



Brussels, 22 November 2024
(OR. en)

15291/24

CULT 107
AUDIO 106
ONU 136
JUR 624
SOC 847
SUSTDEV 123
GENDER 247
EDUC 432
CY 1
RELEX 1475

NOTE

| | |
|----------|--|
| From: | General Secretariat of the Council |
| To: | Delegations |
| Subject: | AOB for the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 25 and 26 November 2024: Conference on Cultural Rights in Times of Crisis and MED9 Declaration on Cultural Rights - <i>Information from Cyprus</i> |

**Conference on Cultural Rights in Times of Crisis and MED9 Declaration on Cultural Rights
(MED9 Cultural Ministerial Meeting, 16 September 2024, Cyprus)**

Information from Cyprus

‘The universality and indivisibility of human rights still suffer as a result of the marginalisation of cultural rights’ acknowledges the Fribourg Declaration. Culture and cultural rights indeed are at stake due to the ongoing political, economic, climatic, and technological challenges. At the same time, culture and cultural heritage, as well as cultural practices can provide us with a wealth of knowledge and resilience-building to face contemporary issues.

In this context and seizing the political opportunity offered by the Conference of the MED9 countries hosted by Cyprus this year, an online meeting of the Ministers of Culture was held on 16 September 2024. The aim was to stir a discussion on prevailing challenges to human rights, share information on national strategic planning and adopt a Declaration on Cultural Rights. During the online meeting, the Ministers discussed the role of culture in times of crisis. In particular, they exchanged views on how they perceive the challenges regarding the protection of cultural rights in the Mediterranean region, referred to national strategies and legislation to strengthen the resilience of the cultural and creative sector and expressed how they envision cooperation between MED9 countries in the field of cultural rights protection.

Guided by the need to protect and promote cultural diversity and human rights in an era of political, economic, technological and environmental challenges, the representatives of the MED9 countries adopted the MED9 Declaration on Cultural Rights ([Annex 1](#)). The Declaration underlines the political need for the protection of cultural rights, especially in the Euro-Mediterranean region, as an important component of external relations. It also highlights the key role that culture plays in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the positive impact it has on both individuals and communities. The Ministers of Culture committed, inter alia, to protect cultural diversity, to interpret and make use of the institutions of UNESCO and the Council of Europe on cultural heritage in a way that promotes the cultural rights of all, on the basis of common European values, as enshrined in Articles 2 and 3.3 of the EU Treaty.

The online ministerial meeting was preceded on the same day by a scientific conference on ‘Cultural rights in times of crisis – Contemporary challenges and perspectives’, which was held in collaboration with the University of Cyprus and the Organization of European Programs and Cultural Relations at the University of Cyprus.

Cyprus also had the honour to call for the promotion and protection of human rights, with special mention on cultural rights, by a Joint Statement of MED9 delivered in the recent 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Cyprus invites Member States to build on the momentum created by the aforementioned conference and MED9 Ministerial Meeting and make cultural rights more prevalent in the EU agenda.



MED9 Declaration on Cultural Rights

We the Ministers of Culture of the MED9 called together to an online meeting in the context of the MED9 Summit held in Cyprus and a hybrid conference on "Cultural Rights in Times of Crisis" to reaffirm our commitment to the implementation and realisation of cultural rights. To this end, we adopt the present Declaration.

Preamble

1. Acknowledging the political urgency of safeguarding cultural rights in times of crisis, particularly in the context of the accelerating pace of political, economic, climatic, and technological challenges.
2. Prioritising on the role the culture has in the Euro-Mediterranean region, especially as an important component of external relations.
3. Incentivised by our commitment to respect, fulfil and protect cultural rights as have been recognised in international human rights law -and in particular Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights-, as interpreted currently by the United Nations bodies.
4. Recognizing that cultures are dynamic and encompass ways of life that include tangible, living and natural aspects.
5. Acknowledging the key role of cultural rights in the implementation of all sustainable development goals.
6. Recognizing that the exercise of cultural rights has a positive transformational impact on individuals and cultural communities, particularly their freedom, agency, and possibilities to participate in and contribute to the wider society.
7. Concerned about the ongoing lack of visibility of cultural rights despite their relevance in many current debates such as sustainable development and peace, migration, science and technology, as well as women's rights.

Action points

8. We reaffirm our commitment to fulfil our obligations on cultural rights deriving from current international law as interpreted by United Nations bodies in a way that reflect the evolution of such law.
9. We commit to work towards ensuring that everyone has the right to take part in the cultural life both of the society and their own communities.
10. We support, protect and promote cultural diversity as an important aspect of our societies and commit to protect and encourage it with specific measures. We are particularly focused on creating and maintaining open public spaces for intercultural dialogue and cultural exchanges between individuals and groups.

11. We reaffirm our commitment to substantive equality and commit to take the necessary positive measures to ensure such equality within our societies. Our efforts go in particular to ensure the realisation of cultural rights of all marginalised and vulnerable individuals within our territory, in particular/including of women, LGBTQIA+ persons, minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, people living in poverty, persons with physical, psychosocial and/or intellectual disability, children and older persons.
12. We commit to take measures to resist to the undermining of any cultures within our territories by media, politicians and other entities. We recognise that such undermining can lead to the dehumanisation of sections of the population and to violations of other rights as well as ethnic tensions and conflicts.
13. We recognise the importance of effective participation of people in cultural policies and initiatives, including in their conception, creation, delivery and evaluation of programmes relating to or impacting cultural rights.
14. We recognise that cultural rights are not absolute and cannot be invoked to impair other rights and interests using the tools of international human rights law.
15. We commit to respect our common European values as enshrined in Articles 2 and 3.3 of the Treaty on European Union.
16. We commit to work towards educating our societies on the scope of cultural rights; in particular our policy makers, our public bodies and enforcement agencies. We shall also strive towards the justiciability of cultural rights at the domestic level and consider aligning our efforts with the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
17. We commit to ensure that individuals and groups have their right to cultural heritage. We commit to protect cultural heritage of all in our territories in times of peace and conflict. We recognise that what constitutes cultural heritage will be defined by the holders of such heritage. We further commit to interpret and use the UNESCO and Council of Europe instruments on cultural heritage in a manner that respects and promotes cultural rights for all.
18. We emphasise that artistic freedom is a cultural right and must be guaranteed for all.
19. We affirm that culture should be an integral part of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda and that we shall work for culture to be included as a set alone goal in the post-2030 Agenda.
20. We, MED9 states, strive to promote cultural rights in regional cultural cooperation, by supporting artistic freedom and cherishing the Mediterranean cultural heritage in the spirit of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, equity, and inclusion.
21. Finally, we, MED9 states, commit to work together, and with other states and international organisations to bring cultural rights to the centre of relevant discussions at the international agenda, including those on the arts, cultural heritage, sustainable development, migration, sports and women's rights.

Nicosia, 16 September 2024
