miniature in Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Uzbekistan, tree beekeeping culture in Belarus and Poland, and traditional weaving of Al Sadu in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait – and the joint nomination for inclusion in the World Heritage List of the Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří Mining Region (Czechia and Germany) are testimony to the ability that culture has to foster collaborative and inclusive approaches to promoting peace and cooperation. Likewise, the UNESCO Silk Roads programme has been instrumental in strengthening regional cooperation among the 40 participating countries along these cultural routes, while also increasing the prospects for cultural tourism.

## **D. Leveraging synergies between culture and nature for climate action and the protection of biodiversity**

32. The multifaceted impact of climate change on cultural heritage is now fully recognized, including in the “Report of the Secretary-General on the 2019 Climate Action Summit and the way forward in 2020”. In the report, UNESCO is entrusted with leading advocacy, analysis and knowledge-building on culture for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Climate change is now regarded as the biggest threat to natural heritage, putting a third of the 252 UNESCO natural World Heritage sites at risk. Increased ocean temperatures and acidification, and coral bleaching in particular, endanger marine World Heritage sites. Fires, floods, droughts, extreme weather events and rising sea levels threaten the conservation of all World Heritage sites; increased soil temperatures potentially jeopardize archaeological sites. Climate change is also disrupting social and cultural practices, threatening traditional knowledge and livelihoods, weakening the capacity of communities to adapt and taking an economic toll on local communities. The small island developing States – where cultural and biological diversity are intrinsically linked – are particularly imperilled, especially because they rely on coastal tourism.

33. Overall, culture remains an untapped wellspring for climate adaptation and mitigation. Sites designated by UNESCO, including World Heritage sites, biosphere reserves and geoparks protect some 10 million square kilometres of cultural heritage and biodiversity worldwide because they act as carbon sinks and thus extract greenhouse emissions from the atmosphere. World Heritage sites, including urban sites, also provide learning laboratories for studying climate change impacts and experimenting with low-carbon solutions. Moreover, traditional knowledge such as local and traditional food security strategies, or water and land management techniques, notably those borne by indigenous communities, are a vital source of resilience and adaptation, a contribution that is acknowledged in the Paris Agreement.

34. Climate action has gained greater attention from policymakers in the context of the preservation of cultural and natural heritage. At the request of the State parties to the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 2007 policy on the impact of climate change on World Heritage properties has been updated to provide action-oriented recommendations for adapting to the impact of climate change. The Convention’s operational guidelines were also updated to strengthen the participation of indigenous communities in heritage management, notably with regard to climate action. During the reporting period, 11 intangible cultural heritage elements and 11 World Heritage sites were inscribed – under the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, respectively – that expressly embody the contribution of heritage to climate adaptation. Over the same period, 42 UNESCO biosphere reserves and 23 UNESCO geoparks were registered in 50 countries. UNESCO has strengthened cooperation with the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, which is involved in the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and with the secretariats of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which foster ecological connectivity and tackle illegal wildlife trade. To facilitate the contribution of the private sector to climate action, UNESCO has developed a practical guide for insurance companies to encourage climate-compatible investments in World Heritage sites and has reached an agreement with British Petroleum on the interruption of oil and gas exploration and production at World Heritage sites.

35. Efforts to monitor climate change impacts on cultural heritage were strengthened. The UNESCO, the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and GEO

Greece launched the Urban Heritage Climate Observatory to monitor the impact of climate change on World Heritage sites and support mitigation and adaptation. As a follow-up to the Climate Action Summit, UNESCO and WMO, under the coordination of Greece, launched an initiative on addressing climate change impacts on cultural heritage, which included a flexible mechanism to bridge scientific knowledge, as a policy contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. WMO recognized some 117 so-called centennial observing stations WMO for the cultural and scientific value they represent in the assessment of climate variability.

36. Marine heritage is increasingly harnessed for the protection of oceans, particularly as part of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), led by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. Marine World Heritage sites, which comprise at least 21 per cent of the global area of blue carbon ecosystems and whose carbon stores amount to approximately 10 per cent of the world's annual greenhouse gas emissions, are developing resilience strategies, as detailed in the 2021 publication "Custodians of the globe's blue carbon assets". In Australia, a climate adaptation strategy was pioneered at the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage site as part of the Resilient Reefs initiative, which is intended to develop resilience strategies in four other coral reefs listed as World Heritage in Belize, France and Palau. Likewise, under the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, marine sciences and underwater archaeology are combined to provide integrated ocean management solutions, while also contributing to the so-called blue economy through tourism development, recreational diving and underwater museums.

37. Other global initiatives have promoted the contribution of culture to climate action. In an effort to raise awareness of the importance of traditional farming practices for sustainable food production, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has recognized 6 new globally important agricultural heritage systems in Brazil, Morocco, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Tunisia, which combine agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and outstanding cultural heritage. The role of culture in the sustainable use of natural resources was highlighted at the launch of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030. Through its Faith for Earth initiative, the United Nations Environment Programme is exploring the contribution of faith-based organizations and intercultural dialogue to the restoration of ecosystems.

38. At the national level, countries are strengthening linkages between culture and climate policies, although this nexus remains insufficiently addressed. Algeria and Jamaica, for example, have integrated culture into their national biodiversity protection plans, while France's national climate change adaptation plan includes specific recommendations related to cultural and natural heritage. Finland has developed a cultural environmental strategy through which it leverages art and culture for education on climate change and sustainable development.

39. Another area of engagement is the development of needs assessments and disaster risk management to mitigate climate change impacts on cultural heritage. Damage inflicted on the cultural sector in El Salvador and Honduras by tropical storms in 2020 was assessed as part of the post-disaster needs assessment to inform national recovery efforts. In Nepal, an archaeological risk map was prepared for the 235 sites in the greater Lumbini area. In 2020, Japan opened a cultural heritage disaster risk management centre. During the reporting period, the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund provided \$1.7 million for 38 projects in 38 countries. The role of intangible cultural heritage in supporting preparedness, resilience and recovery efforts was further integrated into policy recommendations for the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. To further

support the contribution of cultural heritage to disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience efforts, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property developed a programme on first aid and resilience for cultural heritage in times of crisis.

40. Anchoring culture in the global climate agenda remains a critical endeavour, as highlighted by the “Report of the Secretary-General on the 2019 Climate Action Summit and the Way Forward in 2020”. At the summit, UNESCO was requested to form a follow-up committee to continue outreach on the Initiative on Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage from Climate Change, with the support of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Greece, and develop programmes to mitigate the impact of climate change on cultural and natural heritage. At the fifty-second session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), reference was made to the role of culture in climate action. In 2020, IPCC, UNESCO and the International Council on Monuments and Sites launched an initiative on cultural heritage and climate change to assess the state of knowledge and prepare an international expert meeting on culture, heritage and climate change, which is to take place at the end of 2021, to support the integration of culture into the international climate agenda. Culture was also a topic of discussion in the run-up to the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2019 and during the Conference itself, and in 2020, under the leadership of Greece, a flexible mechanism to accelerate actions and cooperation on addressing climate change impacts on cultural and natural heritage was established.

41. The role of culture in climate action is increasingly addressed in regional and global policy forums. It is among the priorities of the G-20 meeting of culture ministers to be held in 2021. The European Commission has integrated cultural heritage into its regional strategy to make buildings green, while the heritage organization Europa Nostra and the International Council on Monuments and Sites have launched a policy paper on the role of cultural heritage in the European Green Deal. The Council of Europe leverages the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society to advance climate action and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **E. Advancing gender equality and youth engagement through culture for access, inclusion, and equity**

42. Women and young people still face critical inequalities in the cultural sector. Although women are well represented in the cultural sector, they remain underrepresented in high-level creative roles and decision-making positions and face substantial gender pay gaps. Inequalities have been exacerbated by the pandemic, with women of African descent and indigenous women particularly likely to face barriers, as has been exposed in the 2021 UNESCO report, *Gender and Creativity: Progress on the Precipice*. As highlighted in a 2020 policy brief of the International Labour Organization, sexual harassment in the entertainment industry also remains rife. Young people are another priority group for many countries, particularly since the onset of the health crisis, which has disproportionately affected young people, who were already three times more likely to be unemployed. The share of youth employment in the creative sector is larger in low-income countries, as outlined in a recent World Bank report. In Pakistan, for instance, nearly one-third of the people in cultural occupations are under 24 years old, while in Ghana and Uganda, more than 25 per cent of those in the creative economy are young people.

43. Over the reporting period, culture has been increasingly leveraged by countries to advance gender equality and youth engagement. For example, France established an equity roadmap in 2018 to guide its cultural policies in favour of gender equality, while Argentina has adopted access quota for female artists to music events to promote the inclusion of gender-diverse performers. Austria and Germany have created trusts centres to provide psychological and legal support to victims of harassment and violence in the cultural sector. In recognition of the sustained growth of the cultural and creative industries, Lesotho and Serbia have implemented strategies targeting young people in which culture and creativity are recognized as key dimensions. Country-level policy engagement should be sustained to harness the transformative role of culture to advance gender- and youth-inclusive policies, notably by producing gender- and age-disaggregated data to inform transformative policymaking and fostering employment and empowerment.

44. Similar efforts are being supported by regional and international organizations. UNESCO has launched two initiatives targeting young women creators. The “You are next” initiative is targeted at gender equality in the digital creative industries, an environment particularly challenging for women, with the aim of boosting the technical and entrepreneurial skills of young women in Mexico, Senegal, the State of Palestine and Tajikistan. In Nara, Japan, 10 young African women filmmakers from Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria Senegal and South Africa were awarded an artistic residency to strengthen their skills and give them access to international markets. UNESCO is supporting efforts by Colombia to map the situation of women in the publishing and audiovisual sectors. It is also developing a gender-disaggregated data framework for film sector in Indonesia and aiding Senegal in the development of a diploma in cultural management, whose first graduating class will be 100 per cent female. In addition, in Peru, the UNESCO-Mali grant for women cultural managers is aimed at promoting the work of women in the sector. In Samoa, UNESCO, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Programme, delivering as one, are using culture to address gender stereotypes and deep-rooted inequalities in certain communities. Specifically supporting young people, UNESCO continues to hold the annual World Heritage Youth Forum, thus offering young people a chance to learn about and respond to the threats facing World Heritage. In 2019, a new network of young heritage professionals emerged from a UNESCO-European Union initiative entitled “Cultural heritage messengers”, as part of which social responsibility in preservation efforts and bolstering positive social change is fostered among young people. The Arab World Heritage Young Professionals Forum focused on the links between peacebuilding, preservation and the promotion of World Heritage. In 2020, the UNESCO-Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman International Prize for the Creative Economy was launched to reward outstanding initiatives that promote youth engagement in the creative economy.

## **F. Forging sustainable cities and human settlements through regeneration strategies with culture at their centre**

45. Sustainable cities are a strategic entry point for culture into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goal 11 is the only Goal that includes an explicit target related to culture, target 11.4, in which the role of culture for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities is recognized. Building on the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III, held in October 2016), the recognition of culture was reinforced as part of the tenth World Urban Forum of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

(UN-Habitat), held in 2020, at which culture and creativity were placed at the centre of the global conversation on sustainable urban development. Meanwhile, Armenia and Finland reported stepping up the devolution of their powers in the area of culture to local authorities.

46. Cultural heritage and the cultural and creative industries are increasingly being leveraged to support urban sustainability. During the reporting period, 66 cities in 49 countries joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which now totals 246 cities in 80 countries. UNESCO World Heritage sites in 313 urban areas, and Network member cities are engaged in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals by promoting the appreciation of cultural diversity, safeguarding natural and cultural heritage and boosting social inclusion. In 2019, UNESCO launched a cities' platform to maximize the impact of its specialized cities networks in the fields of education, culture and the sciences to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The platform serves as a laboratory of ideas to exchange knowledge, thus sustaining innovative strategies to advance quality education, social justice, urban rehabilitation, climate action and disaster risk reduction.

47. Culture has gained traction as a means to promote sustainable urban development, as it acts as a driving force behind economic, social and environmental progress. UNESCO Cities of Design, which are part of the Creative Cities Network, have promoted the reuse of historical buildings for housing purposes and leveraged culture in public spaces to promote walkability, safety and well-being, especially during the pandemic. Culture and creativity can stimulate resilience by supporting behavioural change, sparking the adaptation of production and consumption patterns and encouraging the sustainable use of natural resources. During the World Forum on the theme "Culture and food: innovative strategies for sustainable development", which was held in Parma, Italy, in 2019, UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy demonstrated how the cultural and creative sectors contribute to preventing food waste, fostering societal transformation among young people and promoting the value of urban-rural linkages to support climate action.

48. The pandemic has revealed the power of culture as a resource for city recovery and resilience by fostering knowledge, innovation, and intercultural dialogue. Culture-based urban regeneration strategies have proven critical for cities in their efforts to better cope with challenges such as unequal access, discrimination and exclusion. In response, the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments developed the document "2020 Rome charter: the right to participate fully and freely in cultural life is vital to our cities and communities". The responses mounted by local governments to the pandemic have further highlighted the importance of mobilizing the cultural and creative capital of cities as part of efforts to address the crisis. In the publication *UNESCO Creative Cities' Response to COVID-19*, measures taken in 90 cities are documented. Digital platforms are critical for building on cultural capital to maximize civic engagement and inclusion in increasingly diverse urban areas.

49. Tools and policy mechanisms for sustainable urban development have been developed that place culture, creativity and innovation at the centre stage. In May 2021, UNESCO and the World Bank published a policy paper entitled *Cities, Culture, and Creativity: Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth* in which they provided guidelines on leveraging the cultural and creative industries for sustainable urban development, city competitiveness and social inclusion. City-specific indicators have been integrated into the UNESCO Culture 2030 thematic indicators that measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in urban contexts. Also, culture has been included as one of the five core components of the UN-Habitat global urban monitoring framework. The recognition that culture has the ability to advance sustainable urban

development was further amplified by the pandemic, as reflected in the policy directions of regional IGOs and development banks. As an example, under the strategy for heritage conservation of historic cities implemented by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and the urban sector policy of the Islamic Development Bank, cultural heritage and tourism are set as core priorities.

### III. Conclusions

50. During the reporting period, global engagement to harness culture for sustainable development has been scaled up. The revitalization of the multilateral policy dialogue on culture at the global and regional levels, reflected, notably, in the UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Culture and the inclusion of culture at the G-20 Summit, are testimony to this global trend. So does the progress made in integrating culture into country-level sustainable development frameworks, policies and plans, as reflected in the voluntary national reviews that countries have submitted at the high-level political forum on sustainable development; the increased policy attention to cultural diplomacy; and the strengthening of policy and statistical instruments to monitor the impact that culture has on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. This trajectory will inform policy discussions and decisions at the World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (Mondiacult), to be hosted by UNESCO and the Government of Mexico in September 2022. Looking forward, the recognition of the transformative power of culture in societies, accentuated by the disruptive impact of the pandemic, opens up new pathways to renew multilateral dialogue.

51. Adapting the cultural sector to the digital transformation remains a critical challenge in harnessing the economic impact of culture and ensure that no one is left behind. While the social and economic benefits of culture are now undisputed and increasingly visible as drivers of global economies and levers of sustainable cities and human settlements, Member States have voiced the urgency of addressing issues of cultural diversity and equity in the digital environment in order to build open, inclusive and pluralistic societies. Ensuring the fair remuneration of artists and cultural professionals in the digital environment while improving their economic and social rights, including through strengthening the recommendation on the status of the artist adopted at the twenty-first session of UNESCO, held in 1980, is another major priority. In addition, ensuring equitable access to culture online and protecting cultural and linguistic diversity are key endeavours from the economic, social and ethical perspectives. More broadly, to enable culture to build more sustainable livelihoods and shape the future of work it is necessary to diversify the cultural economy across the spectrum of cultural domains, invest more robustly and systematically in women and young people in the cultural sector, and promote more inclusive business models, especially in the cultural tourism industry.

52. Strengthening linkages between culture and education is increasingly recognized as foundational to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and to equipping the citizens of tomorrow. Culture and education are pillars of human and societal development whose combined agency has multiple benefits across the public policy spectrum. Integrating culture into education and learning, as well leveraging cultural institutions and spaces for the development of knowledge and skills, should be systematized as a crucial inroad into reimagining education. Looking forward, synergies between culture and education will pave the way for innovation and the adaptability of present and future generations, enabling learners to adjust to a rapidly evolving environment and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

53. The safeguarding of cultural heritage and diversity has increasingly become a security imperative and is essential for a more stable and peaceful world. As migration, urbanization and the digital transformation are bringing cultures into closer proximity to each other, leveraging culture for social cohesion, conflict prevention and reconciliation is paramount. While cultural diversity is becoming a defining characteristic of our societies, combatting the instrumentalization of culture for divisive purposes, safeguarding cultural heritage as an educational resource and reaffirming cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as a force of unity will be central to sustaining peaceful and inclusive societies. In that context, upholding individual and collective cultural rights – understood as the right of access to, of participation in and to the enjoyment of culture – is paramount to sustaining equity in societies based on human rights, including by fostering the full participation of indigenous peoples in cultural policies affecting them.

54. Leveraging the linkages between culture and nature for climate action and the protection of biodiversity is another strategic endeavour. While the impact of climate change on culture is now fully recognized, advancing the power of culture to prompt climate adaptation and mitigation is a priority. Building on existing achievements, further efforts will be needed to share knowledge and inform policy adaptation, to embed climate action within cultural policies and, more widely, to anchor culture within the global climate agenda.

55. Recent policy developments are testimony to the power of culture for reshaping the public policy landscape. As the pandemic has exposed the need for more agile policy design and responses, it will be critical to orient public policy and funding schemes towards more flexible and inclusive models, including through more robust engagement of local governments and civil society in cultural policymaking and sustained efforts to build knowledge and data. It will be particularly necessary to expand multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels (across the United Nations system, with regional IGOs and development banks, and with CSOs) for culture as a unifying dimension for people-centred sustainable development. The inter-agency platform on culture for sustainable development recently established by UNESCO, together with regional and global policy forums and networks on culture and sustainable development, will be equally instrumental. Today, there is a growing momentum to capitalize on culture as a common good, and build on its transformative power to make societies more economically stable, more inclusive, more harmonious and more environmentally sustainable.