



# **World International Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development – May 21**

Dear sweet children,

## **The Importance of Cultural Diversity**

Most of the world's conflicts are rooted in culture. Therefore, in the tapestry of humankind, characterized by myriads of most diverse cultures, it is most necessary to bridge the gap between various traditions and norms in order to foster peace, stability and development. Promoting peace and bringing people together is essential to reach the targets of Agenda 2030 which is also the mission of the SMVA Trust.

Similar to science, energy and water and other forces, cultural diversity is today recognized as a key driving force of development. It is a *sine qua non* to not only accelerate economic growth, but also as a means of leading a more fulfilling intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life. The all-round integrated fulfillment of the human potential is a vital goal of the SMVA Trust, generated through various programmes and services.

## **The Culture Conventions**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has adopted a large number of conventions related to culture, thereby offering a solid basis for encouraging cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is thus an

asset that is indispensable for poverty reduction and the achievement of the 17 sustainable development goals.

At the same time, acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity – in particular through innovative use of media and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) – are conducive to dialogue among civilizations and cultures, respect and mutual understanding.

## **History and Background of the Day**

Two decades ago, in 2001, UNESCO adopted the [Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity](#). In December 2002, the UN General Assembly declared 21 May as the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. In 2015, when the 17 Sustainable Development Goals were formulated, the General Assembly affirmed culture's contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development: namely, the natural and cultural diversity and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development.

The Day provides us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to advance and protect it through four means: Support sustainable systems of governance for culture; achieve a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and increase mobility of artists and cultural professionals; integrate culture in sustainable development frameworks; and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.

## **COVID-19's Impact on the Cultural Sector**

The pandemic has really impeded the promotion and appreciation of through cancellation of cultural events, institutions and community cultural practices, empty UNESCO World Heritage sites, and heightened looting of cultural sites and poaching at natural sites. Performers and artists have been deprived and reduced them to poverty. At the same time, cultural tourism has been greatly diminished with loss of incomes for many services. Thus, the impact of COVID-

19 on the cultural sector is severely felt around the world in the social, economic and political fields, and also affected the fundamental right of access to culture, the social rights of artists and creative professionals, and the protection of a diversity of cultural expressions. This has resulted in an unprecedented crisis, with deepening inequalities and rendering artisan and performing arts communities vulnerable. In addition, the creative and cultural industries (CCI) contribute US\$2,250 bn to the global economy (3% of GDP) and account for 29.5 million jobs worldwide. The economic fall-out of not addressing the cultural sector - and all auxiliary services, particularly in the tourism sector - could also be disastrous.

## **Protecting the diversity of cultural expressions is more important than ever**

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and magnified the creative industries' pre-existing volatility. Due to the complex nature of their work, cultural professionals are still affected by lockdown measures around the world. The entire creative value chain is grossly affected.

[UNESCO has launched a page that aims to serve as a reference for those seeking to draw inspiration from best practices](#) in the development of appropriate responses adapted to national contexts.

UNESCO is sharing [first-hand accounts from World Heritage site managers](#) offering a unique glimpse into the impact of COVID-19 on the sites, as well as the intangible cultural heritage of surrounding communities. Do take a few moments to have a glimpse of these incredible heroes.

So, the SMVA Trust honours all those who promote culture and create it. Culture enriches human life and we must be there for each other and share the legacy of our common humanity.