

International Youth Forum: Creativity and Heritage along the Silk Road

Changsha and Quanzhou, China, 17-22 April 2017

I. Background

For the first time at the global level, the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 acknowledges the key role of culture, emphasizing the function of creativity and heritage to solve sustainable development challenges. This recognition resonates with the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

As one of UNESCO's themes, "Protecting Our Heritage and Fostering Creativity" has been gaining ever increasing importance in the globalization era. Heritage constitutes a source of identity and cohesion for communities disrupted by bewildering change and economic instability. Creativity contributes to building open, inclusive and pluralistic societies. Both heritage and creativity lay the foundations for vibrant, innovative and prosperous knowledge societies.

"Young people are the tomorrow of the motherland and the hope of the nation, who should dare to become pioneers and make the best of youth through innovation and entrepreneurship" said Mr. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China. Today, more than ever, young women and men have got the creativity, the potential and the capacity to advance meaningful solutions – for themselves, for their societies, and for the rest of the world. All over the world, youth are driving social innovation, claiming respect for their cultural identity and heritage, and seeking new opportunities to learn and work together for a better future.

On one hand, young people are the most dynamic group with full imagination, innovation and creativity. More and more young women and men are participating, contributing, or leading the innovation and creativity at a local, or a global level. On the other hand, the future of our remaining heritage will depend largely on the decisions and actions of the present generation of young people who will soon become the leaders and decision-makers of tomorrow. They are eager to find new ways to build commitment and strengthen action in favor of preserving our cultural and natural heritage, our tangible and intangible heritage, and our local and world heritage. Their efforts will benefit not only the present generation but also the generations of the future.

Simultaneously, youth are not only beneficiaries but also essential actors in

finding solutions. Their energy and leadership has been demonstrated across the world, and they must be fully engaged and supported in these fields.

II. Normative Instruments/ documents to which this Forum contributes:

1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities seeks to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, with a target of strengthened efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage (Target 11.4).

UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth – Axis III seeks to engage young women and men engage as active citizens towards democratic consolidation, sustainable communities and peace.

III. Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The objectives of the International Youth Forum are to give young people a chance to voice their concerns and to become involved in the creative industry and the protection of our common heritage, as well as to raise the awareness of decision-makers, the general public, and entrepreneurs about the importance of youth full engagement in promoting peaceful coexistence and sustainable development. These objectives are in line with Axis III of the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021) which seeks to engage young women and men as active citizens towards democratic consolidation, sustainable communities and peace.

The Forum is committed to:

- encouraging tomorrow’s decision-makers to participate actively in creativity and in heritage conservation on a local as well as on a global level, in order to promoting mutual understanding, respect for diversity, and social cohesion;
- building capacity of the youth in the relevant fields by organizing various forms of activities;
- mobilizing exchange and dialogue among the youth, providing opportunities for them to work together and to build networks.

The expected outcomes of the Forum would include a Declaration on Creativity and a

Recommendation on Heritage that would seek to enhance the engagement of youth in the relevant fields along the Silk Road. These outcome documents will be targeted at national governments, international and regional bodies, and civil society. Additionally the Forum is also expected garner the support of Changsha and Quanzhou to launch youth networks in the relevant fields along the Silk Road and to provide opportunities for participants to engage with decision-makers in the creative media arts and heritage protection and preservation, to learn from them and inspire their actions post-Forum.

Building on the outcome and as a follow up to the Forum, the young participants will also have the opportunity to engage in a UNESCO global pilot project on the Creation of an Open Digital Library on Traditional Games. Forming a network of youth advocates and practitioners for creative arts and heritage protection, they will also contribute to the preservation of traditional knowledge and games from their own countries with innovative technologies, through which their understanding and capacity on these issues will be further enhanced.

IV. Participants

A total of about 80 young women and men aged 18-30 from more than 60 countries along the Silk Road including China are expected to participate in the International Youth Forum. Each country will be represented by one or two participants.

Participants will be selected from among UNESCO World Heritage Youth Forum representatives and other engaged and active representatives of youth organizations working to promote creativity and the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. To facilitate this, a Call for Applications from among engaged youth will be issued via different networks and channels of UNESCO.

A final selection of the youth participants will be made by the Organizers based on criteria such as youth experiences in promoting creativity and heritage conservation, and to ensure gender parity.

A number of visionaries and leading figures will also be invited to deliver short and dynamic presentations on the two themes of the Forum.

The Director of UNESCO Beijing Office and Programme Specialists from UNESCO Beijing Office, and representatives of UNESCO Headquarters will participate in the Forum.

V. Detailed Arrangements

Dates:

The Forum will be held from 17 to 22 April 2017.

Venues:

The two Phases/Sessions of the Forum will be held consecutively in two different venues:

- a. the first phase/session focusing on Creativity in Changsha, Hunan Province;
- b. the second phase/session focusing on Heritage in Quanzhou, Fujian Province.

Themes:

The themes of the Forum will focus on two main areas:

- a. encouraging youth as active participants in creativity;
- b. engaging youth as important partners of world heritage conservation, both tangible and intangible.

Modalities:

The Forum envisioned as a dynamic and participatory event utilizing a combination of plenary lectures, workshops, and field experiences organized thematically and in a fun environment to facilitate learning and networking opportunities for youth.

Languages:

Simultaneous interpretation Chinese/English will be provided during plenary meetings.

VI. Partners and Organizers

UNESCO, the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO will co-organize the International Youth Forum, in collaboration with the municipal governments of Changsha and Quanzhou, and in collaboration with several Chinese universities. The World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations (WFUCA) will also be supporting the Forum.

The Organizers will:

- a. facilitate the Visa application process for international participants, purchase international air tickets, provide local transportation and arrange for accommodation and meals during the Forum;
- b. issue the Call for Applications through appropriate channels and networks, select the most relevant participants, and establish a list of participants.

VII. Programme Overview

16 April 2017(Sunday) Arrival in Changsha, airport pick-up and registration

17 April 2017(Monday) Changsha

- Opening
- Sessions on "Creativity"
- Field visit
- Welcome Reception

18 April 2017(Tuesday) Changsha

- Creative Workshop
- Thematic Discussions
- Creative Fireworks Show

19 April 2017(Wednesday) Changsha

- Discussions
- Closing of Session I
- Departure for Quanzhou

20 April 2017(Thursday) Quanzhou

- Opening of Session II
- Presentations on "Heritage"
- Field visit
- Welcome Reception

21 April 2017(Friday) Quanzhou

- Heritage Assignment
- Field works
- Cultural activity

22 April 2017(Saturday) Quanzhou

- Thematic Discussions
- Closing Ceremony
- Departure Quanzhou

VIII. Introduction to the Host Cities

Changsha, located in central China, is richly endowed with beautiful scenery and has brought forward numerous men of talent. With its name and site unchanged over the past 3000 years, the city has been listed in the first 24 famous historic and cultural cities in China. Changsha is the cradle of Chu-Han Culture and the source of Huxiang Culture. Changsha has become a place where the forest coverage rate exceeds 53% percent and human and nature co-exist harmoniously. Hence it is awarded as "Green City" at the Global Forum of Human Settlement, and listed in the first batch of national outstanding tourism cities and exemplary cities for ecological construction.

Quanzhou is located at the southeast coast of China. Formerly known as Zayton, Quanzhou is one of the earliest places in China opening to the outside world and developed into a large international trading port in Song and Yuan Dynasties (10-14th centuries). During that period, the sails and masts of ships in Quanzhou port were as numerous as trees in a forest and Chinese and foreign goods were piled up like mountains. "Maritime Silk Road" extended from Quanzhou to nearly 100 countries and regions. Meanwhile, the city had become a yearning destination for merchants, missionaries and aristocrats of various countries. Quanzhou is characterized by its distinctive and colorful cultural heritage as well as a great number of historical relics and sites reflecting the navigation and trading systems of Quanzhou.