

## Presentation

# Mexico, Culture and MONDIACULT 2022

Culture has been at the heart of national policy since the day President Andrés Manuel López Obrador took office. This policy has provided a clear roadmap for the redistribution of cultural wealth and guaranteed freedoms of every kind: no one is to be left behind and no one is to be left out.

The cultural policy of the Mexican State is founded on three main principles: inclusion, recognition of diversity and the defense of freedoms—the very same values promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has convened the second World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development-MONDIACULT 2022 to be hosted by Mexico.

Essential to ending violence and poverty, culture is an effective tool for rebuilding the fabric of society, as we have seen in Mexico and other parts of the world. Cultural diversity, the greatest strength we have as a country, gives visibility to the invisible members of our society because it makes great civilizations accessible to the average citizen, reason why culture is at the core of the wellbeing policies of this government administration.

Humanity finds itself at a challenging point in time. Faced with inequalities, conflicts, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, countries have sought to meet the basic needs of their citizens, while guaranteeing social and economic sustainability. This, too, has been the task of the current government, specifically the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture.

In this context, Mexico's diplomatic apparatus has made some laudable achievements in negotiating supplies of vaccines, promoting cooperation between countries to ensure their equitable distribution and contributing to the shoring up of the World Health Organization's COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) initiative, particularly in Latin America.

At the height of the pandemic, the Ministry of Culture demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that its actions on a community level were instrumental in fostering stronger social ties and communication, and in supporting public health measures. Culture was used to encourage greater family integration nationwide, the media provided informational tools, a broader choice of cultural education and entertainment was made available, and participation in recreational activities, especially by children, was encouraged. Culture became a vehicle for reconciliation, information, reflection and peace, bringing us more music, literature and films, and facilitating our participation in social media networks, blogs and podcasts. In short, it was food for the soul that helped make lockdown more bearable.

When the pandemic hit, the cultural sector was the first to come to a standstill and the last to make a comeback. Alternative means of safely reuniting artists with their audiences were explored and health protocols implemented. Culture proved to be a balsam in these times of crisis, firmly positioning it high up on the global development agenda in light of its capacity to help rebuild trust, dissipate fear and recreate a sense of community.

Given its enormous real and strategic importance, this administration has made cultural diplomacy one of the pillars of its foreign policy, with a view to promoting the country's diverse symbolic expressions and creating more opportunities for society, while enhancing Mexico's image in the eyes of the outside world.

Under this mandate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) has endeavored to coordinate various forms of diplomacy—cultural, public, sports and tourism—and make these priorities of our actions abroad. The challenge—and the opportunity—inherent to these diplomatic tools has been to showcase Mexico for what it is: a cultural power, a united nation and a country reputed for consistently honoring its convictions as to the effectiveness of international law and multilateralism.

This policy has served to guide actions of international import, such as the defense of the collective rights of creative communities, the restitution

of illegally exported cultural objects belonging to Mexico, and the defense and preservation of indigenous languages.

At the initiative of the Ministry of Culture and in coordination with the SRE and UNESCO, Mexico will be hosting MONDIACULT 2022, exactly 40 years after the first intergovernmental conference of this type in 1982, which also took place in Mexico.

Picking up from where MONDIACULT 1982 and the Stockholm Conference of 1998 left off, the objective of MONDIACULT 2022 is to discuss cultural policies in the current context, including how the cultural sector is adapting to the digital transformation, and the ways in which it contributes to social and economic development and climate action; highlight the cross-cutting nature of culture as a facilitator of resilience, wellbeing and prosperity; define the outlook for the sector in the decade ahead; and provide recommendations for the future undertakings of UNESCO in the sphere of culture.

Aside from reflecting on the importance of cultural policies to solving the problems of our modern age, MONDIACULT 2022 is an opportunity to improve the resilience of the cultural sector, in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In this regard, it is also an opportunity to make history—perhaps one our generation will not see repeated—by encouraging the international community to recognize culture as a pillar of transformation that reinforces the fabric of society and encourages dialogue between nations.

This issue of *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior* takes a fresh approach to debate on international cultural policies from the perspective of members of the Mexican Foreign Service, academics, cultural attachés and creators.

The articles featured focus on relations between Mexico and UNESCO, the art of diplomacy in fostering dialogue between cultures, and the role of public and cultural diplomacy in addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Also discussed are the main topics on the MONDIACULT 2022 agenda: strengthening cultural governance with a view to establishing a resilient, inclusive and sustainable cultural ecosystem; the cross-cutting role culture plays in sustainable development; the promotion and protection of cultural heritage as a path to social inclusion, peace and the fostering of a sense of belonging; and measures to shore up the creative economy through training, and the creation of more jobs and better opportunities.

We trust these articles will shed light on how culture ties in with foreign policy and the development agenda, and provide food for thought during the global debates to be held in late September 2022.

*Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon*

Minister of Foreign Affairs

*Alejandra Frausto Guerrero*

Minister of Culture