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CONCEPT NOTE

Regular meeting of

Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI)

NOVEMBER 27, 2023

**THEME: KEY ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURES OF THE AMERICAS**

1. **Background/Justification**

The cultures of the Americas are as rich as they are diverse, reflecting the historical, social, economic, and environmental contexts of each nation. The theme for this CIDI meeting: Key Aspects of Sustainable Development of Cultures of the Americas, provides the Council and member states an opportunity to examine key issues related to the promotion, preservation, enrichment, and transmission of the region’s diverse tangible and intangible cultural heritage while also addressing contemporary challenges.

Cooperation in culture has always been an important part of the Inter-American System and pre-dates the OAS. The OAS Publication [Culture in the Organization of American States a Retrospective 1889-2013](http://scm.oas.org/pdfs/2013/CIDI03965E.pdf) notes that **“from the First International Conference of American States onward, cultural matters have always been among the priorities of political leaders,” and that, “in the process of inter-American integration, peaceful coexistence among peoples is based mainly on mutual understanding of cultural specifics.”** Moreover, the first version of the OAS Charter, adopted in 1948, states that: “**The spiritual unity of the continent is based on respect for the cultural values of the American countries and requires their close cooperation for the high purposes of civilization”** (Chapter II: Principles, Article 3). Other multilateral organizations also foster cooperation on cultural issues and the development of the creative industries.

UNESCO notes that **at the international level, the proportion of Official Development Aid allocated to culture and recreation accounted for only 0.23%. The contributions to the International Fund for Cultural Diversity have also decreased in recent years. Nonetheless, the involvement of non-traditional donor countries, the growing interest of multilateral organizations in the cultural and creative industries and the rise of South-South and triangular cooperation models offer new possibilities.[[1]](#footnote-1)/**

Jyoti Hosagrahar in UNESCO Courier of June 2017 notes that within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations, the international development agenda refers to culture for the first time, and that the safeguarding and promotion of culture while being an end in itself, at the same time contributes directly to many of the SDGs — safe and sustainable cities, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, the environment, promoting gender equality and peaceful and inclusive societies.[[2]](#footnote-2)/

The revitalization and preservation of the region’s traditional, ancestral cultural heritage and practices, including language, arts, and rituals are central to maintaining the unique identities of communities across the Americas. Initiatives which foster these developments include among other things, documentation, oral history preservation, cultural education, and cultural diplomacy programs. The matter of cultural revitalization and preservation encompasses discussion of issues related *inter alia* to member states’ efforts to balance the preservation of cultural heritage with modernization, economic advancement, and growth, and at the same time an examination of the strategies that have or can be employed to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, languages, and traditional knowledge.

The Ninth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Culture and Highest Appropriate Authorities which took place in October 2022, under the theme “Technology, creativity, and innovation as an opportunity for developing and strengthening culture,” discussed among other things, how artists and cultural practitioners managed to maintain their livelihoods during the pandemic, including through use of technology tools and support from government in strengthening culture, and artistic expression. This CIDI meeting will provide for further discission on strategies which support the collection, preservation, dissemination, strengthening and development of culture in the Americas, including the role of technology in this process.

Economic sustainability, development of the creative economy and monetization of cultural products are all bound up in the sustainability and preservation of culture over time. Cultural and creative industries, such as art, music, film, and design, are increasingly important economic contributors in many countries in the Americas. Providing economic opportunities within cultural communities and strengthening frameworks which support entrepreneurship among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in traditional crafts, local markets, cultural tourism, and creative industries are therefore important elements in this process.

Moreover, these issues require consideration on how cultural and creative industries, contribute to economic development without compromising cultural integrity. At the same time, the opportunity for countries across the Americas to share strategies which encourage entrepreneurship within cultural sectors, particularly, among SMEs, can contribute to the sustainable development of the collective and disparate cultures in the Americas.

Capacity-building, education and enhancing cultural awareness are key to understanding the value and the rich diversity of the cultures of the Americas. In this context, investment in educational programs which incorporate cultural awareness into curricula and enhance the capacity of cultural institutions and practitioners is central to this effort. Likewise, strengthening community engagement, is important, particularly, in relation to understanding and defining what is of cultural heritage significance to each society. These initiatives help garner support for documentation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and facilitate their transmission to future generations, thereby contributing to sustainability over time.

Many cultural practices are closely tied to the environment. Incorporating sustainable practices in cultural activities can therefore help conserve natural resources and ecosystems, reinforcing the connection between culture and the environment. One such key example in the Americas is in tourism for which balancing development with cultural preservation is critical. Responsible tourism practices can generate economic benefits while minimizing negative impacts on cultural sites and traditions. This notwithstanding, sustainability must also consider the impact of the environment on culture, in particular, the challenge posed by the effects of adverse events associated with a changing climate on the built heritage. In this case sustainability of our cultures suggests the need to raise awareness and promote action to protect and preserve cultural heritage sites that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Such issues suggest a role for ministries of the environment and culture in member states which focus on the identification and assessment of cultural heritage sites that are at risk due to climate change, including rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, and more frequent and intense weather events. Consistent with initiatives within SEDI which support resilience in member states, the CIDI could encourage cooperation opportunities and engagements among member states for sharing of practices as well as the exploration of ways to mitigate these impacts, such as implementing adaptation measures to make the sites more resilient, and promoting sustainable tourism practices that support conservation efforts.

1. **Purpose of the meeting**

 Discussion of the key elements of the sustainable development of cultures of the Americas requires a broad approach, involving an assessment of how to balance cultural preservation, economic empowerment, social equity, and environmental conservation. By fostering collaboration, sharing experiences, and promoting discussion among government leaders and policymakers in the region, the Council can strengthen support for arriving at a more harmonious balance between preserving cultural heritage, promoting growth, and advancing towards a sustainable future.

 The purpose of the meeting therefore is to discuss some of the key aspects related to the sustainable development of cultures of the Americas, address contemporary challenges involved in this process, assess opportunities for inter-institutional cooperation for culture and development, and building consensus around policies for a sustainable future and the role of culture in this process. The meeting will also provide member states with an opportunity to present their experiences in the framework of culture and development, including how culture contributes to the SDGs, as well as their strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change on vulnerable cultural heritage. Further, discussion on these issues can provide some insight on the potential for further dialogue in this area at the Tenth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Culture and Highest Appropriate Authorities to be held in the Dominican Republic in 2025, as well as how cultural diplomacy initiatives could contribute to this effort.

 Questions for member states will feature:

1. How can member states balance the preservation of cultural heritage with modernization and economic growth?
2. What practices are OAS member states employing to promote sustainable cultural development?
3. How can the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) collaborate with member states and other institutions to build capacity to support the promotion, preservation, enrichment, and transmission of the region’s diverse tangible and intangible cultural heritage?
4. What are the key challenges, strategies, and tools in member states for raising awareness and promoting action to protect and preserve cultural heritage sites that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
5. Based on your country’s experience how is culture contributing to the attainment of the SDGs?
6. **Relevance to SEDI**
* Promote culture and the creative economy as tools for increasing economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and strengthening capacities among SMEs in the culture sector.
* Strengthen the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs
* Promote dialogue, on how to balance cultural preservation, economic growth, social equity, and environmental conservation.
* Foster regional dialogue, cooperation and knowledge sharing on culture for development, including mechanisms for sharing good practices and lessons learned.
* Promote resilience in key sectors in OAS member states.
1. **OAS mandates**

The 2021 OAS General Assembly resolution “AG/RES. 2967 (LI-O/21) Advancing Hemispheric Initiatives on Integral Development: Promoting Resilience, and under the strategic line “promoting inclusive and competitive economies” establishes the following mandate:

18. “To request the CIC, with the support of SEDI, to share experiences regarding efforts to promote, modernize, and reactivate in a sustainable way the cultural and creative sector of the economy during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to promote the work of CIC member states to retain a visible role for culture as a catalyst of social and economic development in regional agendas, thereby enabling innovative solutions for building capacity and acquiring knowledge and tools to enable social and economic transformation and to strengthen artistic and cultural entrepreneurship in the Hemisphere.

 The Declaration of Bridgetown “Strengthening the Creative Economy and Culture Sector: Repositioning the Culture Sector to Secure Sustainable Development "Requests the OAS General Secretariat to work with relevant international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),to support member states, as appropriate, in generating policies, aimed at achieving those goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that contribute to the advancement of the creative economy and the cultural sector.

 In the Declaration of Antigua Guatemala, on “Technology, creativity, and innovation as an opportunity for developing and strengthening culture” Ministers of Culture committed to “Maximize opportunities in technology, creativity, and innovation for States in the Americas to develop, strengthen and safeguard their cultural and artistic expressions through the digitization, collection, preservation, dissemination, and legal and secure exchange of cultural and artistic heritage, and urge member states to explore these opportunities individually and collectively.” And to “Promote collaboration on technology, creativity, and innovation as an opportunity to develop and strengthen culture in the Americas with OAS Permanent Observer States and CIC partners including universities, research centers, NGOs, private sector and other international organizations to support the implementation of the Declaration of Antigua Guatemala.”

 Article 47 of the OAS Charter notes that “The Member States will give primary importance within their development plans to the encouragement of education, science, technology, and culture, oriented toward the overall improvement of the individual, and as a foundation for democracy, social justice, and progress.”

1. **Structure of the meeting**

For the purposes of the meeting, various speakers will be invited to explore some of the key aspects related to the Sustainable Development of Cultures of the Americas, including *inter alia* the promotion, preservation, enrichment, and transmission of the region’s diverse cultural heritage while also addressing contemporary challenges. Member states will have an opportunity to take part in an interactive dialogue guided by the Chair of CIDI.

After a question-and-answer session with the guest speakers, the Chair will invite delegations to share their practices on promoting culture for development and explore opportunities for cooperation in this area.

1. **Outcomes of the meeting**
2. Better understanding of the role of culture in development in OAS member states.
3. Specific policies to promote sustainable cultural development in OAS member states shared.
4. Opportunities for cooperation on culture and development identified.
5. Contribute to the dialogue and support member states’ efforts to reach attainment of the SDGs.

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1. . See UNESCO |Reshaping Policies for Creativity Report available at <https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en/culture-sustainable-development-still-untapped-potential> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . See UNESCO Courier April-June 2017, available at https://en.unesco.org/courier/april-june-2017/culture-heart-sdgs [↑](#footnote-ref-2)