The Assistant Director-General for Culture

To the Ministers of Culture

2 April 2020

Ref.: CLT/CPD/20/2794

Subject: First virtual meeting of Ministers of Culture

Dear Sir/Madam,

The current health crisis due to the COVID-19 virus is greatly affecting the culture sector worldwide. Measures of confinement or restriction of mobility undertaken by many countries to contain the pandemic also drastically constrain access to culture and weaken the cultural ecosystem as a whole, notably through the closure of heritage sites and cultural activities, the closure of cultural infrastructure, the cancellation or postponement of events, and the interruption of cultural production. The economic and social impacts of the crisis will be deep and lasting, especially for creators, for creative industries, but also for the most vulnerable communities.

The unprecedented nature and scope of this crisis compels us to reinvest, more than ever, in international cooperation and intergovernmental dialogue, in order to unite our efforts and build a shared reflection.

As an essential common good, culture is a vector of resilience and human development – both social and economic - within the framework of the national policies undertaken to overcome this crisis. To support this joint effort, UNESCO has undertaken a wide data collection and analysis effort on a global scale, in order to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural sector and to identify measures of support deployed by governments for the sector. This data collection and analysis will allow us to inform action in the short, medium and long term, and to better support public policies.

With this in mind, I would like to invite you to participate in a first virtual meeting of Ministers of Culture, which will be organized by UNESCO on 22 April 2020. Following the Forum of Ministers of Culture held by the Organization on 19 November 2019, this exchange will allow Ministers to share their thoughts on the impact of the health crisis on the cultural sector, as well as on their
recommendations within the framework of their respective policies, and to pursue the ministerial dialogue that you have all supported under UNESCO’s leadership.

To this end, I invite you to confirm your availability to participate in this virtual exchange at the following address Culture.Forum@unesco.org. A technical note will be sent to you as soon as possible in preparation for this conference, to specify the operational modalities of the meeting. This document will also present a preliminary summary by UNESCO of the impact assessment and analysis, and the identification of public policy measures on the basis of contributions from Member States, in order to enrich our collective reflection. My team and I remain at your disposal for any further information. Rest assured that UNESCO stands ready to support the efforts of your country during this challenging time.

Please accept, dear Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Ernesto Ottone R.

Cc: Permanent Delegations to UNESCO
    National Commissions for UNESCO