



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA  
MINISTRY OF CULTURE



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

With the support of  
**Venice Office**

## **Eighth Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe**

**(Sofia, Bulgaria, 24-25 October 2012)**

### **The Eighth joint Declaration of the Ministers of Culture of South-Eastern Europe on “Intangible Cultural heritage and Sustainable Development”**

We, the Ministers and Heads of delegations participating in the Eighth Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, organized by the Government of Bulgaria with the support of UNESCO,

***Fully confirming*** the contents, aims and principles of the Mostar Declaration, Venice Declaration, Ohrid Declaration, Zadar Declaration, Bucharest Declaration, Cetinje Declaration and Belgrade Declaration, respectively approved by the First (Mostar 2004), Second (Venice 2005), Third (Ohrid 2006), Fourth (Zadar 2007), Fifth (Bucharest, 2008), Sixth (Cetinje 2010), and Seventh (Belgrade, 2011) Ministerial Conferences on Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe;

***Reaffirming*** our commitment to enhance regional and bilateral cooperation on culture, creativity and cultural heritage, intended as a shared resource and a driver for dialogue, good neighbourly relations, social cohesion, integration, in the spirit of mutual respect and peaceful and sustainable development for the benefit of all.

***Mindful*** of the several platforms initiated within the last decade in order to promote cultural cooperation in the region of South-Eastern Europe, and convinced of the necessity to further reinforce their coordination;

Adopt the following Declaration:

1. We emphasize the importance of **culture for development** and its contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and call for the mainstreaming of culture into development policies and strategies. We recognize, in this regard, the specific contribution that culture as a sector, encompassing tangible and intangible heritage, cultural and creative industries and cultural infrastructures, is making towards achieving sustainable development in terms of poverty alleviation, gender equality, social inclusion and environmental sustainability;
2. We welcome the various regional activities launched in South-Eastern Europe by the Director-General of UNESCO within the framework of its new global initiative, "**Culture: a Bridge to Development**", in order to promote creativity, arts and heritage as a powerful tool for intercultural dialogue and sustainable development, by fostering cooperation platforms and networks among cultural professionals, institutions, and the civil society. We emphasize the need, in this regard, to strengthen our cultural policies and industries, in particular through the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005);
3. Recalling that the World Heritage Convention celebrates this year its 40th anniversary, dedicated to sustainable development and the role of local communities, we reaffirm our commitment to step up efforts for improving the **management of World Heritage Sites** and other UNESCO designated sites in South-Eastern Europe;
4. We consider the conclusions of this ministerial meeting on “intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development” both as an opportunity to address the direct nexus between culture and the achievement of the MDGs, and a contribution to the forthcoming **ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review** on “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals” and beyond, to the formulation of the post 2015 UN development agenda;

5. We commend the establishment, under the auspices of UNESCO, of the **Sofia Regional Centre for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in South East Europe**. We express willingness to cooperate for the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage as a shared legacy and a driver for intercultural dialogue and sustainable development, and renew our commitment to designate national representatives in the General Assembly of the Centre, with the aim to contribute to the definition of shared programmes of activities;
6. We commend UNESCO for its support, through its national and regional capacity-building programmes, to the effective **implementation of the 2003 Convention** for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, and for its coordination of the regional network of experts on intangible cultural heritage;
7. We take note with interest of the final joint statement approved during the **6th Annual Regional Meeting of the SEE network** of experts on Intangible Cultural Heritage (Athens, 10-11 May 2012), recommending to focus our action on topics and challenges of common interest, in particular: youth; regional cooperation; enlargement of partnerships with the civil society and the private sector; shared tools of analysis, exchanges and documentation;
8. We renew our willingness to explore possibilities for reinforcing cooperation on the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage shared across borders by various countries and/or local communities in the region, and on the preparation of multinational nomination files for inscription on the UNESCO lists for intangible cultural heritage, as well of national and sub-regional programmes for inclusion in the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices;
9. We express agreement on the necessity to streamline and reinforce the **coordination between the existing cooperation platforms at ministerial level**, hereby including the present Ministerial Conferences on Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-Eastern Europe, as well as any other forum involving the participation of the Ministers of culture of this region;

10. In particular, we agree to investigate **possible forms of convergence** within the platforms in question, in order to advance our common objectives, capitalize on the dynamics of these platforms, consolidate available resources and bring the perspectives together;
11. Accordingly, we propose to establish, in cooperation with UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the EU, **a new unified ministerial platform on culture and development in SEE**, the format of which will be presented during the next meeting of the Council of Ministers of Culture of SEE in April 2013;
12. We undertake to transmit this Declaration to the next **Forum of the Heads of State** of South-East Europe that will be held in Ohrid.

**Adopted by consensus by the Ministers of Culture  
and Heads of Delegations**

*Sofia, Bulgaria, 25 October 2012*