

Newsletter of the International Network for Cultural Diversity

Welcome

First, thank you for joining our network. Organizations from 18 countries on every continent have signed the declaration recognizing the need to promote cultural diversity and maintain the ability of sovereign nations to support their cultures in the face of globalization. Many of you have told important stories about the growing homogenization of cultural expression and the difficulties we face in trying to stem this tide.

Although you have all signed our declaration of principles, we are resending it to you in handy digital form at the end of this message. Please feel free to distribute these materials and invite others to join the International Network for Cultural Diversity, a non-partisan network open to all groups which adhere to its principles.

We invite you to participate

The Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA), acting as the secretariat of the network, will soon create an e-mail list of all the members, which will allow us all to communicate with one another. By the end of February, we will also launch a web site in English, French and Spanish. For these purposes, we have registered the following domain names:

world-culture-network.net
reseau-culture-monde.net
red-cultura-mundo.net

Initially, most of the material posted from Canada will be in English, some of it will be in French, and a small amount will be in Spanish. As more organizations become active, we will be able to post more information in French and Spanish. We invite you to submit relevant materials in any of these languages.

If we are to succeed in convincing governments of our alternative approaches and have them act together, we will need to keep each other advised of developments. This is why we have established these electronic communications tools. Please use them.

New York Times writer Thomas L. Friedman, writing from the Davos conference in Switzerland, observed that there appear to be 3 perspectives to global trade surfacing: the one afraid of the future, the one demanding a slice of the future, and the one building a future. Our network aims to be one of the builders.

Culture and Seattle

Like many civil society groups, we see some advantages in the collapse of the talks in Seattle. The differences within the WTO give us time, and new opportunities not obvious before. We hope that the information-sharing arrangements we are creating will help us seize these opportunities as talks continue in Geneva and elsewhere.

We may even be able to appropriate some of the work done within the official WTO meetings. The draft statement of the Ministers, which fell by the wayside when the talks collapsed, included the following statement in its preamble:

AIn a rapidly changing world, we owe it to all our citizens that the system should allow them to pursue their opportunities and realize their aspirations, including those pertaining to cultural identity and diversity, and to adapt to the challenges of globalization and new technologies.@

Although this language is weak, it could provide a starting point for raising concerns about developments in the working sessions that will take place in Geneva.

But the most exciting aspect of Seattle was the solidarity between Acivil society@ groups. Several groups concerned about the cultural dimensions of trade spoke out during the WTO Aofficial@ NGO Day, and the next day we joined them in calling a press conference to raise the issues publicly. As those of you who joined us in Seattle know, there were excellent networking opportunities with other NGOs, cultural organizations and related groups, and our network grew as a result.

Despite these gains, the problems of the cultural community are far from over. The existing WTO agreements have already been used to roll back certain cultural protections and restrict others. At present, the moratorium on challenges under TRIPS has expired, leaving certain copyright polices open to challenge. Furthermore, the so-called Abuilt-in@ agenda of matters agreed before the Ministers converged on Seattle included an understanding to continue important discussions on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS). Both of these could have enormous consequences for cultural policy.

We will monitor these developments closely over the coming months. Along with our own analysis, we have that of a researcher we have hired as part of a consortium of Canadian groups concerned about trade developments. He has already written an in-depth analysis of the events in Seattle, which we will make available on our web site and can provide to our members on request. We were also sent an analysis from professor Arun Kumar at Nehru University, which we are happy to share.

Building the Network

We have a big job ahead of us. The acquisition of Time Warner by America On-Line, and the subsequent takeover of one of the four largest music producers, EMI, by Time Warner is stark evidence of the enormous corporate weight pushing to use the trade agreements and the WTO to

eliminate cultural support measures around the world.

We invite you to take the following steps to help us build the network.

First Step:

Sign the declaration, as you have done.

Second Step:

Help expand the contact list. Send the material to others in your country and elsewhere. Give us contacts wherever you have them. Encourage people to log onto the web site when it gets up and running at the end of February.

Third Step:

Share information, and help us plan for the founding conference in Greece. We plan to have substantive discussions before the conference, involve more of our partners in the International Advisory Committee, and locate more partners in Greece to help us host the conference.

Fourth Step:

Plan to join us for the founding meeting of the international network for cultural diversity.

International Network for Cultural Diversity

Founding Meeting

Athens, Greece

September 2000

Our meeting is scheduled to coincide with the annual meeting of the International Network for Cultural Policy (INCP), which brought culture ministers from more than 30 countries together in Mexico in September 1999. The governmental network has aims similar to our own: to draw attention to the important role of cultural diversity in the development of societies; to raise the profile of culture in global relations; and to ensure that international trade rules do not narrow cultural policy options. We will meet as a network of NGOs and hope to organize a joint session with the Ministers. The dates of the activities will be available shortly, but begin to plan now so that you can attend this critical gathering.

Since one purpose of this newsletter is to test our e-mail list, please confirm that this e-mail has found its way to the right place, and let us know if you would rather receive news from us in French rather than English, or French as well as English (this newsletter is available in both languages). If you have received this e-mail in error, please let us know as well. **Please do not resend this message when you reply.**

We look forward to working with you!

Mireille Gagné

Maxine Heppner

Co-chairs

CCA International Committee

Board Members, Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA)

The International Advisory Committee

The International Advisory Committee, put in place by the CCA=s Board of Governors and co-chaired by two board members, guides the work of the CCA on the International Network for Cultural Diversity. As more members join the network, we intend to expand the International Advisory Committee to truly represent the international arena and the complex concerns and realities inherent in our culturally diverse world.

The Secretariat

The Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) is acting as the Secretariat of the International Network for Cultural Diversity. The CCA is Canada=s largest and oldest arts advocacy organization. The membership, which represents the interests of over 200,000 individuals, is composed of artists and cultural workers, arts organizations, labour groups, arts educators, cultural industry organizations and concerned citizens from all across Canada.