



International Network for Cultural Diversity

*A Voice for Culture and the Arts
in the Era of Globalization*

NEWSLETTER

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1. INCD Celebrates World Day for Cultural Diversity

At INCD, we believe there is much to celebrate in 2008 on the World Day for Cultural Diversity.

Speaking in Montréal, Mireille Gagné, INCD Chair said, “there is growing awareness that promoting and celebrating our cultural differences is a positive force for humanity. Developing local artists and cultural producers in every country can reduce poverty and achieving more balanced cultural exchanges can help us to bridge the gaps in our misunderstandings.”

Ms. Gagné noted that the new UNESCO *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*, which came into force in 2007, can be a powerful political tool for cultural diversity. The Convention is now in its initial implementation stages. “If we work together in civil society, with our own governments and with UNESCO, we can make the Convention come to life.”

She called on all Parties to use the scope it provides them to develop supportive cultural policies and new forms of international cooperation to ensure there is greater interaction between all cultures. “In particular, INCD calls on all developed countries to implement concrete measures to provide preferential access to their markets for the artists and cultural goods and services from developing countries. This is an obligation of the Convention and we are committed to making sure that meaningful programs result from it.”

“In our eyes, making the Convention effective is the best way to celebrate the World Day for Cultural Diversity,” concluded Ms. Gagné.

2. UNESCO – Important Convention Developments

INCD and other civil society organizations are preparing for key meetings being held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in June. On 23 June, Parties to the Convention and NGOs active in the field will meet to exchange views on the role of civil society in the implementation of the Convention. From 24-27 June, the Intergovernmental Committee will hold its second session to consider important questions about how the Convention will be implemented. INCD will have a delegation at both meetings.

The Intergovernmental Committee, the operational body of the Convention, held its first meeting in Ottawa, Canada in December 2007. The working papers and decisions of that meeting are available on the UNESCO website, www.unesco.org. INCD's report on that meeting and our analysis of recent developments is available at www.incd.net.

While NGOs have been seated as observers at the initial Convention meetings, there has been limited scope to participate in the deliberations. In a joint presentation to the Ottawa meeting, the six NGOs in attendance (including INCD) urged Parties to take a more inclusive approach, particularly given the strong commitment in Article 11 which recognizes “the fundamental role of civil society in the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.” In response to the input of NGOs, the IC determined that a scheduled “information” session would be transformed into an “exchange” of views between civil society and NGOs.

The six NGOs have continued to work together to influence the agenda for the 23 June meeting and hope to make joint presentations on key issues, such as the right of civil society groups to speak at meetings before decisions are taken, and the need for civil society representatives to be involved in deciding which projects will be funded by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity.

Also in preparation for the June meetings, the committee of the International Network on Cultural Policy which oversees the ministerial network's input to the discussions will meet in Brussels on 26-28 May. An INCD delegation will table our views with the Committee on 26 May.

In preparation for these upcoming meeting, the Steering Committee has approved the latest proposals from INCD on the Convention implementation issues, including the questions of how to define civil society and the role it should play in the Convention implementation process. This document will be available on the INCD website, or you can request a copy from the secretariat at incd@neilcraigassociates.com.

Since this document will form the basis of our submissions to the June meetings, we welcome all input and comments.

3. Is the World Trade Organization Coming Back to Life?

Garry Neil

International trade talks at the World Trade Organization (WTO) appear to have found a second wind. When the formal hiatus was announced last summer, most commentators felt there was little prospect of reaching a deal on such contentious issues as agricultural subsidies and market access for industrial goods. However, two factors appear to have created a new momentum in Geneva.

The world food crisis has prompted developing countries with high tariffs on imported food to lower these tariffs to reduce the cost of food for hungry citizens. If they push for a deal now, they may get something in return for these tariff reductions, such as agreement to further lower agricultural subsidies provided to domestic farmers by the U.S. and the EU.

The other factor is the U.S. election. President Bush is concerned about his legacy and he would like to conclude a multilateral trade agreement before he leaves office. Other countries appear to prefer to deal with a trade-friendly administration, rather than waiting to negotiate with a new President who may be hostile to any new international trade agreement. While no deal can be ratified before the new U.S. President is sworn into office, the thinking is that if the new administration is faced with a *fait accompli* there may be sufficient pressure to ensure passage of the deal.

Provisional plans for a May meeting of trade ministers in Geneva have been shelved. But a consensus on the most difficult issues appears to be developing and the ministers could be brought together in late June or early July to hammer out all the remaining unresolved elements of the negotiations.

For the cultural sector, the most significant concerns arise under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). If a Ministerial meeting takes place, there will be pressure in all areas, including for countries to put forward new “offers” in services. Given the pressure to reach a settlement in other negotiating areas, it’s unlikely we will see any substantial offers. However, there are two areas of discussion that may have an impact on the ability of states to implement cultural policies.

The first is a general process where parties are considering a proposal to “freeze” existing levels of liberalization for all services sectors. What that would mean for example is that states could not increase domestic content requirements in broadcasting. Such a “freeze” might also prevent states from introducing new regulatory requirements for the Internet or other new distribution platforms.

The second GATS proposal is for rules governing “domestic regulations,” which have been the subject of considerable discussion in Geneva. It is still possible that an agreement will be reached to have these rules apply to all services sectors. If they are, a wide range of cultural policies could be questioned, since the agreement would require domestic regulations to be “no more burdensome” and “no more trade restrictive” than necessary.

A detailed paper on how the GATS rules affect culture can be found at www.incd.net.

4. Arterial Network in Africa

The creation of the Arterial Network was one of the principal outcomes of the March 2007 Conference held in Dakar, Senegal (see INCD Newsletters Vol. 8, Nos. 1 and 2). INCD was one of the convenors of the Conference. The Arterial Network is an informal, dynamic network of individuals, institutions and funding partners working to support the effectiveness and growth of the African arts and culture civil society and to enhance the sustainability of creative industries in Africa.

The Arterial Network recently issued calls for four important projects, which will be the first concrete steps in implementing the vision and objectives agreed to in Dakar. These projects are:

- To organize a 7-10 day training program for 10-12 African arts journalists.
- To organize a 7-10 day training program for 20-25 African cultural entrepreneurs.
- To develop a research and mentorship program around the African arts economy that will both help to develop experts in the field on the continent, and contribute to new research related to the impact of the creative sector on the arts economies of various African countries and regions.
- To undertake a two-phase research project into the viability, sustainability, structure, management, operational mechanisms and location of a Fund that will channel support to the African creative sector.

To subscribe to the Arterial Network newsletter, send an email to art27m@iafrica.com.

Another outcome of the Dakar Conference was Imagine Africa, a web-based campaign to promote and strengthen African arts. You can find more information about this initiative here: <http://www.imagineafrica.org/>.

5. INCD News

Membership Campaign

INCD's membership campaign continues. You are invited to renew your membership for 2008 by visiting www.incd.net. Membership fees and voluntary financial contributions (yes we do need your financial support) can be made to INCD electronically, or by credit card through Paypal in many local currencies.

Website

Be sure to visit the INCD website www.incd.net to find all the latest information about the INCD and its campaigns, as well as background information about the UNESCO Convention, articles on culture and trade, research papers on cultural development, and information about the history and development of the INCD. All back issues of the

newsletter are available and the site has contemporary links to other related sites.

Interesting New Publication

INCD member D. Paul Shafer, who is director of the World Culture Report, has published a new book, *Revolution or Renaissance: Making the transition from an economic age to a cultural one*. He argues that, while the economic age has created wealth and unleashed productive power, it cannot deal with the current threats to life on the planet. Making the transition to a cultural age is imperative for our survival. For more information contact order@exportlivre.com.

EU/ACP Looking for Cultural Experts

The Asia Caribbean Pacific group of countries, with the support of the European Union, is developing an ACP Cultural Observatory to undertake a culture sector analysis and specialized studies into the situation of culture in the ACP countries. The observatory has issued a call for three international experts, national experts in Guinea Bissau, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Botswana, Jamaica and Papua New Guinea, as well as 12 research assistants in the countries involved in the pilot studies. If you would like more information, please contact burama.sagnia@eco3.be.

Apologies for our limited language capacity

INCD deeply regrets that its ongoing financial challenges prevent the French and Spanish sites from being as current as the English-language one. INCD is committed to correcting this imbalance as soon its resources allow.

INCD/RIDC

5 Brulé Crescent,
Toronto ON M6S 4H8
Canada

Tel 1.416.604.3326

incd@neilcraigassociates.com

www.incd.net

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