

# **Third ordinary session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**

**Francesco Bandarin, Assistant Director-General for Culture**

## **Opening remarks**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Director General, Ms Irina Bokova, I am honored to welcome you to this third ordinary session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

The 2005 Convention is the first standard setting instrument that puts culture and development at its core. The UN Millennium Declaration and Goals figure in its preamble, in its objectives, guiding principles and operational guidelines. Together they define an agenda to promote the cultural and creative sector as an engine for the social and economic development of countries, in particular through the cultural industries. This was, as you now, recently reaffirmed in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Culture and Development that has recognized the 2005 Convention as one of its pillars. Culture and development is also a pillar of the action of UNESCO and of the cultural sector as discussed at the recent session of the Executive Board.

The third session of the Conference of Parties is a special occasion because we are at the crossroad in the life of the Convention. And we have an opportunity

today to put in place the mechanisms that are needed to enable the cultural sector at all levels to grow, develop and prosper.

There are several priorities for action that we must take forward in the near future in order to ensure that the Convention becomes more than just a document of principles and ideals.

The first and fundamental issue to address is the ratification of the Convention. Today, there are 117 Parties to the Convention. But considering its relatively recent entry into force, this is a remarkable achievement. Since the last time the Conference of Parties met in 2009, seventeen countries have ratified the Convention, the most recent being Costa Rica earlier this year. Countries from Africa currently make up the largest proportion of Parties. Both the Conference of

A second priority, after ratification, is to ensure the visibility of the Convention and work towards a common understanding of its key messages.

One way to address this challenge is to increase our efforts to communicate and exchange experiences to demonstrate, in concrete terms, the ways in which the Convention is being implemented around the world. The work you are starting to undertake on the quadrennial periodic reports to be submitted over the next ten years is a particularly important step in this regard. The 2010 Report should be the working tools and platforms for sharing experiences. By this time next year, 94 countries will have completed their first round of reports. This means that we will have collected information on how governments have integrated culture into

Committee in December of last year, and they are being implemented in 24 countries. A new call for projects was launched earlier this year and we are expecting an equally impressive number of projects to be approved by the Committee at its fifth session at the end of this year. One of the main issues you will discuss over the next days will be how to raise resources for the Fund. The Director-General continues to call on all Parties to contribute 1% of their annual contribution to UNESCO to the Fund. Given that just over one-quarter of the Parties have made contributions to the Fund shows that some have gone far beyond the benchmark set by the Director-General while others still need to be convinced. The success of the Fund will depend also on the quality of the implementation of the projects on the ground and the impact that they will have to promote the diversity of cultural expressions within their own countries and at the international level.

The fourth priority for action is to address the growing demands from Parties for help in implementing the Convention into their national policies and programmes. The Secretariat has taken first steps in this direction thanks to the support received from the European Union to launch and implement a programme of technical assistance to improve the governance of culture in developing countries.

In parallel, thanks to the support of the Spanish government, the Secretariat has developed a variety of practical tools designed to help implement the Convention and build capacity at national levels. I would like to quote some of them:



Ladies and gentlemen,

We collectively stand on a threshold looking at the future priorities for action. This week, there will be an election of 12 new members to the Intergovernmental Committee. Those who have served their four year term have built a secure foundation for the future. New members of the Committee will be tasked with ensuring this stability, with taking forward the priorities mentioned and also with pioneering new paths for the future. To the outgoing members of the Committee, I would like to express our congratulations for the tremendous work that you have done and invite you of course to not wander too far away. The success of this Convention requires the contribution of all Parties and members of civil society if we are going to make a difference.

Thank you