



## **World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development: Joint Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell and Commissioners Gabriel and Urpilainen**

Brussels, 20 May 2022

Cultural diversity is one of the cornerstones of the European Union and one of its greatest assets. It is crucial to constantly nurture and cherish cultural diversity for the advancement of freedom, democracy, peace, prosperity, innovation and creativity.

Diversity is a great strength, but it is also fragile. In the past few months, we have witnessed the deliberate destruction of Ukrainian culture, of its institutions and its heritage by Russia's unjustified military aggression. We have reacted swiftly to help protect Ukrainian cultural heritage, as well as to support Ukraine's creative industry with several of our support measures.

The destruction witnessed in Ukraine and in other parts of the world goes against everything that culture and diversity stand for. It undermines dialogue, mutual understanding and human rights. It shows how destruction of cultural goods is more than just an act of aggression in a war. It is an attempt to undermine an identity. We condemn Russia's actions in the strongest terms.

This year, the European Year of Youth, we celebrate the unique potential of culture to connect and support young people to lead positive changes in their communities and societies. Through performance, storytelling, songs or films, they transform behaviours and mentalities. They accelerate and foster sustainable development towards greener, fairer and more cohesive societies.

Thriving culture can bring innovation and sustainable growth to cities, regions and communities. The Creative Europe Programme safeguards, develops and promotes European cultural and linguistic diversity and competitiveness of the sectors through cultural activities, active participation, mobility and exchanges.

The EU supports reconciliation, dialogue and recovery of communities across the world, including through EU initiatives focused on rehabilitating cultural heritage in post-conflict.

We are committed to protecting and promoting culture and making it widely accessible to all. We will protect and safeguard cultural heritage. Without it, there will be no lasting peace.

### **Background**

The UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions is at the heart of the longstanding partnership between the EU and UNESCO, emboldened in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by both parties, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in the next months.

Reconciliation, dialogue and recovery of communities are at the heart of the European project. There are many EU initiatives focused on rehabilitating cultural heritage in post-conflict.

In 2021, the EU called for the protection and safeguard of cultural heritage throughout all phases of conflicts and crises, and as a basis for lasting peace. The EU-funded "Cash for Work" project in Yemen demonstrates how cultural heritage provides opportunities for youth, employing more than 2,000 young workers, and gives hope to families affected by the war, through the rehabilitation of housing and cities.

Moreover, the EU supports innovation and the strengthening of value chains in cultural and creative sectors for more than 2,000 young people in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, to set up their own cultural enterprises and initiatives through training, grants and loans.

The EU is committed to continue working together on protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions with its Member States as "Team Europe" and partners, in fora such as the MONDIACULT conference on cultural policies organised by UNESCO and hosted by Mexico in September 2022.

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