

The Montreal Declaration

The Coalitions for Cultural Diversity gathered March 15-17, 2007, in Montreal for the Ninth General Assembly of the International Liaison Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity (ILC). On this occasion, they adopted the following declaration:

We, the Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, celebrate the success of the campaign to ratify the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. To date, 54 States, drawn from every continent, have now ratified the text.

Taking note of this remarkable progress, UNESCO is now expected to announce imminently the convocation of the first Conference of Parties that will bring the convention to life and elect its Intergovernmental Committee.

This success would not have been possible without the widespread and sustained mobilization of cultural professionals, and the work of the coalitions.

Today, the 37 coalitions now in existence around the world agree on the need to continue their work. In particular, we intend to pursue the campaign to raise awareness of the importance of the convention to those States that have not yet ratified it. Our ultimate objective is to ensure the UNESCO convention obtains widespread ratification on the same scale as such major international agreements as the Land Mine Treaty (152 ratifications) and the Kyoto Protocol (169). It will also be important to work to secure balanced geographical representation among States Parties to the Convention.

Clearly, the Convention is not an end in itself. It is an instrument in service of cultural diversity that will only have value to the extent that States effectively put it into practice.

Therefore, the Coalitions call on the States Parties at their very first Conference to take the measures necessary for the concrete realization of the objectives of the convention. In particular, we consider it essential that the States Parties:

1. Take the necessary steps to adopt and implement cultural policies in line with the principles, objectives and provisions of the Convention.
2. Rapidly put in place the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, and ensure that this fund is resourced at a level appropriate to its ambitious and important objective—the development of the cultural industries of the South.
3. Refrain, going forward, from making commitments in any trade negotiation—bilateral or multilateral—that would risk calling into question the right now clearly accorded to countries to freely determine their own cultural policies.
4. Involve civil society in the implementation of the Convention and in the development and application of cultural policies.

The difficult circumstances experienced today by the cultural sectors of countries that have accepted liberalization commitments on culture in bilateral and/or multilateral negotiations—

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such as Korea is in the process of doing—are testimony to the importance of the campaign we are pursuing.

The Coalitions for Cultural Diversity gathered in Montreal are convinced that all sectors of culture must continue their mobilization in order to ensure the potential of the Convention is realized.

For this reason, we have agreed to transform the ILC into the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity. Once established, it will seek official recognition for the Federation from UNESCO on a priority basis, so that at this organization, just as in all other forums that it considers it useful, it can defend and promote cultural diversity.

In closing, we would like to thank those who, through their sustained support, have provided us with the capacity to combine our forces internationally—the Governments of Canada and France, as well as those of Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick, and the International organization of La Francophonie. Their support, along with that of SOCAN, was indispensable to building our movement—and in particular made this Assembly possible. We hope that we can count on their support as we embark on the challenges to come.

The list of delegates that approved this declaration is attached.

Adopted in Montreal, March 17, 2007