

The Fourth Pan-African Cultural Congress Report and Framework of Action



Johannesburg, South Africa- 27 May 2015 – Following three-day intense discussions, the Fourth Pan-African Cultural Congress (PACC4) adopted the draft Framework for Action and the Report of the PACC4. Both documents will be submitted to the 2nd Specialized Technical Committee Meeting on Youth Culture and Sport (STC-YCS2) to be held in 2016.

Co-organized from 25 to 27 May 2015 at the Sandton Convention Center, by the African Union Commission, in collaboration with the Department of Arts and Culture of the Republic of South Africa as part of its Africa Month Celebrations, the 2015 edition of the Pan-African Cultural Congress was held under the theme: “Unity in Cultural Diversity for Africa’s Development.”

The debate focused on the theme of the Fourth Pan-African Cultural Congress; the cultural Diversity and Human Rights; the culture for Peace and Cultural Diversity as well as cultural Diversity and cultural governance. The approach to inventorying artists, professional and cultural structures and cultural infrastructures to inform cultural policy development and post 2015 Development Agenda for Culture have been discussed.

The meeting shared as well views on the ways and means to improving understanding and cooperative relations; the issue of language as a depository and vehicle for cultural diversity and factor in Africa's development and integration. The presentation of the Agenda 2063 communication strategy constituted an opportunity to discuss the appropriate approach to communicating Africa's transformation in view to reach the main stakeholders: the African citizens (the presentation of the Agenda 2063 communication strategy available at: www.au.int).

The participants highlighted the need for Africa to put an end to the suppression of cultural expression of one group by another and for African culture to be domesticated where other cultures tend to dominate in African communities, calling for the diminishment of the distance between cultural conferences and people at grassroots level for the latter to be able to participate effectively.

An appeal was done to the African Union to provide structures for the contributions of civil society to be incorporated more effectively and in this regard, the establishment of national chapters of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) were considered as critical. The meeting stressed the necessity to expand and promote local arts and cultural festivals, and to invite participants from other countries to foster integration and tolerance between cultures.

The meeting specified that diversity and Human Rights are crucial pillars supporting cultural development in Africa, while culture is an important tool of human heritage with power to strengthen social cohesion as a fundamental pillar for achieving lasting peace and development for any nation. It embraces freedom and democracy and it should be considered how arts and culture can be used for cultural diplomacy in dealing with conflicts, noting that a model culture policy for Africa is proposed, containing the elements of institutional structures and decision making, arts policy domains and instruments stressing that a database and mapping of existing artistic trends is important for each country.

The participants underlined the need for education to be mobilised to realise linguistic rights; to use African languages in all levels of society. The meeting underscored that Africa should understand its history, to be able to start new creative industries and use its creativity to enhance the African economy. The meeting called for the improvement of culture governance, training, decentralisation, policy advocacy for creative solidarity and partnership all over the world.

The Fourth Pan-African Cultural Congress stated that Africa should strive for linguistic equity in order to catalyse acceleration of indigenous languages that have remained in the periphery of the development agenda stressing that there are several barriers that still need special attention: Trade barriers, language barriers, visa, official collaboration between African countries, Infrastructure challenges.

Some critical recommendations were made. They include:

- Develop a culture of accepting one another through embracing diversified cultural expressions within the context of Human Rights principles;
- Promote and advocate the strengths of African diversity and incorporate it in the education curriculum;
- Promote African languages and introduce them in the school curriculum,
- African Union must commit to the use of African languages in its meetings;
- Leadership should lead by example in using and promoting their African languages;
- Adoption of a Pan-African language;
- Focus on children and young people, to educate them about cultural activities and socialise the children to develop national pride;
- Define steps to achieve African aspirations, more specifically aspiration 4 and 5 dealing with a peaceful continent, culture and heritage, respectively, following the adoption of Agenda 2063;
- Establish Platforms for interaction with indigenous groups at community level and other fora such as PACC;
- Establishment by Ministries of Culture of a research structure and ensure close relationship with Arts faculties at universities for the purposes of developing and evaluating cultural policies.
- African Union member states should improve their planning in culture, also at local level;
- Protect minority cultural groups in all countries and raise awareness of their cultural rights;
- Redress the economic returns of what artists are paid for their work;
- Establish dedicated offices or desks for culture in regional and continental bodies;

- Set up a forum of artists and policy makers in all countries for good governance of cultural policies;
- Mobilise the wealth of Africa for the development of Africa;
- Make efforts to understand African history and use African creativity to enhance the African economy and develop new creative industries.
- Advocate for creative solidarity and partnership all over the world;
- Move culture to the centre of sustainable development;
- Identify preconditions for Agenda 2063 to succeed and put together an operating environment for Africa's cultural sector to prosper;
- Accelerate the ratification and domestication of relevant conventions and charters (Only eight countries have ratified the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance);
- Promotion of cultural diplomacy;
- Accelerate the renewed attention on developing the African Cultural Common Market;
- Set up greater partnership between the cultural and creative sector and governments;
- Reduction of the dependency on foreign funders, and exploration of diversified funding models within Africa;
- Encourage regional and continental cultural and technical exchange through enhanced communication technologies;
- Reduction of the obstructions to the mobility of artists, cultural goods and services within regions, and within the continent;
- Envisage a Visa free for all Africans.