

## WORLD URBAN FORUM (UN – Habitat)

Report of symposium

Agenda 21 for culture.

An undertaking by cities and local governments for cultural development

The symposium discussed the **Agenda 21 for culture**, a document agreed by more than 300 local authorities “as a guiding document for our public cultural policies and as a contribution to the cultural development of humanity”.

The presentation took place in **the morning of September 15th 2004**. It was organised by the second World Urban Forum (UN-Habitat) during its meeting in Barcelona on the occasion of the first Universal Forum of Cultures – Barcelona 2004. The symposium was co-ordinated by Barcelona City Council – Institute of Culture and the Forum of Local Authorities of Porto Alegre.

The first part of the event was chaired by Mr. Joan Clos, Mayor of Barcelona, Mr. Joao Verle, Mayor of Porto Alegre, and Ms. Anna Tibaijuka, UN-Habitat’s Executive Director.

Mr. **Vitor Ortiz**, Councillor for Culture of Porto Alegre City Council, framed the origins of the document within the Forum of Local Authorities of Porto Alegre. This network of local authorities decided in 2003 to write a document explaining the links between local cultural development, social inclusion, enhancement of democracy and citizenship participation. From January 2003 to May 2004 draft documents were discussed in several cities (Saint Denis, Montevideo, la Paz, Nova Iguaçu...) and by network organisations (Eurocities, Interlocal, Sigma, European Forum of Local Authorities...). Last draft was modified during Interacció 2004 (4-6 May) and the Forum of Local Authorities (7-8 May). Councillor Ortiz stated the document is the local governments’ contribution to current worldwide debates on cultural diversity and affirmed that cultural development should not be measured only with western formulae.

Mr. **Ferran Mascarell**, Councillor for Culture of Barcelona City Council, explained the contents of the document, 67 articles divided in three sections: “Principles”, “Undertakings” and “Recommendations”. The 16 principles analyse the links between human rights, sustainability, cultural diversity, participation, democracy and governance, and relate these topics with challenges of cities. The 29 undertakings represent the specific commitments for cultural development local authorities engage to. The 22 recommendations are addressed to various tiers of government, from national authorities to UN agencies and programmes, including UNESCO “to recognise this Agenda 21 for Culture as a reference document in its work preparing the international legal instrument or Convention on Cultural Diversity planned for 2005”, UN-Habitat “to consider this document as a basis for the establishing the importance of the cultural dimension of urban policies”, and United Cities and Local Governments “to adopt this Agenda 21 for Culture as a reference document for their cultural programmes and also assume their role as coordinators of the process after their adoption”. Councillor Mascarell finished his speech stating that today’s struggle for culture is, more than ever, fighting for freedom, justice and human development.

Ms. **Elisabeth Gateau**, Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments, the recently unified new world organisation of local governments, explained the growing development of municipal international relations and the importance of strengthening local government worldwide. Ms Gateau analysed the growing liaison between culture and urban governance and mentioned that article 25 of UCLG’s Founding Congress Final Declaration (Paris, May 5<sup>th</sup> 2004) represents the commitment of the new organisation with culture: “the protection of cultural diversity, within a democratic legal framework, should be one of the pillars of local government actions (...). Local governments are committed to develop the Agenda 21 for Culture.”

Mr. **Mounir Bouchenaki**, Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO, explained the debates on cultural diversity that UNESCO is leading, from the Universal Declaration of 2001 to the prospects to approve a legally binding instrument –a new convention- in October 2005. Mr Bouchenaki welcomed the initiative of those cities and local governments that have written and approved the Agenda 21 for culture. This document, he said, is fully coherent with the convention on cultural diversity and demonstrates the significance of cities as relevant actors in the international scene. Mr Bouchenaki invited the signatory cities of Agenda 21 for culture to disseminate the document worldwide and to liaise it with Unesco urban activities.

Ms. **Anna K. Tibaijuka**, Executive Director of UN – Habitat, mentioned the growing importance of culture within urban governance; it is not an accident, she said, this Second World Urban Forum analyses cities as *crossroads of cultures* and how culture can contribute to urban strategies for *inclusiveness and integration*. The Executive Director stated cultural policies can play an important role in struggling against poverty, generating employment and improving urban planning. The Agenda 21 for culture represents an excellent basement of new urban policies, which need to be more sensitive to what culture means for inhabitants.

Mayor **Joan Clos** and Mayor **Joao Verle** celebrated the commitment of cities and local governments that approved the document. They engaged their cities to further disseminate the document and to advocate national and international authorities to include the implementation of Agenda 21 for culture in their Agendas.

After a coffee pause, Mr **Colin Mercer**, Director Cultural Capital Ltd., chaired the second part of the networking event, a round table with five local government officials. Mr Mercer introduced the round table with a critical analysis of the document. He said that cultural governance is a very complex issue and that Agenda 21 for culture was specially significant for its bottom-up origin as for its combined local and international ambitions. Mr. **Erik Nilsson**, Vice Mayor for Culture and Education of Stockholm City Council said the contents of the document are very close to the challenges Stockholm is facing, specially in what regards new migration. He emphasised the “process” dimension of exchanging perspectives among cities of the world and to further debate the role of culture in urban development. Ms. **Francine Senecal**, Vice-chair of the Executive Committee of Montreal, celebrated the existence of the document as it illustrates what cities can do for cultural diversity. She mentioned the Agenda 21 for culture will become a reference in current re-shaping of Montreal’s cultural policies. Ms. **Claire Péssin-Garric**, Vice-president in charge of culture in the Conseil-Général de Seine-Saint-Denis, explained departmental and municipal cultural policies, their commitment with cultural diversity and social justice and gave several examples of specific projects being implemented in Seine-Saint-Denis; she also said the document is an excellent local authorities’ respond to cultural standardisation threats of globalisation. Mr **Ferran Mascarell**, Councillor for Culture of Barcelona, explained why and how culture has been at the core of Barcelona’s policies during the last 25 years; he stated cities will only be able to respond to new emerging challenges (new migration, knowledge society) with the presence of culture in mainstream policies. Finally, Mr. **Vitor Ortiz**, Councillor for Culture of Porto Alegre, affirmed culture plays a key role in recognising dignity and guaranteeing well-being for inhabitants; he also said the Agenda 21 for culture can be understood as a new platform for cultural development that international agencies should support.