

BRUSSELS DECLARATION BY ARTISTS AND CULTURALS PROFESSIONALS AND ENTREPRENEURS

We, artists, professionals and culture entrepreneurs, from the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and European Union member States, met in Brussels from 1 to 3 April 2009 at the invitation of the Council of the ACP Group and the European Commission. The objective of this meeting was to facilitate a dialogue concerning current and future issues of cultural cooperation, the importance of the cultural sector for the consolidation of a knowledge-based society and a creative economy, based on the needs and expectations of professionals from ACP countries and on the priority guidelines needed for programmes of cultural cooperation between ACP countries and the European Union.

After so many conferences where clear diagnoses were established and specific recommendations were made but not pursued; after so many resolutions, programmes and action plans rarely put into practice, it is with a mixture of scepticism and hope that we have come to participate in this Colloquium.

The European Union has developed, over many years, important cultural cooperation programmes with all ACP countries. However, these programmes have not really been able to deliver national cultural policies nor helped to build more structured and professional cultural sectors at a national or regional level. Moreover, they remained limited to the cultural sector, with no real influence on development policies.

As clearly announced by the title of the colloquium, the intention to articulate culture, creation and development by involving culture professionals from ACP countries and Europe with high-level ACP and European Union politicians gives us hope. It makes us believe that this Declaration will not be a new international text without political and operational follow-up. If it is supported by the political leaders of the European Union and ACP countries, this declaration has a real chance to create a new dynamic.

Today, all countries face a profound crisis: financial, economic and social. In addition, particularly for developing countries, there are climate, energy, food and human security crisis. Current policies on development cooperation do not respond adequately to the challenges of sustainable development. We must, therefore, rethink our approach to development. And, without wishing to overstate the power of culture, we are convinced that, as already stated by Léopold Sédar Senghor, "culture is at the beginning and the end of development".

Many surveys and studies show us that culture and art is one of the most dynamic economic sectors in terms of employment, economic growth and wealth creation. It also promotes social cohesion and democratic participation in public life. Finally, unlike mineral resources, social and cultural capital is a renewable resource.

Regarding North-South cooperation, it cannot succeed without the improvement of human rights, democracy and governance. By stimulating individual and collective imagination and creating links between communities, culture and artistic creation contribute to the establishment and development of democracy.

Because culture contributes to economic development, wellbeing and social cohesion, and has an impact on other sectors of development, we, artists, professionals and culture entrepreneurs are making three key requests:

- first, that culture is the subject of public structural policies, at national, regional and international levels; - then, that the cultural dimension is taken into account by other sectorial policies and defined in a integrated approach to development; and, - finally, that

artists and creators are fully recognised as actors in development and have a professional and social status adapted to their own context.

It is time to act. In order to do this, we are making proposals that are based on the Cotonou Agreement, the Dakar Action Plan and the Santo Domingo Resolution (ACP), the Action Plan on "Cultural Industries for the development of Africa" (AU), the African Renaissance Charter, the Cultural Cooperation Protocol of the Economic Partnership Agreement between Cariforum States and the European Union, the Pacific Plan (Pacific Islands Forum), the International Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO) and the European Agenda for Culture (EU). These proposals arise from the analysis of barriers and opportunities that will enable us to increase the contribution of culture in development of ACP countries.

They correspond to three types of objectives and bring up several recommendations.

Objectives

At the political level:

- To bring policy makers together to formulate cultural policies, where they do not yet exist, and to pursue support policies for the cultural industries and the creative economy;
- To convince ACP States and European Union member States of the importance of culture in the development process and to translate this new priority in budgetary and financial terms;
- To increase the participation of ACP States in the cultural environment of the North so as to reduce their dependence and strengthen cultural diversity for the benefit of humanity;
- To create the conditions and the legal, regulatory and economic framework for the development of a creative economy;
- To strengthen the regional dimension in the building of infrastructure, institutions and markets, especially by promoting the creation of regional centres of excellence;
- To ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and democratic and involve the participation of the private sector and professional organisations;
- To encourage the development of North-South, South-South and intra-ACP mutually beneficial trade.

At the economic level:

- To encourage the establishment of national and regional markets and increase the market-share of local content in these markets;
- To enhance the capacity of ACP countries to create, produce, distribute, and to ensure competitive dissemination of cultural products in domestic, regional and international markets;
- To strengthen the role of private operators in development strategies of cultural sectors;
- To promote business partnerships between North-South operators for access to international markets and for reinforcement of their capacities;
- To reinforce the contribution of culture to the fight against poverty and the improvement of living conditions of people in ACP countries, through cultural activities that create employment and wealth.

At social and cultural levels:

- To promote the protection of artists and creators as well as the respect of cultural rights

of all individuals, particularly the most disadvantaged;

- To contribute to the dialogue between civilisations and intercultural dialogue, which are the guarantee of peace and security.

Recommendations

We propose as priorities the following actions concerning the regulatory framework and access to funding for creative industries, creation and production, dissemination and circulation of artists and works, the training of artists and cultural professionals, as well as information and communication between ACP cultural actors. For the implementation in the short, medium and long term, it would be desirable to create a climate of trust between public, private and civil actors and to promote cooperation and networking. Furthermore, the role of the Diaspora should be valued.

Recommendations to professionals of ACP and European Union States

- Create or develop professional organisations with the ability and means to strengthen the cultural sector: including representation of private interests, support for training, dissemination of information;
- Contribute to the formalisation and the professionalization of ACP enterprises;
- Bring together the creativity of the cultural sector in order to create platforms for collective production and dissemination of information at national and regional levels in order to increase the visibility of ACP creations at the international level;
- Participate in training programs in order to transmit and acquire skills in technical and managerial domains;
- Participate in North-South and South-South accompaniment programmes, in order to increase the transfer of skills between practitioners.

Recommendations to local, national and regional authorities

- Include culture as a priority, taking into account the National and Regional Indicative Programmes (NIP and RIP) on cooperation and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers;
- Recognise culture as factor of development and implement a multisectorial strategy taking into account the horizontal nature of culture and involving the participation of various bodies (youth, employment, trade, finance, tourism, culture, communication, education, professional training, transport...) related to the general environment of cultural industries;
- Open up eligibility for existing support programmes for micro and small enterprises to the creative industries;
- Develop artistic education at all levels by involving the active participation of artists and culture professionals;
- Develop national study programmes, collecting information and statistics on the economy of culture, relevant to all sectors;
- Develop support policies across each sector;
- Develop a strategy to support the private sector: support funds, access to funding, training, support and advice;
- Strengthen the capacity of professional organisations by encouraging them to improve their governance and to develop training programmes and dissemination of information;
- Develop and implement audio-visual, broadcast and telecommunications policies to provide platforms for the production and dissemination of creative content in ACP and EU countries;

- Support groups of producers and distributors for collective presentations of their works in the main international markets, at national and regional levels;
- Facilitate the movement of artists and culture professionals at an international level;
- Identify training needs, develop multidisciplinary programmes and promote the emergence of centres of regional and national excellence;
- Harmonise and apply laws concerning the status of the artist, copyright laws and investment;
- Establish a tax and customs system favourable to improving the conditions of production and dissemination of cultural goods and services in order to create regional cultural markets;
- Support the organisation of seminars and regional professional markets;
- Professionalise and develop festivals, meeting and exchange places, training and pilot initiatives;
- Protect the cultural heritage and contribute to its development in order to improve the lives of people who are the carriers; and,
- Encourage cities to conduct activities supporting the cultural sector, particularly through the creation of infrastructures, training, and venues for creation and dissemination.

Recommendations to the European Union

- Support local, national and government authorities in the implementation of the actions mentioned above and in particular encourage them to integrate culture in NIPs and RIPs;
- Develop culture programs, notably national and regional Culture Support Programmes in order to promote the creative economy;
- Facilitate technical support for ACP operators and skills transfer in cooperation programmes;
- Improve the visibility of the cultures of ACP countries in the EU Member States by supporting large-scale festivals, show-cases and co-productions;
- Facilitate the free movement of artists and culture professionals in EU member states by encouraging them to create a cultural visa;
- Facilitate networks and support North-South and South-South partnership programmes used for the transfer of skills between operators of same area;
- Create a "culture facility" for development in order to support the cultural dimension of economic development and social cohesion;
- Create a support fund for the creation and circulation of cultural goods and services in ACP countries, with management conditions (procedures and selection criteria) adapted to the realities of ACP operators and the specificity of the artistic creation.

*To ensure the success of this initiative, we call on the ACP States, the European Union and the regional and multilateral cooperation agencies to **improve coordination and synergies of their interventions with full respect for the autonomy of the artist and his or her creation.** It is equally necessary to significantly increase financial resources. We believe the source of the inertia we deplore is that financial means allocated are insufficient to attain the aspirations, however noble they may be.*

*We, artists, professionals and, culture entrepreneurs from Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Europe, all members of the area covered by the Cotonou Agreement which, in terms of respect for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is an example for the rest of the world, adopt this Declaration and call for the establishment of a **monitoring committee.***

We affirm our commitment to contribute, through our work and our creations, to the advent of a new society where each member may assert his or her dignity and creativity and contribute to the construction of a better world.

Brussels, 3rd April 2009