

## Istanbul Declaration of 17 September 2002

At the close of the Round Table of the Ministers of Culture on “Intangible Cultural Heritage, mirror of cultural diversity”, held in Istanbul on 16 and 17 September 2002 – United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage –, we, the participating and represented Ministers of Culture, arrived, on the basis of our exchanges, at the following joint positions:

- 1) The multiple expressions of intangible cultural heritage constitute some of the fundamental sources of the **cultural identity** of the peoples and communities as well as a wealth common to the whole of humanity. Deeply rooted in local history and natural environment and embodied, among others, by a great variety of languages that translate as many world visions, they are an essential factor in the preservation of cultural diversity, in line with the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001).
- 2) The intangible cultural heritage constitutes a set of **living and constantly recreated** practices, knowledge and representations enabling individuals and communities, at all levels, to express their world conception through systems of values and ethical standards. Intangible cultural heritage creates among communities a sense of belonging and continuity, and is therefore considered as one of the mainsprings of **creativity** and cultural creation. From this point of view, an all-encompassing approach to cultural heritage should prevail, taking into account the **dynamic link** between the tangible and intangible heritage and their close interaction.
- 3) The safeguarding and transmission of the intangible heritage is essentially based on the will and effective intervention of the actors involved in this heritage. In order to ensure the sustainability of this process, governments have a duty to take measures facilitating the **democratic participation of all stakeholders**.
- 4) The extreme **vulnerability** of the intangible cultural heritage, which is threatened by disappearance or marginalisation, as a result inter alia of conflicts, intolerance, excessive merchandising, uncontrolled urbanisation or rural decay, requires that governments take resolute action respecting the context in which the intangible cultural heritage is expressed and disseminated.
- 5) The process of globalisation, while presenting serious threats of uniformisation on intangible cultural heritage, may facilitate its dissemination, mainly through new information and communication technologies, thereby creating a digital heritage also worthy of safeguarding. Globalisation can therefore facilitate the emergence of a **set of references common to all humankind** and thus promote values of solidarity and tolerance resulting in a better understanding of others and respect for diversity.
- 6) Laying the foundations of **true sustainable development** requires the emergence of an integrated vision of development based on the enhancement of values and practices involved in the intangible cultural heritage. Alike cultural diversity, which stems from it, intangible cultural heritage is a guarantee for sustainable development and peace.
- 7) In conclusion we, the participating and represented Ministers of Culture, aware of the urgency to take action:
  - (i) Undertake to actively promote **the principles** set out in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity;

(ii) Agree to developing policies which aim at the identification, safeguarding, promotion and transmission of the intangible cultural heritage, particularly through information and education. Steps must be taken to ensure that the expressions of intangible heritage benefit from **recognition** within States, provided that they respect universally recognised human rights;

(iii) Seek to, within the framework of the **policies of each State, at the appropriate level:** encourage research and documentation, develop inventories and registers, establish legislations and appropriate mechanisms of protection, ensure the dissemination, through education and awareness raising, of the values and significance of intangible cultural heritage, foster the recognition and protection of custodians together with the transmission of knowledge and know-how;

(iv) Consider that it is appropriate and necessary, within this framework, in close collaboration with the practitioners and bearers of all expressions of intangible cultural heritage, to consult and involve **all the stakeholders**, namely the governments, local and regional communities, the scientific community, the educational institutions, the civil society, the public and private sector as well as the media;

(v) Appreciate and support the initiative taken by UNESCO regarding the **Proclamation** of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity;

(vi) Call upon UNESCO to foster the development of **new forms of international cooperation**, for example by setting up mechanisms of recognition, inventories of best practices and the creation of networks, by mobilising resources and encouraging consultations between countries sharing expressions of intangible heritage;

(vii) Endeavour, in the spirit of **international solidarity**, to pay special attention to countries, such as Afghanistan, and to territories suffering from poverty, conflicts or crisis, and extend assistance when deemed necessary; and call on UNESCO to examine the possibility of establishing a special fund to that end;

(viii) Consider that, in the spirit of the 31C/Resolution 30 adopted by the General Conference, **an appropriate international Convention**, which should be developed in close cooperation with relevant international organisations and take into full account the complexity of defining intangible cultural heritage, could be a positive step towards pursuing our goal; and therefore, in a spirit of constructive cooperation, undertake to participate in the forthcoming debate of the Intergovernmental Experts Meeting in order to start elaboration of the preliminary draft of such a Convention;

(ix) Request UNESCO to inform the Member States on its cooperation with other relevant international organisations, such as WIPO, as such information will be useful to Member States in further developing their policies on the protection of intangible cultural heritage;

8) We request the Director General to transmit the present Istanbul Declaration to the Member States of UNESCO and to circulate it widely to the relevant regional, national and international organisations and to the organs of the press.

9) We express our deep gratitude to the Turkish authorities for their warm hospitality, and for their active contribution to the preparation of the Round Table and its successful outcome.