



Informal meeting of EU Ministers of Culture
Cáceres, 25-26 september 2023

CÁCERES DECLARATION

Culture is what gives meaning to life. Culture broadens what is real through what is dreamt. Culture turns the banal into the essential, the ephemeral into the eternal. Culture makes the small giant, the perishable infinite. Culture is rights, culture is freedom. Culture is progress and, above all, democracy.

While the echoes of war resound and hurt in the heart of Europe, we, the ministers for culture gathered here, wish to publicly reaffirm our commitment to culture. Because culture is both reason and heart; it is past, present and future. Because culture is a cornerstone of the European project. We therefore condemn without qualification Russia's unjustified and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine, its people and its cultural identity.

All the ministers for culture gathered in Cáceres on 25 and 26 September at the informal meeting on culture have adopted this declaration in support of culture to be placed at the highest policy level, and hereafter considered to be an essential public good.

Because life without culture is mere survival.

From this city that is a World Heritage Site, we pledge to work to make culture a crucial element of policies promoting peaceful, fair and egalitarian societies, because culture plays an essential role in the construction of democratic societies and in the personal development of citizens; culture is essential for achieving societies that are healthier, fairer, freer and more discerning, tolerant, inclusive and egalitarian. That is why, without pre-empting the coming post-2030 discussions, we are committed to working for culture to be recognised in and of itself as a new sustainable development goal.




We would like to quote the words of Federico García Lorca, spoken at the opening of a library in his home town, Fuente Vaqueros, in 1931, where he spoke of books as 'horizons, ladders to climb to the summit of the spirit and the heart'. Like Lorca, we recognise the role of culture in building wiser, freer and happier people, and we are committed to working for those people, because

we want food for the body and the spirit, we want bread and we want books, we want well-being, social justice and equal opportunities. We want, we demand, and we commit to working to achieve these goals, to build educated societies, because life in such societies will always be better.

As it now seems that the COVID-19 pandemic is beginning to be a thing of the past, we remember the way in which culture proved indispensable in those difficult times and are grateful for what it gave us. Culture is life, health, integration, resistance and hope. Culture unites us, connects us and integrates us. Culture recognises us, protects us and welcomes us. Culture opens doors, breaks down barriers, heals wounds and offers paths to better lives and societies. Culture and life are never separate, but parts of a whole.

This is because culture is a source of well-being, wealth and policy for the future. Culture is part of the shared European identity and also of the identity of each of the countries we represent. Culture is indispensable, because it is at the heart of our history and because it paves the way for the future. Culture saves us and separates us from hatred, intolerance and barbarism. Commitment to culture, to the freedom of creators, to their rights, to their working conditions, to participation and access, must always be among the objectives of any public authority, because culture defines us and is the path to freer, happier and more tolerant, sustainable and generous societies.

For all these reasons, from Cáceres, we affirm:

-  Culture is the heart of democracy.
-  Culture is tolerance, respect and human rights.
-  Culture is freedom of thought and creation.
-  Culture is pluralism, diversity and wealth.
-  Culture is peace.
-  Culture is identity.
-  Culture is equality.

- ≡ Culture is universal access and inclusion.
- ≡ Culture is the participation of citizens in cultural life.
- ≡ Culture is health and physical and mental well-being.
- ≡ Culture is sustainability and the pathway to a future world for generations to come.
- ≡ Culture is a key element in the fight against climate change.
- ≡ Culture is an essential element of economic development.
- ≡ Culture is dignified lives for cultural workers.
- ≡ Culture is heritage, history and memory, the wellsprings of the future.

Culture is, in short, a right of citizens that public authorities and all individuals have an obligation to safeguard. That is why we are making this commitment today, so that culture will henceforth be considered an essential public good, a global public good, at the highest policy level.