



Creative Commons

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Chapeau

We call for the creation of a global policy environment that fully supports *open* culture, inter alia, policies that:

- **Protect the public domain from erosion**
- **Reduce the term of copyright protection**
- **Shield cultural heritage institutions from liability**
- **Legally allow necessary activities of cultural heritage institutions and other collection holders**
- **Ensure respect, equity, diversity and inclusivity**

Preservation, access, sharing, use, and reuse of cultural heritage are essential to maintain peace and security, achieve sustainable development, and ensure respect of fundamental rights. Access to cultural heritage is a demonstrated contributor to sustainable development and human wellbeing. Yet, collection holders — including cultural heritage institutions and more informal entities whose function is to steward collection of cultural heritage materials — are operating in a challenging, inhospitable legal and policy environment. They face difficulties in realizing their missions in the digital world. They struggle to conduct their legitimate activities, like digitizing collections to preserve them, and developing open initiatives or open access policies for collections' public use and reuse. Their basic functions and legitimate activities are hampered by a jumble of outdated, inadequate, unclear, or improper cultural policies that raise unnecessary barriers to cultural heritage sharing, curtail their efforts to provide access to knowledge and culture, and carve a black hole into our shared digital heritage, thereby exacerbating inequalities.

In turn, citizens all over the world must overcome great challenges in sharing cultural heritage online and are hence unable to enjoy their fundamental rights to culture. This points to an urgent need for the international community to recognize the importance of *better* sharing of culture as a means to activate and support wider cultural and information policy ambitions. *Better sharing* — sharing that is free, ethical, equitable, inclusive, sustainable, reciprocal, and responsible — is a key means to enable everyone to enjoy culture.

We underscore the need to empower the people who promote and practice *open* culture widely. A

general inability to meaningfully interact with cultural heritage in the digital space results in a disconnect between people and heritage, manifested in such situations as:

- scholars who often cannot freely reuse heritage content for research purposes;
- artists who often cannot remix heritage content into new creations;
- people with disabilities who often cannot access heritage content in a format adapted to their needs;
- the general public who often cannot learn about the past to make sense of the present and shape the future — a reality that is hard to accept since according to UNESCO “a world without culture is a world without a future.”

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

Recognize that knowledge needs context to be mobilized. Culture helps contextualize the knowledge about the world's greatest problems and foster greater understanding of how knowledge can be applied to solve these problems. By making cultural heritage as openly accessible, shareable, and reusable as possible by the public — both on-site and online — we can empower people with the scientific, historical, and socio-cultural resources to reach the SDGs and contribute to fostering global collaboration to solve the world's most pressing problems and enable people to lead richer, more meaningful lives.

Uphold the fundamental right to participate in cultural life. Cultural heritage plays a critical role in our societies. Access to and enjoyment of cultural heritage are necessary conditions to participate in cultural life. Being able to access, study, and reuse heritage, as well as related information and knowledge, allows us to learn from our mistakes and build upon the creativity of our ancestors. Access to cultural heritage is essential for societies to build upon the learnings from their pasts in order to find purpose for their futures. This becomes more important as heritage is increasingly accessed online, where the possibilities for sharing and collaboration are immense, but the laws, restrictive.

Chapter II. International peace and security

Promote intercultural dialogue and understanding and promote sharing of reliable information. Armed conflicts as well as other threats to international peace and security often lead to the irremediable loss of cultural heritage — the local history, art and artifacts, and knowledge of a region, which are often deeply linked to people's identities and cannot easily be accessed and shared, let alone replaced. Caring, protecting, preserving, celebrating, and ensuring that culture and cultural heritage are available to future generations constitute a social responsibility and a collective duty to uphold fundamental rights.

Catalyze the preservation, protection, safeguarding, dissemination, and revitalization of cultural heritage. Celebrating cultural heritage through better sharing can reduce barriers to collaborative knowledge building, help enhance intercultural understanding, and enable everyone to immediately participate in a positive creativity cycle in furtherance of key cultural policy goals.

Enhance the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural heritage and cultural expressions. To achieve better sharing, cultural heritage institutions need to be able to freely ingest, harvest, digitize, transpose, and make cultural heritage available to the people that they serve within their institutions and on the internet. Collection holders must gain increased ability to enable every member of the public to enjoy unlimited, broad access and ability to share and (re)use cultural heritage as much as possible. Hence, the need for a clear supportive policy on heritage extends to users and the entire heritage sharing ecosystem to promote and enhance cultural diversity.

Fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage and facilitate the return and restitution of cultural heritage. Issues related to the acquisition, preservation, access, and reuse of cultural heritage of Indigenous people, heritage wrongfully acquired during colonization, and culturally sensitive heritage, its restitution and repatriation, can be addressed using open access solutions.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

Build knowledge societies and support digital and new technologies skills learning and support the cultural sector through technological transitions. In an increasingly connected and complex world, society faces deep challenges across economic, environmental, and social spheres that require new ways of thinking. Openness is a crucial enabler of this transformation.

Support of public, non-profit, and/or collectively governed open digital infrastructures to support delivery and enjoyment of culture, including free and open-source software, as well as technical, legal, and social open infrastructures. Standardized, open, public-interest technology and legal tools enable the worldwide sharing of creative content and form an integral part of the infrastructure that scaffolds open sharing. Such tools help ensure knowledge and culture are open, i.e., the public has access to and can share, use, reuse and build upon them. They are essential to preserve the global commons, which is constantly at risk.

Uphold equity in knowledge access across the internet. We need to build a world where everyone has access to knowledge and has the 21st century skills critical to tackle the world's multiple, complex challenges and create a future of equitable, inclusive, and resilient societies. Addressing these challenges requires that knowledge and culture about them need to be open and accessible to all; this includes research, data, educational resources, software, artifacts, documents, heritage both tangible and intangible, information. When knowledge and culture are not freely and openly available, only part of humanity is able to learn about and contribute to solutions.

Underline the need for sustainable and sufficient funding for collection holders, creators, and open infrastructures. The technical and legal infrastructure of the open web as well as open tools stewardship and maintenance require significant and future-proof investment. Public support for these essential structures must be a priority.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

Bring the voice of youth to the center of policy discussions. Economic inequalities, social exclusion, and environmental destruction are some of the critical challenges youth populations are facing today. When younger generations face such challenges accessing their past heritage, how are they to understand their present and pass their legacy to future generations? How are they to learn from the mistakes of history, participate in generative creativity cycles, and enjoy their fundamental right to access to culture? Fresh and novel perspectives brought about by new generations will help us collectively build a future that will shore up creators, artists, and cultural enterprises.

Chapter V. Transforming global governance

Ensure culture forms part of UN system governance. Culture is often discounted as less important than other policy fields, even though cultural preoccupations permeate all layers of society and have far-reaching impacts on people's wellbeing, health, and ability to participate in the life of the community.