

## Foreword



I welcome the initiative of Sir David Khalili, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, and his Foundation to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity through this publication. This is an important opportunity to reflect on where we have come from, where we are today, where we are going, and most importantly, where we want to go.

Twenty years ago, UNESCO Member States unanimously adopted the Universal Declaration for Cultural Diversity to help preserve and promote cultural diversity in all its forms worldwide, setting the groundwork for a more open, creative and democratic world. Since then, many steps have been taken to develop new international legal instruments in favour of cultural diversity.

Indeed, the Universal Declaration for Cultural Diversity was a precursor to the adoption in 2003 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which recognises traditions and living expressions transmitted from one generation to another as cultural heritage in need of safeguarding. Affirming the importance of equal access to art including in digital form and access to the means of expression and dissemination for ensuring the free flow of ideas by word and image and, most of all, for the world's cultural diversity, the Cultural Diversity Declaration also resulted in the adoption in 2005 of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which provides legal weight to the concept of cultural goods and services as vectors of identity, values and meaning and thus must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods. Under the 2005 Convention, arts and culture have become situated as “public goods” requiring public support and investment.

Subsequently, UNESCO adopted the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape and the 2018 Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society. All of these legal instruments complement those international instruments that were developed since the creation

of UNESCO, such as the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1972 Convention concerning Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist, and the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. These international treaties adopted by UNESCO over the years provide a comprehensive policy framework to protect and promote the world's cultural diversity, recognising the interdependent relationship between tangible and intangible cultural heritage, built heritage of the past and creativity of today and tomorrow.

The designation of the International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019 and the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development 2021 have also contributed to the global awareness of the fundamental links between cultural diversity, creativity and sustainable development, as recognised by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

These efforts must continue and be strengthened in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted the entire cultural ecosystem. Around the world, the livelihoods of artists and cultural workers have been profoundly affected by lockdowns and physical distancing measures, exacerbating their already precarious conditions. Numerous museums and cultural venues such as cinemas and concert halls have been forced to close their doors, and many of them may unfortunately never manage to reopen again. At the height of the crisis, 90% of World Heritage sites were totally or partially closed, impacting communities who rely on these places for their livelihoods and social and cultural life. As shown by the recent UNESCO report on the cultural and creative industries in the face of COVID-19, job losses in this domain are conservatively estimated at 10 million worldwide, which represents a dramatic setback in the capacity of these industries to be drivers of cultural, economic and social outputs for sustainable development.

The closure of cultural spaces and the cancelling of physical performances caused by the pandemic have also accelerated the digital transition of cultural and creative industries. Over the past year, the digital space has

come to the forefront of cultural consumption and production. Yet artists and creators rarely receive fair remuneration for our clicks and views. Protecting and promoting cultural diversity today therefore also requires a fair digital transformation of the creative sector that safeguards local and diverse content online.

On the occasion of this 20th anniversary of the Declaration and in celebration of 2021 as the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, UNESCO calls on the international community to take actions to address the impact of the digital transformation on the culture sector through public policies, reinforce data gathering efforts for informed policymaking, and also create or strengthen social protection of artists, cultural professionals and heritage practitioners as core actors creating and safeguarding the cultural diversity around the world.

The World Conference on the Cultural Policies to be held by UNESCO in Mexico in September 2022 will provide a crucial opportunity to take stock of lessons learned from the past twenty years and reimagine a new and more resilient creative sector that is equipped to face future challenges. Let us seize this occasion to further strengthen our cooperation with each other and renew our commitment to cultural diversity as the wealth of our world.

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