



By the Organized Constituency of  
the Local and Regional Governments



Forty years after the first **UNESCO** Mondiacult World Conference on Cultural Policies held in Mexico City (Mexico) in 1982, and 24 years after the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies for Development held in Stockholm (Sweden) in 1998, UNESCO has decided to convene the “UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies – Mondiacult 2022”, to be hosted by the Government of Mexico from 28 to 30 September 2022.

UNESCO affirms that over the last four decades, **the global landscape on culture and development “has profoundly evolved”** with “overarching transnational challenges, such as inequalities, conflicts, technological revolution or climate change”; also, “the COVID-19 pandemic has starkly exposed the shared vulnerability of countries in facing emergency situations while continuing to provide basic services”. In this context, “UNESCO is reinvesting in the global policy dialogue in the field of culture, building on its historic and constitutional legacy of fostering multilateral cooperation and policy dialogue” and “is engaging its Member States and the international community to embark on **a renewed reflection on cultural policies** to tackle global challenges and outline immediate and future priorities in order to shape a more robust and resilient cultural sector, fully anchored in public policies and sustainable development prospects”. According to UNESCO, “the World Conference will provide **new momentum for the global policy dialogue on culture for sustainable development**” and consider “the urge to shift the focus of public policies towards global public goods – an imperative recently reiterated by the UN Secretary General in the Our Common Agenda report – cuts across all policy domains but is particularly relevant to culture”.

The **Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments** has become an important actor in the global policy dialogue in the field of culture and sustainable development.

- In **May 2013**, when the Global Taskforce was set up to bring the perspectives of local and regional governments to the SDGs, the climate change Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, the place of culture in sustainable development was identified as an important field to consider within the GTF.
- In **October 2016**, the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, convened by the GTF, in the meeting held in Quito in the frame of Habitat III, provided a clear vision on culture and sustainable development for the GTF in its Statement: “We commit to integrate culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development and take action to foster heritage, creativity, diversity and peaceful co-existence”.
- In **February 2020**, the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments in Abu Dhabi further reiterated the call to integrate culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, a sentiment that was echoed in the outcome Document of the Forum, which received inputs from the networks of the Global Taskforce.
- In **September 2020**, the UN75 Visioning report further developed this idea and affirmed the need to upgrade the place of culture in the global policy dialogue, including concrete proposals: “In 2045, culture will have been recognized by the international community as the fourth dimension of sustainable development, on equal basis to the economic, social and environmental pillars. In order to achieve this recognition, it would be crucial that the

post-2030 Development Agenda includes a stand-alone Goal on Culture. One that includes several targets related to memory, heritage, creativity, diversity and knowledge, supported by a narrative that clearly identifies culture as a core component of local and regional identity, a strand of global solidarity, and a vector for peace and human rights”.

- Yearly the GTF organizes the Local and Regional Governments Forum at **High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)** together with the UN which is a dedicated session to ensure local and regional government contribute to the HLPF and which contributes to the advocacy towards culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

In the last decade, several of the members of the GTF have become important actors in the conversation that relates culture and sustainable development. GTF members AIMF, UCCI, ICLEI, ATO, ORU-Fogar, C40, Platforma, GPM or AER, as well as UCLG and its sections, have published policy documents in this field, and/or run specific programmes and projects on this issue. **The know-how and the expertise of local and regional governments** in the field of cultural policies and cultural rights include the explicit consideration of local cultural policies as platforms for dialogue, coexistence and freedoms. They include active participation of communities in public debates, and an open governance of culture with the involvement of all actors in a place. They promote cultural diversity, as a source of knowledge, as a vital element of citizenship and as a component for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Cultural rights-based policies also include how we can imagine the future together, that is, promoting human creativity as an aspect of human experience and a source of progress and innovation. Cultural policies promote a sense of place; identity and belonging that leaves no place behind, with integration of heritage and culture in sustainable development, equity and community planning.

Considering the importance of the UNESCO MONDIACULT 2022 conference in the policy dialogues on culture, sustainable development and global public goods, the GTF wishes to highlight these **key messages**:

- The consideration of culture, by the international community, as **the fourth pillar or dimension of sustainable development**, on equal basis to the economic, social and environmental pillars, would bring coherence to the paradigm of sustainable development. The current “triangular” model does not illustrate the complexities and the challenges of our times. Culture re-connects. Culture places people at the centre. Culture humanises sustainable development.
- **Culture is a global public good** that needs to be included in the national, local and international policies. These policies need to become truly people-centred. Innovative programmes and projects aiming to leave no one and no place behind have been tested during the last decade by GTF members, and they need to be escalated nationally and internationally. The recognition of culture and linguistic diversity in sustainable development is not only an image or a metaphor but also a matter of power: a framework to understand and transform our world, promoting freedoms and making for stronger and more creative communities.
- We believe **the climate emergency** is a defining challenge of our time, and it requires an ambitious and comprehensive treatment in cultural policy commensurate with the magnitude of the climate emergency itself. Culture, including intangible and tangible cultural heritage, creativity, Indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ languages, wisdom and knowledge systems and traditional crafts and materials, especially those used by Indigenous and local women, offer great potential to drive climate action and sustainable development and contribute meaningfully to climate solutions.

- **A global frame for cultural policies** should be explicitly based on cultural rights, which are becoming the norm in those national, regional and local policies that are explicitly addressing the challenge of inequalities, in particular through cultural programmes aiming at education, active participation, critical citizenship, gender equality, linguistic diversity, and the empowerment of indigenous peoples and marginalised groups. In general terms, local and regional governments are disappointed by the little consideration they get from the national governments on these issues. Considering its proximity to citizens, local and regional governments can join and facilitate the collaboration with communities and stakeholders in processes of co-creation of cultural-rights based policies.
- As we already defended in the UN75 Visioning Report, it is crucial that the post-2030 Development Agenda includes **a stand-alone Culture Goal**. One that includes several targets related to memory, heritage, creativity, diversity and knowledge, supported by a narrative that clearly identifies culture as a core component of local and regional identity, a strand of global solidarity and dialogue, and a vector for peace and human rights. The work of the #Culture2030Goal global campaign can be inspirational. A Culture Goal should also unfold truly ambitious programmes of international cultural cooperation. All places around the world are recognized with their dignity and their capacity to interact with others on an equal basis, in a fair cultural globalization.

On behalf of the organized constituency of local and regional governments, the **Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments** calls for the final Outcome Document of MONDIACULT 2022 to be explicit about the importance of UNESCO structurally involving local and regional governments in its programmes. Also, the GTF calls for countries to rely on the leadership, the know-how and the expertise of local and regional governments in the field of cultural rights. The GTF is convinced that, if collaboration with all the spheres of governments is fostered, the global conversation on culture and development becomes richer and its results more effective. Through a strong global cooperation, our constituency is committed to placing culture at the centre of sustainable and equitable societies. Our networks are willing to join the decision-making table, convening a powerful voice at the global agendas, while promoting opportunities for peer-learning, exchange of experiences and scale-up of effective practices among local and regional governments.

