

Introduction

The Road to MONDIACULT 2022

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What kind of twenty-first century do we want? The world is undergoing unprecedented cultural changes, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first entirely global event we have ever experienced, it claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, but it also opened our eyes to the social intelligence required to achieve the sustainable development to which the international community aspires. The global campfire creators, artists, academics and governments sat around was perhaps the only gift for the future bequeathed us by the health crisis.

Almost three years ago in Paris, Mexico proposed organizing a second UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development—MONDIACULT 2022. We thought it was a good time to stop and take stock of the cultural policy achievements of the last four decades, and in terms of cultural diplomacy, we believed it was the best thing that could have happened to the country: few nations have the privilege of being entrusted with the organization of such an important event, one that will have a far-reaching impact on how humanity views itself at a time when the world is changing before our very eyes.

So, in late 2019, at the instructions of Minister Alejandra Frausto, the Mexican Ministry of Culture put together an interinstitutional team to work on the desired model the conference was to take. For professional and thematic reasons, it was the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that initiated work on the planning of the event. With the support of the Chancellery, headed by Minister Marcelo Ebrard, and the expert input of its

cultural diplomacy area and a group of citizens, the best route for collaboration was mapped out, one that has brought us to where we now find ourselves: at an intergovernmental meeting (UNESCO category II), whose final declaration will address the major cultural issues facing our generation.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, what started out as a good idea soon became a strategic matter. The pandemic radically changed not only public and private spaces, creative processes and habits, but how we understand life itself. The peoples of the world experienced changes on both social and deeply personal levels, forcing us to reflect on our vulnerability as a species, the dramatic effects of climate change and what we need to do to strengthen international institutions for peace and cooperation. The pandemic also reminded us that we have the capacity to come up with inventive solutions to large-scale common problems and that we can carry on with our lives relatively normally while maintaining social distance, but that there is no escaping the fact that we live in a transborder system, whose nations and peoples are closely interconnected. Assuming that addressing the challenges of sustainable development requires sweeping change, clearly only culture and cultural transformations can save us.

While MONDIACULT 1982 was the first world conference to broach the relationship between culture and development, the second is focused on acknowledging culture as a global public good that requires a specific sustainable development goal—one that was not included in the 17 SDGs and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In more general terms, the objective of MONDIACULT 2022 is to discuss cultural policies in the current context, including how the cultural sector has adapted to the digital transformation, its contribution to social and economic development and climate action, and the cross-cutting nature of culture as a facilitator of resilience, wellbeing and prosperity, while defining the outlook for the cultural sector in the coming decade and guiding the future undertakings of UNESCO in the sphere of culture. The final declaration approved by member States will have the status of a UNESCO normative instrument that acts as a compass for the establishment of commitments by member countries and new cooperation models *vis-à-vis* the global cultural policies of the future. The connection between culture and development in particular needs to be revised in light of past MONDIACULT debates and in the interests of consistency, to ensure our cultural policies reflect the times we live in and

take into account the notion of culture as a global public good. We need to rethink culture and sustainability and this is a unique opportunity to put culture at the center of public policy, on a par with health and employment, with a view to changing paradigms and repositioning culture at the heart of our modern world.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Instituto Matías Romero and its Director-General, Alejandro Alday, for giving a voice to many of the people involved in the 1982 Mexico City Declaration and those who helped prepare MONDIACULT 2022. To all of you who contributed to this issue of the *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior*, our heartfelt gratitude.

I would like to end by sending a message of optimism and assurance to those who continue working at the conference. Culture has been, is and will continue to be the treasure and future of our peoples. It is impossible to avoid its impact, influence and conditioning. Above all else, *homo sapiens* is culture, seen in the integration of the humanity-nature dichotomy. There can be no denying culture is the best tool at our disposal as we attempt to understand transcendental social and development processes. We believe MONDIACULT is a platform that can be used to improve living conditions and societies as a whole. Likewise, in view of the recent armed conflicts to emerge, we are convinced that peace cannot exist without culture. It is not simply a question of understanding culture as an effective means of mending the fabric of society in zones of violence and conflict, but of acknowledging that only through dialogue in which every voice is heard do we have a chance of putting our affinities above our differences. We hope that culture, in the best sense of the word, can give us back a sense of humility and sincerity, and help us comprehend the challenging times we live in, so we can leave the world a better place for future generations and secure the viability of that ambitious project we call humanity.