



UK Coalition for Cultural Diversity

UKCCD: Letter to Michael Helston, Head of the International Unit, DCMS

– sent via email on 9 June 2009

Dear Michael Helston

In the run up to the forthcoming Conference of Parties next week the UK Coalition for Cultural Diversity would like to contribute the following observations with regard to the importance of the inclusion of Article 21 in the development of guidelines over the coming 2 years.

We understand that, whereas it seems likely that Articles 9 - Information Sharing & Transparency, 10 - Education & Public Awareness, 19 -Exchange, Analysis and Dissemination of Information, will be included there seems less certainty with regard to Article 21 - International Consultation & Co-ordination.

The UKCCD considers that:

There is a need to clarify the other international forums in which countries would promote the principles and objectives of the Convention. On this count, we believe this should encompass not only multilateral forums, such as the WTO, but also regional- and linguistically-based forums, such as the Organization of American States, MERCOSUR, the African Union, Commonwealth, La Francophonie and others.

There is a need to identify the different types of consultation that could take place among countries that have ratified the convention—development and adoption of declarations, coordinated development of positions to exempt culture during trade negotiations, etc. We also emphasise that, consistent with Article 11, civil society organizations—notably organizations representing cultural professional organizations—should be consulted in this regard. There is a need to identify the different types of issues that could be addressed through such consultation— initiatives to develop international cooperation, the exchange of best practices regarding effective policy approaches in a digital environment, etc.

Furthermore, if operational guidelines are not developed for Article 21, the fundamental value of the Convention as an international instrument for upholding the right of countries to support their domestic cultures through

policies and other measures will be at risk. In essence, Article 21 is about coherence and strengthening the consensus among signatory states that they should not renounce in other forums—notably trade negotiations—the right to apply cultural policies which they have clearly affirmed through the Convention.

Finally, it also bears emphasizing that it is the responsibility of each country that ratifies the Convention to promote its provisions in other international forums. This is the fundamental starting point. However, the consultation and coordination framework envisaged in Article 21 strengthens this by engaging countries to work and speak with one voice on this question—thereby reinforcing the crucial consensus.

Members of the International Federation will be amongst the representatives of civil society although this time, the UKCCD will not be sending a delegate.

It would be excellent to have the opportunity to speak to you after the Conference to receive your briefing on what transpires and an update on the government's support for the Convention.

Kind regards,

Holly Aylett