

**SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON CULTURAL POLICY (INCP)**

Opatija, Croatia, October 17, 2003

**Address by PIERRE CURZI, spokesperson for the
International Liaison Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity**

Honourable Ministers,

Lady and Gentlemen Members of the delegations of participating countries,

My name is Pierre Curzi. I am a professional theatre, film and television actor and chairman of *l'Union des Artistes*, the union that represents Canada's French-speaking actors and performers. I am also co-chair of the Coalition for Cultural Diversity, an organisation that brings together 32 professional organizations from Canada's cultural sectors.

This morning I am here to speak to you as the spokesperson for the International Liaison Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity. The Liaison Committee unites the national coalitions of nine countries, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, France, Republic of Korea, Mexico, New Zealand and Senegal. Together, these nine coalitions represent nearly 200 organizations and tens of thousands of professionals from all cultural sectors.

I would like to introduce to you the other members of our delegation. To my left, Mr. Gi Hwan Yang, General Director of the Coalition for Cultural Diversity in Moving Images and Executive Director of the Korean Coalition for Cultural Diversity. To my right, Mr. Ndiawar Mboup of the Senegalese Music Association and General Secretary of Senegal's National Coalition for Cultural Diversity. We are also joined by Mr. Jim McKee, the Canadian Coalition's director of external relations, and Mr. Ho Jun Lee, responsible for international relations for the Korean Coalition.

Before moving on, I would like to thank you on behalf of my colleagues and the nine coalitions we represent for allowing us to be here today. It is both an honour and a privilege for us to be given this opportunity to address the ministers of culture gathered here for this sixth annual meeting of the INCP.

The outstanding work of the INCP in supporting the project to establish a convention on cultural diversity

This week at UNESCO, the campaign for cultural diversity issue crossed a major hurdle. Following a critical debate this past Monday, the General Conference's 'Culture Commission' unanimously adopted a draft resolution to develop an

international convention on cultural diversity within the framework of UNESCO. It appears certain that the General Conference will formally ratify this decision in its plenary session later today.

In doing so UNESCO will be deciding, in the words of the resolution, "that the question of cultural diversity as regards the protection of the diversity of cultural contents and artistic expressions must be regulated by an international convention." The resolution further gives the Director-General of UNESCO a mandate to prepare a draft convention, thereby formally launching the process for the eventual adoption of this instrument.

For all of us gathered here today who have worked and hoped for such a decision, this is certainly a moment to rejoice.

This seems an opportune—in fact, essential—time to emphasize that this historic turning point would never have come about without the outstanding support of the INCP in the fight for cultural diversity. Ministers, on behalf of all of the professionals from the cultural milieu that my colleagues and I are representing here today, please accept our sincere congratulations.

From its creation in 1998 — at the initiative of Canadian Heritage Minister Sheila Copps, whose vision and courage I salute — until now, the INCP has worked unrelentingly to advance the project for an international convention on cultural diversity.

At their second meeting in 1999, the ministers of the INCP agreed—and I quote: "that cultural goods and services (...) deserve special treatment" and demanded "the right of nations and governments to establish their cultural policies freely."

During your meetings in 2000 and 2001, you clearly endorsed, and again I quote: "the need to focus an international instrument on the promotion and preservation of cultural diversity in the face of globalization," and immediately established a working group charged with preparing a draft text of this instrument. The working group has since released two versions of that draft convention, both of which were widely-distributed and clearly helped bring credibility to the movement in favour of an international convention on cultural diversity.

Yet the INCP was not satisfied with simply spearheading this project. Nor did it limit its activities to preparing a draft international convention on cultural diversity.

You achieved far more than that. You played an invaluable part in promoting this project by taking on the role, both collectively and personally, of unwavering champion of the cause, both at home and internationally.

In your own countries, you worked hard to convince your heads of state and government as well as your ministerial colleagues, especially those responsible for foreign affairs and international trade, of the project's validity.

You drove home the idea to them that cultural goods and services are vessels of identity, of values and of meaning, and cannot be treated as mere commodities. You reaffirmed time and time again the fundamental right of nations and governments to freely set their own cultural policies. In short, you succeeded in convincing them of the urgent need to establish and adopt this international convention on cultural diversity.

At the same time, you initiated widespread efforts to raise awareness and rally support regionally and internationally, taking the floor at numerous meetings of intergovernmental bodies.

At your last annual meeting in September 2002, you laid the groundwork to move this project past a key turning point by asserting, and again I quote, "that UNESCO is the appropriate international institution to house and implement an International Instrument on Cultural Diversity." Then, last February, during a special meeting in Paris, you met with UNESCO's Director-General, Mr. Matsuura, and played a significant role in ensuring the matter would be added to the agenda of Executive Board meeting in March, and ultimately to the agenda of this General Conference.

Your work before the various UNESCO bodies, obviously, as well as in a number of other forums like the Organisation of Ibero-American States, European Union, Organisation of American States, Francophonie, African Union, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, and the Group of 77, was instrumental in securing the formal support of many of these organizations for the convention project.

Combined, your efforts have played a determining role in the positive outcome we have seen this week from the countries gathered at UNESCO.

The contribution of professional organizations and coalitions for cultural diversity

In many countries, authors, actors, directors, producers, publishers and other professionals from the cultural milieu have banded together in professional associations or organizations. In every cultural sector — be it books, film, television, music, performing arts, visual arts — these organizations have a mandate to protect the specific interests of their members and to promote these interests to the country's public authorities.

In most cases, these organizations are broadly representative of the various categories of professionals in each cultural sector. They generally maintain ongoing relations with you, the ministers of culture, and your departments on all cultural policy matters of concern to them.

As you well know, Ministers, these professional organizations have been engaged for many years now in the struggle for cultural diversity. On this issue they share your fundamental opinions and beliefs. Like you, they are firmly convinced that:

- cultural goods and services cannot be seen as mere commodities and, consequently, culture cannot be left to free market forces alone;
- maintaining and developing a body of cultural policies established by public authorities is crucial to the growth and vitality of cultural diversity;
- nations and governments must preserve this fundamental right to establish their own cultural policies at all cost, particularly within the context of international trade negotiations;
- it is imperative that this inalienable right of nations and governments be reaffirmed and formally enshrined in international law by adopting, through UNESCO, a new and binding international convention on cultural diversity.

In recent years, the organizations that represent professionals from the cultural milieu in a number of countries have, like you, the members of the INCP, felt the need to join forces and step up their activities to advance the cause of cultural diversity:

- They organized the *First International Meeting of Professional Associations from the Cultural Milieu* in Montreal in September 2001, and then the *Second Meeting* in Paris in February 2003, which drew over 350 delegates from more than 30 countries.
- In nine countries, they set up coalitions of the leading professional organizations from every cultural sector, grouping together nearly 200 organizations.
- These nine coalitions carried out widescale campaigns to mobilize the cultural milieu and raise awareness among the general public and public authorities in their respective countries, in most cases with the support and co-operation of their minister of culture.

- Representatives of various coalitions also took action on the international level by taking part in numerous international forums in order to promote the need for an international convention on cultural diversity.
- In March 2003, the nine coalitions came together in the International Liaison Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, an instrument to facilitate co-operation and the development of joint positions and actions; the Canadian Coalition for Cultural Diversity and French Comité de vigilance for Cultural Diversity have jointly assumed the role of Secretariat for the Liaison Committee.
- In June 2003, the Liaison Committee Secretariat began producing *Coalition Currents*, an international newsletter on developments in the cultural diversity file, published in French, English and Spanish and distributed by Internet to more than 500 professional organizations from the cultural milieu in more than 60 countries.
- In September 2003, the Liaison Committee organized its first public event in the form of a seminar held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on the project to establish a convention on cultural diversity. This seminar was attended by some 175 participants, among them representatives of approximately 50 of UNESCO's permanent delegations.
- The Liaison Committee Secretariat and the coalitions are also assisting the Korean Coalition for Cultural Diversity in its organisation of the *Third International Meeting of Cultural Professional Organizations* scheduled to take place in Seoul, Korea, in May 2004.

Towards the adoption of a convention on cultural diversity at UNESCO in 2005:

The road ahead and the challenges we must overcome together

In the wake of the General Conference's historic decision, we must all begin working immediately to prepare for the next step on the horizon: the UNESCO General Conference in fall 2005, at which we sincerely hope the international convention on cultural diversity will be adopted.

It is imperative that all of our efforts focus upon this deadline. We must therefore begin immediately to develop action plans and determine our priorities for the two years ahead. And we must strive to co-ordinate our respective efforts as best we possibly can.

In this regard, we are convinced that we all share — you, the network of ministers of culture, and we, the organizations and coalitions representing professionals from the cultural milieu — the same three fundamental priorities:

1. First, we must actively cooperate - at every stage of the process — with the various bodies and authorities at UNESCO whose task it will be to draft the text of the future convention. We firmly believe that UNESCO will actively welcome such co-operation, both from the ministers of culture of each member nation — and particularly those within the INCP—as well as from the organizations representing cultural professionals and coalitions.

We also believe that such co-operation with UNESCO will be instrumental in ensuring our common goal is achieved: a sound convention, a legal instrument enshrined in international law, a text that provides a solid legal foundation for the fundamental right of nations and governments to adopt and maintain public policies in support of cultural diversity.

2. Second, we must work together, ministers of culture and cultural professional organizations, to rally the support of the greatest possible number of countries to ensure the adoption of the convention at the next General Conference. In practical terms, this means we must convince at least two-thirds — the majority needed according to UNESCO rules — of the approximately 200 UNESCO member states in fall 2005.

It is essential that we deploy our efforts broadly and systematically, first and foremost on the local level, country by country, but also within the many regional and international forums. We must inform and mobilize the cultural milieu, raise media awareness, generate a tide of public support and, especially, convince the government authorities concerned in a significant number of countries to give clear and unwavering support to the adoption of the convention we want in place.

3. Third, and finally, we must pursue together our efforts to convince countries now engaged in trade negotiations — be they multilateral, regional or bilateral — to refrain from making any liberalization commitments that could potentially have a negative impact on culture.

The organizations and coalitions representing professionals from the cultural milieu want to work in close co-operation with the INCP and UNESCO

In closing, and on behalf of the Liaison Committee, I would like to submit to you a few of the ways in which we could strengthen the informal though fruitful co-operation that has existed between the INCP and the coalition movement for some years now. I therefore propose that we structure our co-operation around three main axes:

1. The creation of new coalitions for cultural diversity. In each of the nine countries where they now exist, coalitions have succeeded in raising awareness about our common objectives among thousands of professionals from the cultural milieu. They have played a major role in mobilizing the support of these professionals in favour of an international convention on cultural diversity.

In virtually every case, the coalitions have benefited from the support of their respective ministers of culture. These coalitions have, in turn, provided valuable support to the ministers by, among other things, helping them in their efforts to rally the support of their ministerial colleagues responsible for foreign affairs or international trade, and the heads of state or government in these countries.

Since its creation in March 2003, the Liaison Committee has set as its main priority fostering the creation of new coalitions in a significant number of countries. I therefore propose to you that we work in concert to promote and support the emergence of national coalitions of professional organizations in all INCP-member countries where such structures do not yet exist.

We are convinced that the creation of new coalitions can play a key role in the campaign for a convention on cultural diversity over the next two years by promoting essential dialogue and co-operation between ministers of culture and professional organizations from the cultural milieu.

2. Consolidation of our work within relevant international bodies.

We will of course each pursue our actions within various regional and international organizations and forums between now and the UNESCO General Conference in fall 2005. Over the next two years, we would like to work in support of more systematic dissemination of our common positions at annual and bi-annual meetings of the main organizations that bring together countries along regional or linguistic lines, and more specifically at conferences or summits that bring together the ministers of culture and heads of state and government from member-states of these organizations.

I therefore propose that INCP and Liaison Committee representatives engage in more in-depth discussions regarding the actions each is planning to take in relation to these forums so as to ensure a greater participation of coalitions in particular and organizations representing cultural professionals in general at these events and to foster a better co-ordination of our respective efforts.

3. Setting up mechanisms to ensure the involvement of professionals from the cultural milieu, through the Liaison Committee member coalitions, in the drafting process of the convention at UNESCO.

You are without a doubt aware that UNESCO's directives with respect to non-governmental organizations establishing official relations with the agency — whether on a formal or operational level—set out conditions that are complex and can only be met over an extended period of time. The practical result is that only a small number of major federations and associations of international organizations representing professionals from the cultural milieu are able to acquire such status.

We do know, however, that UNESCO desires the widest possible involvement of organizations representing professionals from the film, television, theatre, book and music sectors—in short, from all of the cultural sectors. We also know that UNESCO wishes to quickly institute flexible and effective consultation mechanisms to ensure that the points of views of professionals from the cultural milieu are taken into consideration in the process for drafting the convention.

Therefore, the Liaison Committee of Coalitions intends to send a letter to the Director-General of UNESCO shortly requesting a meeting with those in charge of the file to discuss the possible form these mechanisms could take. In particular, we plan to suggest to the UNESCO directorate that regional seminars regarding the content of the convention be organized in each of UNESCO's six administrative regions.

It is our belief that such seminars could generate fruitful discussion among UNESCO's staff and experts, the ministers of culture and their representatives, and a significant number of organizations representing professionals from the cultural milieu from countries in each region. We also intend to offer the UNESCO directorate our full co-operation in organizing these events.

We sincerely hope that the INCP will lend its support to the proposal we are making to the UNESCO directorate.

Honourable Ministers from the member-states of the INCP, I thank you again for agreeing to receive our delegation this morning. I sincerely hope that we will be able to increase our level of co-operation in the very near future—co-operation that I believe is essential—and we look forward to seeing the adoption of the convention on cultural diversity in the fall of 2005.

