

17. Cultural Diversity

→ MANDATE

At the Third Summit of the Americas, Heads of State and Government called for a ministerial or high-level, meeting to be held, with the support of the OAS Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), to consider cultural diversity with a view to deepening hemispheric cooperation on this theme. They also undertook to create an environment that would foster the perception and appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity in countries of the Americas, through various means, making use of new communication technologies and the Internet.

Furthermore, Summit participants agreed to partnerships and exchanges of information on the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity in the Hemisphere as a means of promoting greater acceptance, understanding and respect among peoples of the region. The Summit agreed to encourage joint efforts with civil society organizations to implement and support policies, plans, and programs to strengthen research, recovery, study, conservation, maintenance, restoration, access and appreciation for the Hemisphere's cultural heritage.

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

Aware of the importance of this topic—and pursuant to the mandate from the Summit—ministers and High Authorities of Culture from the Hemisphere held their first meeting in Cartagena on July 12 and 13, 2002, in which they reaffirmed that the region's cultural diversity is a source of great wealth for its societies, in which respect and appreciation for diversity will contribute to

social and economic dynamism, and will be positive factors for promoting good governance, social cohesion, human development, human rights, and peaceful coexistence in the Hemisphere.

Some months later, the 185 members of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) adopted the Universal Declaration on Cul-



PROGRESS

The OAS has prepared, and is continuously updating, a Permanent Portfolio of Consolidated Programs in Culture, containing programs that Ministers and Authorities of Culture wish to share with their colleagues. This portfolio is the cornerstone of the Horizontal Cooperation Strategy among cultural authorities, coordinated by the OAS. As part of this strategy, the First Workshop for Exchanging Knowledge on "Cultural Diversity, Employment and Youth Exchanges" was held—based on the Young Canada Works program—which that country contributed to the permanent portfolio. The workshop took place from October 27 to 31, 2003, and was sponsored by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the OAS General Secretariat, with participation by cultural representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Chile, Colombia, Dominica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. At that workshop, all participants prepared profiles of projects for selectively transferring the Canadian experiment to each of their domestic settings. This workshop was consistent with the CIC's work plan, which also calls for interchange workshops in Mexico and Honduras, which are now under preparation.

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tural Diversity, which serves as a global navigation chart for cultural policies. While that declaration sets the course that States should take to guarantee the proposition that cultural diversity is the common heritage of mankind, the Declaration and Plan of Action of Cartagena—signed by Ministers of Culture—represents the compass that the Americas will follow for deepening cooperation in the matter of cultural diversity and establishing a more dynamic and effective relationship among countries in the Hemisphere.

In the words of the UNESCO Director General, Koichiro Matsuura, cultural diversity means "recognizing and promoting cultural pluralism in the broadest sense." The countries of the Americas are no exception to this proposition, which not only signifies pluralism, tolerance and respect for shared cultural values, but also implies—as Matsuura stated—that cultural diversity is a guarantee of peace.

This statement takes on new validity in a globalized, interdependent world that transcends frontiers, social classes, races,

genders, ages and religions. The OAS Secretary General, Cesar Gaviria, speaking in Cartagena, interpreted the understanding of the Hemisphere's governments and peoples in designing policies and activities in this field, declaring that: "in the multilateral setting, there is more room for a fruitful exchange of experience, partnership and collective action."

Ministers of Culture addressed two fundamental issues in their first meeting: the challenges to cultural diversity posed by globalization, and the relationship between culture and development: subjects that permeate the Declaration and Plan of Action of Cartagena. For the purpose of further strengthening inter-American dialogue on issues relating to culture, and in follow-up to the mandate from the Summits of the Americas and the agreements reached in the Ministerial Meetings, (the Plan of Action of Cartagena created the Inter-American Committee on Culture (CIC) which met for the first time in Mexico City in September 2003).

With respect to creating an environment for recognizing and appreciating the cultural and linguistic diversity of the countries in the Americas—through the use of new technologies—an electronic forum for dialogue has been implemented that will maintain constant communication between members of the Inter-American Committee on Culture. Additionally, the creation of an Inter-American Cultural Policy Observatory is under consideration for the purposes of compiling and disseminating specialized information on the cultural sector, promoting research on cultural policies and cultural diversity, and designing indicators to measure the impact of those policies. The Observatory would strengthen the design of cultural policies and would help to give them a more prominent place within the broad range of development policies. With this measure, the Hemisphere will be well positioned to continue promoting respect and appreciation for cultural diversity, which is consistent with the mandate from the Summit of the Americas.



"[We] Recognize that government cultural policies that preserve and promote cultural diversity are fundamental to the social and economic development of our countries, and are a key mechanism in the fight against poverty and the improvement of quality of life. In this regard, we recognize the need to give cultural policies greater prominence in the national policy agendas of the countries of the Hemisphere."

(Declaration of Cartagena de Indias, First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and Authorities of Culture, 2002)

The OAS is coordinating the Horizontal Cooperation Strategy between Ministries and Authorities of Culture (see the box "A successful experiment"), also consistent with the Summit mandate to encourage more dynamic and effective cooperation among countries of the Hemisphere, and to contribute to intercultural dialogue.

In fulfilling the mandate from the Summit of the Americas—on strengthening partnership and exchanging information with civil society representatives and on the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity—the Virtual Forum for Consultation with Civil Society has been established as a channel for promoting participation by civil society organizations, setting priorities, and identifying actions to promote cultural diversity in the Hemisphere. It should be noted that—in the context of the First Meeting of Ministers of Culture in

Cartagena—20 representatives of civil society met with four ministers who represented the meeting in plenary, to discuss and define strategies of cooperation for formulating policies in this sector.

Furthermore, it is important to note the interagency cooperation established in the Americas on cultural diversity, through various meetings among the OAS, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, the Regional Center for Book Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLALC), the International Council on Monuments and Sites, United States Chapter (ICOMOS), the National Foundation for the Arts, the Organization of Ibero-American States, the Convenio Andres Bello (CAB), UNESCO, the International Network on Cultural Policy (INCP) and the International Federation of

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Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFAC-CA). Several of these organizations adopted the Interagency Cultural Cooperation Strategy, in the context of the Cartagena Ministerial Meeting, to support commitments on the promotion and respect of cultural diversity in the Americas.

CHALLENGES

The idea that culture is “the forgotten dimension of development” is gaining currency in the region. For this reason, the countries of the Americas need to place cultural diversity at the center of national, subregional, and hemispheric development strategies. Furthermore, they should consider cultural industries, trade in cultural goods, intellectual property rights, and the design and implementation of a hemispheric mechanism for eradicating illicit trafficking in cultural goods, as issues that should be borne in mind in the process of economic liberalization and trade negotiations.

In addition, it is important at the national level to give cultural institutions and policies the place they deserve, by allocating them the necessary resources to carry out their tasks, and to promote effective coordination among agencies involved in implementing policies and strategies for the promotion and respect of cultural diversity.

Finally, it is important to strengthen the use of new communication technologies, and the Internet, in building partnerships, in exchanging information, and in fostering appreciation for the cultural diversity of the Hemisphere. These issues will be addressed by the creation of the Inter-American Cultural Policy Observatory, and in pursuit of the horizontal cooperation strategy, which in the future will place the emphasis on analyzing information systems and projects relating to the protection of cultural heritage.