

## **Address of the International Music Council to Commission IV (Culture) of the UNESCO General Conference**

### ***Agenda item 8.3.***

### ***Preliminary Report by the Director-General setting out the situation to be regulated and the possible scope of the regulating action proposed, accompanied by the preliminary draft of a Convention on the protection of the Diversity of cultural contents and artistic expressions***

In recent years, the International Music Council has been actively concerned with the survival of the diversity of musics found around the world. Through its program, titled ManyMusics, the International Music Council has become aware of the threats to musical diversity, and most especially the threats to the survival of musical traditions that can be traced back centuries or even millennia.

There are many causes for the weakening of indigenous musical traditions. Some are internal to a culture -- for instance, urbanisation and the decline of village life. But even in this instance, urbanisation arises from the advances in technologies developed in other cultures for other purposes. The education systems in music may have been designed in colonial times to favour the musical genres of the colonial masters, and have excluded local traditional musics.

But the most pervasive current threat is from Western popular music. Apart from any intrinsic merit, this music is of course attractive because it is associated with the glamour of the high living standards in the West. But it also is supported by the marketing power of major transnational corporations, and further supported in some instances by the adoption of national trade policies in support of the trade ambitions of those corporations. The trade policies of the corporations and national governments may in some cases be, in effect, indistinguishable.

Unless actions are taken in support of the world's musical traditions, many of them may soon be lost to us, either totally, or as anything more than records held in museums.

There is a further difficulty. A country may be welcoming to the international popular music genres generated in the West, but wish that it should not be merely the passive recipient of musical expressions generated elsewhere. It may wish that its own young people should have the opportunity to produce their local versions of the international genres. But it may face the dilemma that without some form of government regulation, the local market will not be able to support such activity. There is market failure. And yet, international trade liberalisation policies, with no concern for these local aspirations, would seek to preclude such regulation.

A small country can purchase its cars from Japan or the USA. It can contract with a foreign corporation to provide it with computers, or to operate a mine. But it cannot contract with foreign countries to provide it with its own culture. Even to have its own variants of contemporary popular culture, it must be able to provide space for its own people, empower its own artists.

The International Music Council supports the free exchange of musics between countries. However, it cannot support the doctrinaire pursuit of this objective to the point where many countries have no musics of their own to offer to such an exchange.

Considering all of the above, the International Music Council offers its strong support to the adoption of the UNESCO Draft Convention on the Protection and Promotion of A Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

This Convention is essential in providing support for the right of a country to protect and promote its own culture. This right should not be subjugated to the trade ambitions of another country. Each country must have the right to the survival of its own cultural expressions, subject to the recognition of human rights as acknowledged in the Convention. We repeat, this right should not be abbreviated by or conditional upon the trade ambitions of other countries.

We note the observation of a former French premier that beyond physical survival, the purpose of wealth creation is ultimately the fuller expression of culture and cultural experience. The advancement of trade should not be taken as an end in itself. It is a lower value than the expression and development of culture.

The manner in which a country exercises the right to protect and promote its own culture is a matter for local decision, determined by local need and circumstance. But it must have the right to act, not only through subsidy, but through regulation.

The Convention seeks also to encourage signatories to support the diversity of cultural expressions within their borders. The International Music Council believes that it is most important that they do so.

The Convention establishes a fund to support cultural development in developing countries. The International Music Council supports the establishment of this fund, and urges those countries which are financially able, to contribute generously. In the field of music, the fund could be used to support music education, local music production, and international music exchange. It could be used to support the strengthening both of musical traditions and contemporary musical expression.

If the General Conference of UNESCO adopts this Convention, the International Music Council, through its membership of 75 national music councils, 45 international and regional music organisations and 6 independent organisations in the fields of culture and the arts, will turn its efforts to encouraging ratification by as many individual governments as possible.

The International Music Council commends the UNESCO for its formulation of the Draft Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and urges all delegates to the General Conference to vote immediately for its adoption in the form presented.