



**POSITION PAPER ON
CULTURE IN AN
INTERNATIONAL AND
NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

**WE, MEMBERS OF ARTERIAL NETWORK,
A PAN-AFRICAN, CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK OF ARTISTS, CULTURAL ACTIVISTS,
CREATIVE ENTERPRISES, CULTURAL NGOS AND OTHERS ENGAGED IN THE
AFRICAN CREATIVE SECTOR**

PREAMBLE

Having attended numerous conferences, seminars and workshops promoting culture as a vector of development

Having read various declarations, manifestoes and resolutions affirming the cultural dimension of development

Having participated in initiatives to nurture creative industries as key economic drivers to help generate resources to meet the Millennium Development Goals or to contribute to broader social development

Being aware of initiatives to promote culture both as a goal and as an enabler of development in a post-2015 international development agenda

Living and working in Africa where development challenges are most acute and where the Millennium Development Goals are most relevant and urgent

Often being the beneficiaries or recipients of international culture and development policies and strategies in whose formulation we have been marginal players

Experiencing such policies - generally emanating from the global north – to shift in their priorities and focus when security needs, political conditions and economic circumstances change in the global north

Understanding the unequal power relations between those who have and make available the resources to devise and implement policies and strategies and those who are intended to benefit from such policies

Herewith offer our perspectives and position on culture and development in varied African conditions

NOTING

That culture is not a neutral term, concept or phenomenon that works or can be applied only in the best interests of human, social and economic development

That the colonial and apartheid projects used culture and cultural differences as means to divide and rule African people

That colonialism and apartheid suppressed and marginalized indigenous African cultural practices and languages, imposing foreign religious belief systems and languages – like French, English and Portuguese – that today are still the primary means of communication, identification and conveyers of meaning on the African continent

That traditional cultural and creative expressions were suppressed in favour of foreign art forms that were – and in many cases, still are – promoted as superior to traditional artistic and indigenous creative expressions

NOTING TOO

That in the independence period, culture has been used by some as a rallying cry to commit acts of violence and even genocide against others with a different culture

That culture has been used to mobilise people to capture state power, whether through democratic electoral or other means, and has resulted in state patronage of some cultural communities at the expense of other cultural communities

That while it is important to rediscover and affirm traditional cultural practices suppressed during the colonial and apartheid periods, traditional cultural practices sometimes militate against, or are used to prevent the practice of human rights such as the empowerment of women

FURTHER NOTING

That global, regional and national inequities in economic, political and military power often find expression in the cultural terrain or through cultural means or through the exacerbation of cultural faultlines

That cultural differences i.e. differences in values, worldviews and beliefs, can be both a cause and an expression of global, regional and national conflicts

That xenophobia and nationalism – often linked to economic struggles and inequities - sometimes result in the abuse, marginalization or even killing of others deemed to be of a competing cultural group

ALSO NOTING

That development is not a neutral or commonly understood term and that it could apply to social development, human development, economic development or a combination of these and other kinds of development

That internationally-driven or funded development could serve international geo-political, security and economic interests more than it does local citizens

That development – notwithstanding the people-serving rhetoric in which it is generally couched – often benefits an elite rather than the general populace

That development policies and strategies are often created and implemented in silos rather than in a holistic manner

RECALLING

That the cultural dimension of development was asserted in the period immediately following decolonization when it was found that economic and other models of development appropriate to the global north failed in many newly-independent countries as the culture of the local citizenry militated against such development models

RECOGNISING

That development – premised on values, ideas and a worldview that seeks to bring about change, generally intended to improve the lives of the beneficiaries – is itself an act of culture, rupturing the culture of the beneficiaries and impacting on such culture directly, indirectly and in ways that could be foreseen or not, and in short, medium and long term time frameworks

That the cultural dimension of development is much broader and much more than making a case for supporting the arts or creative expressions or the creative industries as potential contributors to economic growth and thus as direct or indirect contributors to social development

That the arts, creative expressions and products of creative industries such as music, publishing, visual arts, theatre, dance, film and television, festivals and cultural tourism are themselves key cultural signifiers and carriers having embedded within them, worldviews, values, ideas and beliefs that may affirm, challenge, celebrate, shape or shift the identity and culture of an individual and/or community

That culture is dynamic so that as development takes place, cultures will shift, whether in a positive or negative way, influencing worldviews and behavior

BEARING WITNESS TO

Citizen-driven change in North African countries such as Libya, notwithstanding relatively high human development indicators, as citizens demanded more fundamental human rights and freedoms

Growing inequality, deepening poverty and unemployment within and between nations and regions notwithstanding consistently high rates of economic growth in some countries and notwithstanding the apparent euphoria about “Africa Rising” touted in the global media

Stagnant and even declining human development indicators in the realms of health, education, sanitation, infant and maternal mortality, life expectancy, etc, notwithstanding economic growth and relatively high levels of development investment

Persistent and violent conflicts and extra-constitutional means of political change that impact adversely on, retard and even destroy development initiatives, notwithstanding improvements in governance in some countries and regions

THEREFORE BELIEVING

That the end of development must ultimately be the fullest quality of life and the longest possible life of human beings as holistic entities, comprising not only physical, but also psychological, emotional, spiritual and other dimensions

That development “best practice” is driven by, and pursues, social justice at local, provincial and national levels where the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all citizens matter, and are catered for in a holistic rather than in a silo, compartmentalized manner

That sustainable, best practice development must be accompanied by good governance, with those in public authority creating, implementing and monitoring effective institutional, policy and human capacity arrangements to deliver development

DEFINING

Development as the ongoing generation and application of human, financial, infrastructural and other resources to create and sustain the optimal political, social, economic, cultural and other conditions in which citizens may enjoy the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

BEING CONVINCED

That the arts, creative and cultural expressions can make fundamental contributions to

Human development: through the assertion of the universal right of “everyone to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts”, providing intellectual stimulation and emotional catharsis, exploring the human condition in particular circumstances, celebrating and affirming individual and communal identities, providing creative skills to enable participation in the arts, facilitating creative thought to empower individuals to deal with their challenges, etc

Social development: by engaging such creative expressions for socially good ends such as promoting intercultural dialogue and social cohesion, spreading important messages to inform and change social and health behavior, educating

communities about social justice issues, etc and at the same time raising the aesthetic consciousness and appreciation of the participants and beneficiaries

Economic development by creating jobs, generating foreign income through exports, boosting related industries such as tourism and transport, creating or expanding markets through those creative sectors that are able to operate sustainably within a free market economy, etc

That varied conditions within and between nations require a nuanced approach to development rather than a one-size-fits-all approach

THEREFORE RESOLVE

1. To advocate – at international, continental, regional, national and local levels - for a holistic development approach that pursues social justice based on fundamental human freedoms and rights and underpinned by good governance
2. To assert the fundamental human right of everyone to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts as integral to development, along with other rights and freedoms
3. To promote cultural policies at national, provincial/state and local levels that recognize the contributions of the arts and cultural expressions to human development, social development and economic development, and which have appropriate and different funding mechanisms for each
4. To promote development policies that recognize the importance of culture as a potential obstacle or as a potential facilitator of development, and that in content and strategy, respects the culture of the intended beneficiaries of such development
5. To encourage the conducting of cultural impact studies before development projects are initiated to assess the potentially negative impacts of such projects and to ensure strategies that mitigate such negative impacts
6. That development agencies allocate a percentage of their budgets, or a percentage of all development projects to the cultural dimension of the project
7. That further study of and engagement with leaders of traditional cultures be done in order better to align traditional cultural practices with fundamental human rights and freedoms
8. To encourage government departments and development agencies to establish Cultural Units to research the real cultural impact of their programmes, to educate development workers, to integrate culturally-appropriate strategies into development programmes to mitigate negative impacts and to facilitate positive impacts
9. To ensure that artists and creative workers on the continent are educated about the broader contexts in which they work, to understand the relationship between this context and their work, thus empowering them to act in a more informed manner in their interests and in the broader interests of their societies

10. To develop a cadre of civil society experts on culture and development who can assist governments and development agencies in devising and implementing appropriate policies, strategies and programmes.
11. To invite other parties who share our understanding to work with us in pursuit of development that, at continental, regional, national and local levels, builds a sustainable culture of social justice, human rights and freedoms.

APPENDIX ONE: Extracts from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 7: All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration.

Article 9: No-one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 13: Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

Article 16 (1): Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

Article 16 (2): Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, and to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20: Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Article 21 (1): Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives

Article 21 (3): The will of the people shall be the basis of authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent voting procedures.

Article 22: Everyone...has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each state, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23 (1): Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

Article 23 (2): Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection

Article 25 (1): Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Article 26 (1): Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory....

Article 26 (2): Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Article 27 (1): Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Article 27 (2): Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author

Article 28: Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised.