



UK Coalition for Cultural Diversity

05.06.09

NOTES ON CONFERENCE OF PARTIES , June 15 – June 18, 2009

The Second Conference of Parties will take place from June 15 to June 18. On behalf of the national coalitions the International Federation (IFCCD) will be taking advantage of whatever opportunities there are at the end of sessions to contribute perspective from civil society into the debates. The IFCCD has also been preparing the ground in representing the coalitions concerns in the run up to the Conference.

The main items on the agenda are:

- 1) review and approval of first set of operational guidelines;
- 2) identification of articles to have operational guidelines developed in the next two year term
- 3) election of 12 members of the 24-member Intergovernmental Committee.

On 1) it is very unlikely that the guidelines that have been developed will be renegotiated. With 98 states in the room, if this happens, the whole package might risk falling apart.

On 2) a consensus seems to be emerging that the articles to be developed will be 9 - Information Sharing & Transparency, 10 - Education & Public Awareness, 19 -Exchange, Analysis and Dissemination of Information, and...far from certain...Article 21 - International Consultation & Co-ordination.

Article 21...This addresses the question of the UNESCO Convention's relationship to other international agreements, and of developing consultation channels for countries to work together to promote its principles and objectives in other international forums,

There is a concern that the EU and Francophonie are backing away from developing guidelines for 21, despite what they said back in December and despite the fact that the mandate in Article 23 of the Convention underscored importance of developing guidelines by mandating the Committee to promote the principles and objectives of the Convention in other forums in 23 6 e).

The Federation of Coalitions considers that:

- There is a need to clarify the other international forums in which countries would promote the principles and objectives of the Convention. On this count, we believe this should encompass not only multilateral forums, such as the WTO, but also regional- and linguistically-based forums, such as the Organization of American States, MERCOSUR, the African Union, Commonwealth, La Francophonie and others.
- There is a need to identify the different types of consultation that could take place among countries that have ratified the convention—development and adoption of declarations, coordinated development of positions to exempt culture during trade negotiations, etc. We also emphasise that, consistent with Article 11, civil society organizations—notably organizations representing cultural professional organizations—should be consulted in this regard.
- There is a need to identify the different types of issues that could be addressed through such consultation— initiatives to develop international cooperation, the exchange of best practices regarding effective policy approaches in a digital environment, etc.

If operational guidelines are not developed for Article 21, the fundamental value of the Convention as an international instrument for upholding the right of countries to support their domestic cultures through policies and other measures will be at risk.

In essence, Article 21 is about coherence and strengthening the consensus among states that they should not renounce in other forums—notably trade negotiations—the right to apply cultural policies which they have clearly affirmed through the Convention.

Finally, it also bears emphasizing that it is the responsibility of each country that ratifies the Convention to promote its provisions in other international forums. This is the fundamental starting point. However, the consultation and coordination framework envisaged in Article 21 strengthens this by engaging countries to work and speak with one voice on this question—thereby reinforcing the crucial consensus on the right of countries to apply cultural policies.