

## **Contribution of UCLG Culture Committee to the Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights**

April 2023

### **Background**

The Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) was born in 2005 with the explicit mandate to implement cultural rights in local sustainable development, with [Agenda 21 for Culture](#) as its funding document, being the first-ever document written by (and for) local governments with the worldwide mission to establish the basis for a commitment by cities and local governments to cultural development.

Agenda 21 for Culture integrates human rights as one of its key themes, including culture, cultural diversity and human development; cultural rights as an integral part of human rights; and mechanisms, instruments and resources for guaranteeing freedom of speech, among others, but it was not meant to become a practical toolkit. This was achieved by [Culture 21 Actions](#). This complements Agenda 21 for Culture by making it more effective and enhances the potential to assess its impact, and monitor its implementation. In this way, Culture 21 Actions constitutes a complete human rights-based toolkit for cultural policies in local sustainable development that harnesses the key role of cities and local governments as authorities for global governance of development, in terms of the elaboration and implementation of policies with, and for, citizens. This document renewed the commitment of UCLG to highlight the interdependent relationship between citizenship, culture, and sustainable development through 100 actions, grouped in 9 commitments. Each one of these actions identifies a key concept and suggests actors (local government, cultural organisations and institutions, civil society, universities) for implementation. This toolkit is the most complete manual for the implementation of cultural rights locally.

Recalling UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, UNESCO's Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and Agenda 21 for Culture, the Executive Bureau of UCLG approved the Policy Document "[Culture, Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development](#)" (2010), inviting to make cultural policies explicit (cultural actors to sit where power is, and to interact, discuss with the already accepted actors of development) and operational (with resources, with governance structures, and open to the accountability of citizens). This document recognises that the fundamental purpose of governance is to work towards a healthy, safe, tolerant and creative society, and that this requires the promotion by local governments of a model of development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", as well as ensuring the universal enjoyment of culture and its components, and protecting and enhancing the rights of citizens to freedom of expression and access to information and resources.

With the Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its basis, the [Rome Charter](#) was adopted by UCLG in November 2020. The Charter aspired to achieve global relevance and to become a practical guide for sustainable cultural development through a conceptual basis to approach the relationship between the state and people in cultural policy and planning. In this light, the Charter describes the right to participate “fully and freely” in cultural life as vital to cities and communities, and promotes the cultural capabilities: Discover, Create, Share, Enjoy and Protect.

In terms of monitoring or evaluation mechanisms assessing the impacts of development local programmes or cultural policies, the Committee on Culture launched capacity-building, peer-learning and networking programmes to support the adoption of Culture 21 Actions in cities from around the world. For instance, the [Pilot Cities](#) programme and the [Culture 21 Lab](#) workshop include monitoring mechanisms based on the contents of Culture 21 Actions that identify challenges and achievements on the implementation of the work plan. They also include a “radar” to observe the strengths and weaknesses of local cultural policies, and provide a picture of the progress made, as well as the lessons drawn. Cities all over the world have already participated in the [Pilot City programme](#), namely: Baie-Mahault, Chignahuapan, Córdoba, Cuenca, Elefsina, Escazú, Esch-sur-Alzette, Gabrovo, Galway, Gijón, Jinju, Konya, La Paz, Leeds, Mérida, Muriaé, Namur, Nova Gorica, Santa Fe, Sinaloa, Swansea, Tenerife, Terrassa and Timisoara. As for the Culture 21 Lab, Greater Dandenong, Kaunas, Makati, Sant Cugat del Vallès, and Santo André have already completed the workshop.

Moreover, the UCLG Culture Committee launched the [Seven Keys](#) programme in 2020 with the aim to facilitate the localisation of the SDGs through a cultural perspective. This workshop proves that the SDG frame (although being still very far from cultural rights) can be suitable for cities wishing to implement cultural rights locally, because it “invites” local actors to take commitments in climate action, gender equality, education or health, which are (still) often forgotten (or not explicit enough) in cultural programmes and projects. So far, the following 10 cities have completed the [Seven Keys programme](#): Bulawayo, Burgos, Concepción, Izmir, Lilongwe, Lisbon, Puerto de la Cruz, Saint-Louis, Xi’an, and Yoff.

All the aforementioned programmes require joint co-creation and collaboration by a wide range of local actors and stakeholders (local government, civil society, private organisations, citizens, academia, etc.), thus reinforcing the idea that participation of civil society is key for the development and implementation of the programmes. However, this is also applicable on a broader stage, especially with regard to global governance of development, which in turn requires strong civil society bodies and actors.

## **UCLG Pact for the Future and Cultural Rights**

Globally, all local, regional, and national governments need to redouble their efforts in delivering their commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda in line with human rights treaties. Within this

context, global governance of development needs a stronger local governments constituency. In this vein, the [Pact for the Future of Humanity](#) was approved in 2022 in the UCLG World Congress in Daejeon (Republic of Korea), defining the strategic priorities of this global constituency, and showing the political leadership of UCLG through priorities and commitments based on three principles: people, planet, and government.

This document underlies the commitment of local and regional governments which are ready and willing to join national and international partners in bringing about truly transformative action. To that end, the Pact seeks to be part of “a global initiative committed with hope, that demonstrates that another way is possible and that, collectively, the resources, intellectual capacity, skills and desire are available in the necessary abundance. What has been in short supply is the courage to challenge orthodoxies, political will and bold leadership. Against this backdrop, local and regional governments around the world are firmly committed to contribute to a sustained and profound transformation of our societies”.

The UCLG constituency seeks to “deliver real, tangible and constant actions over time, with individual citizens, households and communities playing an active and leading role. While cities - of all sizes - have already demonstrated significant results, reinforcing the notion of systems of cities: the important relationship between cities and their surrounding regions, both being mutually dependent on the well-being of the other, inspiring truly transformational change at scale in all parts of the world is urgently needed. In so doing, we also seek to reinforce the pressing need to replace division and conflict with a new imperative in support of peace”.

This document is anchored in human rights, and identifies culture and cultural rights as key elements for its core commitments, as in the need to foster universal and equitable access to public services, including housing, health, education and participation in cultural and political life; and the promotion of human development with culture, peace, creativity & quality of life at the core. Therefore, the document defends a vision for the future that “facilitates universal access to basic services and the redefinition of essential services by incorporating the right to the city as universal citizenship with renewed sets of cultural rights such as the right to discover, create, share, enjoy and protect the local community's cultural roots, expressions and resources as a building block of peace and wellbeing in all cities and regions. Putting people at the centre in all circumstances and placing science, technologies and artificial intelligence, and entrepreneurship at the service of humanity. Particular attention is needed for cross-border localities that impact the lifestyles of many people in many cities and communities around the world”.

### **The #Culture2030Goal campaign**

When the Sustainable Development Goals were being finalised, between the Rio+20 conference in 2012 and their adoption by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, the

inclusion of a specific focus on culture was of major concern to interested parties in the culture sector and beyond.

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, four documents were produced: a Manifesto – Proposal for a Goal (September 2013), a Declaration on the Inclusion of Culture in the SDGs (May 2014), a proposal for indicators to measure 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”.

The [#Culture2030Goal campaign](#) was born as the continuation of the aforementioned #culture2015goal Campaign. The campaign was, and continues to be, formed by several global cultural networks united to advocate for the role of culture in sustainable development, promoting the inclusion of strong civil society actors in global governance of development. It is currently led by seven global cultural networks (Arterial Network, CAE – Culture Action Europe, ICOMOS – International Council on Monuments and Sites, IFCCD – International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, IFLA – International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, IMC – International Music Council and UCLG Culture Committee).

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the #Culture2030goal campaign released in 2020 the Statement "[Ensuring culture fulfils its potential in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)". 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).

The vision of the campaign is the recognition of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, including the following goals: (a) a stronger place for culture throughout the implementation of the current global development agenda, the UN 2030 Agenda; (b) the adoption of a stand-alone Goal on Culture in the post-2030 development Agenda, and (c) the adoption of a global agenda for culture.

In September 2022, the **#Culture2030Goal campaign** released a proposal for a **Culture Goal** in the post-2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development during a special event entitled “A Culture Goal is essential for our Common Future” organised in the framework of [Mondiacult 2022 Conference](#) held Mexico City. The document explores the structural absence of culture from the SDGs, and mentions the challenges that those leading the preparation of any post-2030 framework will need to address, while also drawing on the successes that the current agenda has brought. “A Culture Goal is essential for our Common Future” also looks

at the current landscape of debates around what development itself is, and the place of culture within it, and argues that culture may also contribute to overcoming the 'pillarisation' of development, providing a new dimension that can help overcome tensions and unlocking transformation. The paper also presents a zero draft of a Culture Goal written on the basis of a [consultation process](#) launched in June 2022. The Goal includes ten potential targets, ranging from cultural rights and a culture of peace to the preservation of heritage and protection of diverse expressions. It also establishes the need to protect the rights of professionals and enhance legal frameworks, to empower indigenous peoples, and to develop a cultural approach in environmental protection and sustainable urbanisation. The targets included in this Zero Draft are the following:

1. Realise cultural rights for all, by fostering inclusive access to and participation in cultural life, creativity and diversity of cultural expressions, in particular for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations.
2. Promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity.
3. Protect and safeguard all forms of heritage, harness them as a resource for sustainable development, through existing conventions and other policy frameworks, as well as such new mechanisms as may be appropriate.
4. Protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions to strengthen the creativity and development capacity of individuals and communities, through existing conventions and such new mechanisms as may be appropriate.
5. In devising and implementing policies on cultural and creative industries, sustainable tourism and digital technologies, promote local culture and products, the economic and social rights of artists and cultural professionals and artistic freedom, and develop and implement appropriate monitoring tools.
6. Enhance legal conditions and practical opportunities for mobility of cultural professionals and cross-border creativity in the creation of cultural goods, services and practices through international multi-stakeholder collaboration.
7. Empower indigenous peoples to strengthen their own institutions, cultures and languages, and to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations.
8. Develop a cultural approach in environmental protection and sustainable urbanization, including land planning, landscape management, protection of biodiversity, agriculture and natural areas management, through heritage, local cultures and knowledge, creativity and arts.
9. Strengthen cultural institutions, including through international cooperation, to build capacity at all levels to realize cultural rights and sustain cultural pluralism.
10. Ensure, through transversal, multi-stakeholder collaboration, that cultural considerations are taken into account in all international development goals, at the outset of and throughout all policy-making processes, through engaging cultural sector actors, whether or not associated with pre-existing cultural targets.

Following up the inclusion of the need for a Culture Goal to be included in global agendas for sustainable development in UNESCO's Mondiacult 2022 Conference Final Declaration, the #Culture2030Goal campaign released the Statement "[Commitment to an explicit Culture Goal in Mondiacult Declaration welcome: now is the time to deliver](#)" in February 2023 asking for transformative action towards concrete implementation.

## **Looking at the Future**

The ongoing efforts of UCLG in the field of cultural rights have always been the result of co-creation exercises, that is, consultations with our members and partners who represent municipalism across the world. In this line, the UCLG Culture Committee is currently working to deliver a new document "Culture 21 +" (provisional name), to be approved in 2025. This document will include all what we have learned on the interrelation between cultural rights and sustainable development. The new document will allow (a) self-assessment on the state of local policies in the territories, and (b) the design of concrete local policies, programmes or actions. The "Culture 21 +" is currently (2023) being tested by UCLG members.

We would like to close this contribution by acknowledging the important work developed by the UN Special Rapporteurs in the field of Cultural Rights since 2009. The global conversation on culture and development has experienced an enormous progress. We, in UCLG have learned a lot with the reports, meetings and processes led by the SRs. We are grateful to the current Special Rapporteur, Dr Alexandra Xanthaki and her team for this opportunity to contribute to this new report.