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Diversity of
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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
FOR THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION
OF THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS**

Sixteenth Session
UNESCO Headquarters, Room I
7 – 10 February 2023

Item 10 of the provisional agenda: Collaboration with civil society to implement the Convention and proposals for the organization of the fourth Forum

At its fifteenth session, the Committee requested the Secretariat to continue to cooperate with civil society organizations in order to promote and optimise the process, whether through their participation in the work of the governing bodies or in the preparations for the fourth edition of the Civil Society Forum. This document presents proposals to this effect so that the Committee can make informed decisions and plan next steps (Decision 15.IGC11).

Decision required: paragraph 30

I. Introduction

1. At its fifteenth session in 2022, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (hereinafter “the Committee”), recalling that civil society organizations (CSOs) are fundamental actors in the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (hereinafter “the Convention”), and acknowledging with satisfaction their ongoing contribution to its work and that of the Conference of Parties, took important decisions to build on this cooperation (Decision [15.IGC 11](#)). These decisions are consistent with the [work plan of the Committee for 2022-2023](#) and in line with the will of the Conference of Parties to better support the good governance of the Convention by broadening and diversifying the range of stakeholders involved in its implementation at the international level, including by encouraging and supporting the participation of civil society in the work of its governing bodies (Resolution [8.PC 13](#)).
2. The Committee requested that the efforts undertaken to facilitate the process of admission of civil society representatives to its sessions be continued, in accordance with the Operational Guidelines related to Article 11 on the “Role and participation of civil society,” by encouraging civil society representatives who meet the criteria defined in the aforementioned Operational Guidelines, and which have not yet done so, to submit an admission request. In this context, the Committee requested that an update on the process of admission of civil society organizations to its sessions be presented to it at its sixteenth session, together with an analysis and preliminary proposals to optimise this process.
3. The Committee also expressed the wish that civil society organizations, including micro, small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises as well as cultural institutions and organizations, submit regular written contributions through existing mechanisms, with the cooperation of National Commissions for UNESCO and UNESCO Field Offices. Moreover, it decided that the written contributions in 2022 would focus on two themes, namely: “the challenges faced in the context of COVID-19 in relation to the diversity of cultural expressions, both offline and online” and “the importance of the participation of micro, small and medium-sized creative and cultural enterprises”. On the basis of the key issues raised in the written contributions, the Committee expressed the wish to organise an exchange session with interested civil society representatives, including cultural institutions and organizations, at its sixteenth session.
4. Finally, the Committee requested the Secretariat to present to it, at its sixteenth session, preliminary proposals for the organization of the fourth Civil Society Forum.

II. Update on the admission process of civil society organizations to the meetings of the governing bodies

5. Amongst the modalities underpinning the participation of civil society organizations in the work of the governing bodies of the Convention, as described in paragraph 9 of the Operational Guidelines related to Article 11 on the “Role and participation of civil society,” participation in the meetings of the governing bodies is the keystone, since it allows representatives of civil society organizations to be admitted as observers.
6. This participation has been considerably strengthened since the evaluation of civil society participation in the implementation of the Convention, examined by the Committee at its ninth session in 2015 (Decision [9.IGC 9](#)). In recent years, flexible and effective ad hoc mechanisms have been put in place to strengthen CSOs’ participation through the decisions and resolutions of the governing bodies, which have led to a constructive dialogue between civil society, Parties to the Convention and the Secretariat.

7. These mechanisms comprise: (i) the inclusion of an item on civil society on the agenda of the Committee; (ii) the organization of a working meeting between the Bureau of the Committee and civil society representatives prior to each session of the Committee since 2017; (iii) the organization of the Civil Society Forum, held every two years prior to each session of the Conference of the Parties (2017, 2019, 2021); iv) the civil society activity reports, requested by the governing bodies on a regular basis (2017, 2019, 2021); and v) the inclusion of a form dedicated to measures and initiatives implemented by civil society organizations in the framework of Parties' quadrennial periodic reports.
8. In recognition of the important role and active participation of civil society in the work of the Convention's governing bodies, the Committee, at its fourteenth session in 2021, undertook a reflection to further clarify the modalities of its collaboration with CSOs (see document [DCE/21/14.IGC/15REV](#)). Indeed, although an upward trend has been noted in the number and diversity of civil society representatives participating in the work of the governing bodies in recent years, the Committee found that only a minority of civil society organizations actively involved in the implementation of the Convention had completed the official process to be admitted to the meetings of the governing bodies as observers.
9. The Committee therefore requested the Secretariat **to facilitate the admission process of civil society representatives to its meetings and to encourage them to do submit such requests** in order not only to provide better visibility to the Convention's governing bodies on their interlocutors and their area(s) of work and expertise, but also to enable the Committee and Parties to exchange with civil society on specific issues.
10. To recall, the **admission process of civil society representatives to the meetings of the governing bodies** is governed by Rule 7.4 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee and Rule 2.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of Parties. These two provisions specify that "non-governmental organizations having interests and activities in the fields covered by the Convention" may be authorised by these bodies to participate in their work as observers, without the right to vote, at several of their sessions, at a single session or at a specific meeting of a session, upon written request to the Director-General. The admission process is also governed by the Annex to the aforementioned Operational Guidelines related to Article 11, which specify the steps that civil society organizations must take in order to be admitted to the sessions of the governing bodies of the Convention as observers, as well as the eligibility criteria¹ and the documents required.² In accordance with these Guidelines and at the request of the Committee, the Secretariat has taken steps to support and facilitate the admission process of civil society representatives to the sessions of the governing bodies. In 2021, it sent a letter to civil society organizations, explaining the steps to be taken and inviting them to submit a complete admission request. The organizations that were contacted include those that have participated in one or more meetings of the governing bodies in the past five years, as well as organizations that have participated in other activities coordinated by the Secretariat, such as those related to the implementation of operational projects in the field, projects funded by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), or activities linked to the follow-up of quadrennial periodic reports.

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1. (a) have interests and activities in one or more fields covered by the Convention;
(b) have a legal status in compliance with the established rules of the jurisdiction in the country of registration;
(c) are representative of their respective field of activity, or of the respective social or professional groups they represent.
 2. (i) a copy of its statutes or by-laws;
(ii) a list of members or, in the case of non-membership entities (e.g., foundations), a list of board members;
(iii) a brief description of their recent activities, which also illustrates their representativeness in the fields covered by the Convention.

Previously, civil society organizations were admitted to meetings upon request, and formal prior contact to encourage their participation was not systematic.

11. A total of 281 civil society organizations were invited by the Secretariat in 2021 to complete the necessary formalities to be admitted as observers to the fifteenth session of the Committee in 2022. Following this invitation, the Secretariat received 48 admission requests³ from civil society organizations, amongst which 7 had never participated in the work of the Convention's governing bodies.
12. The Secretariat continued its efforts to further optimise the admission process for the upcoming sessions of the Committee and the Conference of Parties. For example, as part of a letter sent in 2022, civil society organizations were asked if they would like to submit an admission request for several sessions of the governing body meetings at once, thereby avoiding the need to repeat the process each year. This admission request could cover two years (2023 to 2025) and 5 statutory meetings, namely the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth sessions of the Committee and the ninth and tenth sessions of the Conference of Parties. This proposal was put forward in order to establish a systematic and more regular process to ensure the participation of civil society organizations in the work of the governing bodies in a sustainable and inclusive manner.
13. This letter from the Secretariat was sent to 587 civil society organizations in 2022, of which 44 submitted a complete admission request to participate as observers in the next sessions of the governing bodies (2023-2025), of which 23 have never participated in the work of the Convention's governing bodies. Organizations that had already submitted a request to participate in the 2021 meetings also received this letter in 2022, stating that they did not need to renew their request if they wished to continue their participation in the 2023-2025 sessions. Therefore, at the time of writing this document, 92 civil society organizations (48 in 2021 and 44 in 2022) have requested to participate in the meetings of the governing bodies for the 2023-2025 period. It is thus **proposed to the Committee and the Conference of Parties to admit the 92 civil society organizations, which have submitted a request to the Secretariat in 2021 and 2022, at each of their sessions over the 2023 to 2025 period.**
14. In 2025, the Secretariat will conduct a consultation with civil society organizations so that they can renew—or not—their admission request to participate in the meetings to be held from 2026 to 2028. The Secretariat has also developed an inclusive database of civil society organizations that includes not only those that have requested to participate in the meetings of the governing bodies, but also those that participate in activities related to the implementation of the Convention (through IFCD-funded projects, quadrennial periodic reports, or technical assistance programmes). This database allows the Secretariat to benefit from an updated directory, with the objective of strengthening CSOs' sustainable participation in the work of the governing bodies of the Convention.

III. Launch of an open call for written contributions from civil society organizations

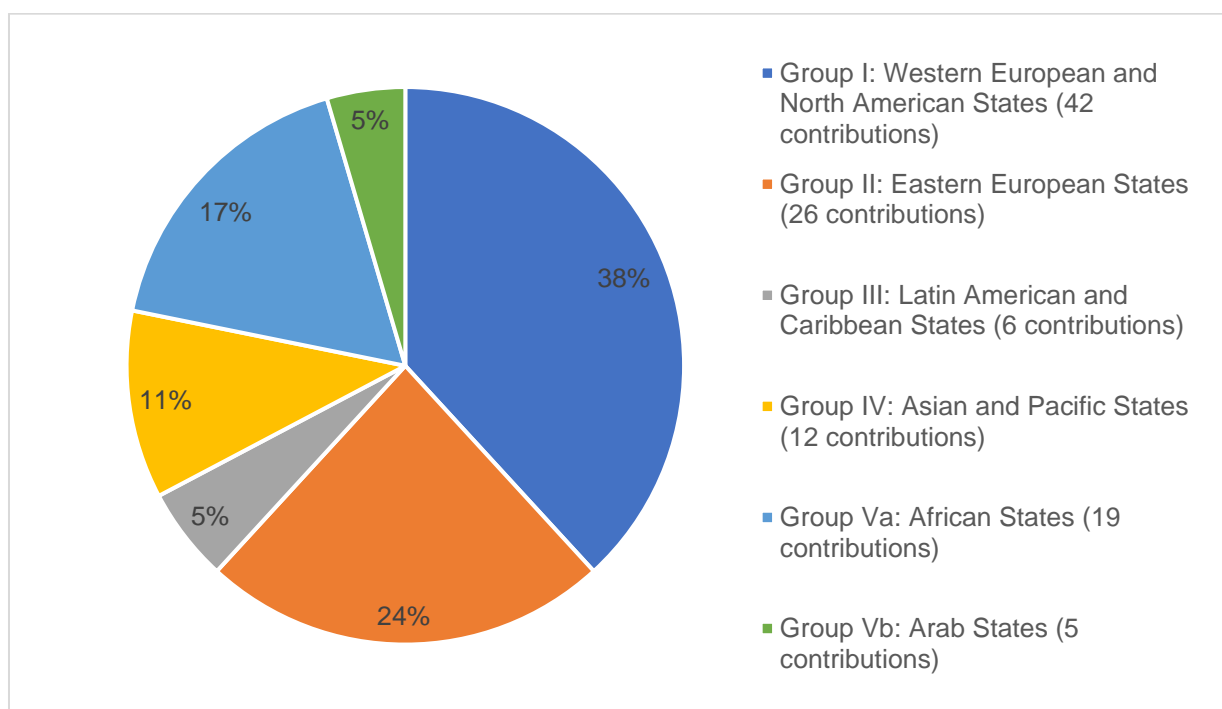
15. At its fifteenth session, the Committee invited the Secretariat to encourage civil society organizations, including micro, small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises, as well as cultural institutions and organizations, to submit regular written contributions through existing mechanisms, with the cooperation of National Commissions for UNESCO and UNESCO Field Offices, if applicable, on a targeted number of specific issues decided by the Committee.
16. The Committee decided that the specific issues for the 2022 written contributions would be the challenges faced in the context of COVID-19 in relation to the diversity of cultural

3.. In total, 68 organizations were admitted to the fifteenth session of the Committee in 2022, as additional civil society organizations submitted requests to participate in the session after the deadline for receiving admission requests in 2021.

expressions, both offline and online, and on the importance of the participation of micro, small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises (Decision [15.IGC 11](#)).

17. In response to the Committee's request, the Secretariat launched an open call for written contributions on 27 September 2022 using an online submission platform. A letter from the Secretary of the Convention was sent **to civil society organizations, including micro, small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises, as well as cultural institutions and organizations** that have been involved in the monitoring or implementation of the Convention in the past, inviting them to submit written contributions through the dedicated online platform. This call was relayed by UNESCO Field Offices at the regional and national levels and an article was published on the website of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions Entity to increase the visibility of this consultation process. In addition, a letter from the Assistant Director-General for Culture was sent to the National Commissions for UNESCO of Parties to the Convention on 12 October 2022, inviting them to disseminate the call for written contributions widely within their networks. The Secretariat sent a reminder to all organizations on 23 November 2022 to ensure a high response rate.
18. A total of 110 written contributions were received by the deadline of 28 November 2022, from **50 countries and covering all regions** (see Figure 1 below). An analytical summary of the key issues raised in the written contributions is available in Annex I of this document.

Figure 1: 2022 Civil society written contributions by UNESCO Electoral Group



19. It is notable that only six written contributions were received from organizations based in the Latin American and Caribbean States region, and five from organizations based in the Arab States region. The low response rate from these two regions may be explained in part by language barriers, as the submissions had to be written in one of the two working languages of the Committee, English or French, which can pose a significant challenge. It should also be noted that a number of written contributions were incomplete, off-topic, or in a language other than the two working languages of the Committee, either English or French. These contributions have not been taken into account in the Secretariat's analysis.

20. At the Committee's request, the Secretariat will organise an exchange session with civil society stakeholders, including micro, small, and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises, as well as cultural organizations and institutions, during the current session of the Committee in the context of the examination of Item 10 of the provisional agenda on collaboration with civil society. The agenda for this exchange session was drafted on the basis of the Committee's guidelines and focuses on the key issues raised in the written contributions submitted by civil society organizations (see Annex I).

IV. Preliminary proposals for the organization of the fourth Civil Society Forum

21. Since 2017, the Civil Society Forum has provided a framework for exchange and cooperation for representatives of civil society organizations with interests and activities in the areas covered by the Convention. It is an essential platform for exchange that allows these organizations to not only share their current concerns, but also discuss priority issues related to the implementation of the Convention.
22. In the framework of the elaboration of the preliminary proposals requested by the Committee for the organization of the fourth edition of the Civil Society Forum, which will be held on 5 June 2023 prior to the ninth session of the Conference of Parties (6 - 8 June 2023), the Secretariat has undertaken consultations with relevant organizations. To this end, **on 2 November 2022, the Secretariat organised an online consultation**, with simultaneous interpretation in English and French, with civil society organizations that have completed the formalities for admission to the meetings of the governing bodies of the Convention, in order to exchange and gather their views on the organization of the next edition of the Forum.
23. Of the 68 civil society organizations invited, 27 participated in the online consultation. After a brief introduction of the objective of the consultation and a presentation of the last three editions of the Forum, three discussion rounds were organised in order to collect concrete proposals: the first discussion focused on the global vision and specific expectations of civil society organizations for the fourth edition of the Forum; the second discussion concerned the format and structure of the Forum, and the third discussion focused on the way to involve the different stakeholders of the Convention in this fourth edition of the Forum in a strategic manner (see Annex II for additional information).
24. These discussions allowed civil society organizations to underline the need for Parties to ensure a better follow-up of the recommendations presented in the framework of the previous editions of the Forum, as well as a better integration of these recommendations in the work plan of the governing bodies of the Convention and the activities of the Secretariat.
25. Regarding the format of the fourth edition of the Forum, civil society organizations agreed that it was preferable to invite civil society organizations that have requested to participate in the meetings of the Convention bodies for the 2023-2025 period. They noted the importance of better informing the new organizations that have asked to participate in the meetings of the governing bodies in order to strengthen their involvement in the work and discussions of the Forum. Civil society organizations also agreed on the importance of organizing informal exchange sessions among themselves in order to formulate common suggestions, notably regarding the themes to be addressed in the framework of the Forum.
26. Civil society organizations initially envisioned a hybrid face-to-face and online format for the fourth edition of the Forum to allow a wider range of civil society organizations to participate. However, it was pointed out that the time difference between the different regions would be a substantial obstacle if the format chosen were to include online participation.

27. It was also agreed during the consultation that representatives of several civil society organizations would have a strong involvement in the preparation of the fourth edition of the Forum. The members of the taskforce involved in the organization of the third edition of the Forum who participated in this online consultation expressed a wish to launch a call for volunteers from civil society organizations that might wish to contribute to the preparation and organization of the next Forum.
28. Regarding the way to involve the Convention's stakeholders in the work of the governing bodies, it was pointed out by civil society organizations that some of them represent micro, small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises.

V. Next Steps

29. At this session, the Committee is invited to examine: the steps undertaken to optimize the admission process of civil society representatives as observers to the meetings of the governing bodies, the outcome of the open call for 2022 civil society written contributions and the analytical summary of the written contributions received by the Secretariat, and the preliminary proposals concerning the organization of the fourth edition of the Forum in order to guide the Secretariat's action.
30. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 16.IGC 10

The Committee,

1. *Having examined document DCE/23/16.IGC/10 and its annexes,*
2. *Recalling its Decisions 1.IGC 5c, 1.EXT.IGC 5, 5.IGC 4, 8.IGC 7a, 9.IGC 9, 10.IGC 6, 11.IGC 6, 11.IGC 10, 13.IGC 10, 14.IGC 15 and 15.IGC 11 as well as the Resolutions of the Conference of Parties 2.CP 7, 4.CP 13, 6.CP 12, 7.CP 14 and 8.CP 13,*
3. *Thanks the Secretariat for the steps undertaken to optimize the admission process of civil society organizations to the meetings of the governing bodies and requests the Secretariat to continue optimizing the admission process, as proposed, in accordance with the Operational Guidelines related to Article 11 on the "Role and participation of civil society";*
4. *Takes note of the launch of the open call for civil society written contributions in 2022 as well as of the analytical summary of the contributions received, and further thanks the organizations that have participated in this process;*
5. *Further takes note of the preliminary proposals for the organization of the fourth edition of the Civil Society Forum (2023) following the consultations that were carried out;*
6. *Further requests the Secretariat to launch a call for volunteers amongst civil society organizations that have requested to participate in the meetings of the governing bodies and invites it to work in close cooperation with those that respond to the call for volunteers in order to prepare and organise the fourth edition of the Civil Society Forum.*

ANNEX I

Analytical summary of the written contributions submitted by civil society in 2022

1. The written contributions submitted by CSOs cover a wide range of topics, which reflects the variety of their respective mandates, expertise, geographic scope, and intervention areas. The following section presents a synthetic outline of the main themes that have emerged from the contributions. **This analysis provides an overview of the main or recurring themes that were raised in the written contributions.**
2. The first question identified by the Committee at its last session was the following: “In the context of COVID-19, please specify the main challenges in relation to the diversity of cultural expressions, both offline and online.” Six main themes have emerged from the contributions submitted by civil society organizations in response to this question, namely:
 - a. **Increased challenges to the status of the artist and the effects of intersectionality:** A large number of organizations reported that the pre-existing precariousness of working conditions in the creative and cultural sectors have been exacerbated and exposed by the spread of COVID-19, revealing the gaps in the social and economic protection available to cultural and creative professionals and weakening traditional revenue streams. In particular, the CSOs that work with minority or disadvantaged communities reported an increase in already-existing inequity because of the pandemic and highlighted that intersectionality meant that these groups were impacted more severely than others.
 - b. **Deterioration of freedom of artistic expression:** Several CSOs noted a significant deterioration of freedom of artistic expression during the pandemic and reported facing increased censorship both online and offline, which had a direct impact on the diversity of voices and cultural expressions.
 - c. **Inequitable distribution and access to public aid:** Many CSOs reported loss of revenue as the main challenge faced by artists and cultural professionals during the pandemic, and highlighted a perceived unfairness in the allocation of government aid during the crisis, noting that the culture sector was usually not a priority. In addition, whilst many countries mobilised to help certain branches of the culture sector, in particular the music sector, CSOs reported that insufficient funds, inadequate eligibility criteria and complex administrative procedures posed significant barriers and limited the effectiveness of the plans deployed by the public authorities. This trend seems to be even more pronounced for the informal part of the sector, which was all too often unable to access government help, therefore impacting the ability of the sector to sustain a diversity of cultural expressions during the crisis.
 - d. **Restrictions to mobility and physical gatherings:** A majority of CSOs reported that measures curbing physical gatherings and international mobility had a significant impact both on their activities and on the creative sector as a whole, causing significant revenue loss and disruption. The impact was felt most keenly by those organizations that work in fields that depend on in-person events, especially the performing arts.
 - e. **The digital environment was a double-edged sword:** The physical distancing measures put in place by governments to curb the COVID-19 pandemic

accelerated the digitalization of the culture sector, which had both positive and negative impacts. On one hand, this permitted the continuation of cultural life by permitting the distribution of cultural content through digital platforms. On the other hand, it exacerbated existing inequalities along the lines of the digital skills and access gap. CSOs reported that independent and emerging artists, especially women and older people, have struggled to obtain or maintain online visibility, to protect their intellectual property and to receive fair remuneration for their work. Several organizations mentioned the issue of the discoverability of cultural content, especially in languages other than English.

- f. **Despite the challenges, the pandemic has some positive impacts:** A few CSOs highlighted some of the positive impacts of the pandemic, noting that the crisis created a new sense of solidarity in the sector. This solidarity was manifested through the establishment of initiatives and networks of professional associations, NGOs and independent cultural workers, which have advocated for the need to develop a more sustainable approach to the culture sector as a whole. In addition, a small number of CSOs reported positive examples of how the culture sector was kept afloat thanks to targeted solutions such as introducing different grants to support freelance artists and staff.
3. The second question identified by the Committee was the following: “Please describe the importance of the participation of micro, small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises in the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.” Several organizations seized this opportunity to describe how their activities contribute to the creation and dissemination of a wide variety of artistic expressions. Four main themes emerged from the written contributions:
 - a. **Micro, small, and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises act as bridge-builders:** Several CSOs highlighted the role played by micro, small and medium sized cultural and creative enterprises to facilitate communication between diverse groups of people and the government and that they support and represent the interests of diverse local communities, including rural communities. They were also considered to have a role to play to protect and promote freedom of artistic expressions through the diversity of their voices and perspectives.
 - b. **Micro, small, and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises are a source of inspiration and sustainability:** Most CSOs agreed that cultural and creative micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of the creative economy. Several CSOs underlined that their flexibility, rapid action, and capacity for innovation makes them particularly resilient, which can provide inspiration for policy-makers trying to develop and implement policies to support the sustainability of the culture sector. They can also help to solve local challenges by providing efficient and targeted solutions because they are in direct contact with creators and professionals of a special field of expertise.
 - c. **Micro, small, and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises are essential links in the cultural value chain as cultural content creators and distributors:** Because of their natural proximity to the communities to which they belong, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises are well-placed to respond to the specific needs of diverse groups by producing tailored cultural and creative content. The result is a rich and diverse tapestry of cultural expressions that cannot be provided by the big industry players, and contributes to the vitality and renewal of ideas. Cultural and creative micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises also play a vital role in facilitating access to culture,

especially at the local level. Several CSOs highlighted that these enterprises were essential players in the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions through their ability to take risks, innovate, and push the limits.

- d. **Micro, small, and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises face several persisting challenges:** The written contributions highlighted that cultural and creative micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises face several common challenges across the world and across artistic disciplines. The two main challenges underlined by CSOs are access to financing and inadequate regulatory environments, which hamper these enterprises from reaching their full potential.
4. Whilst the written contributions submitted by CSOs in 2022 cover a wide array of topics, they also raise several key challenges and concerns that are shared across all cultural domains and that transcend geographic boundaries. They also clearly demonstrate the crucial role played by CSOs as important partners in the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.
5. CSOs represent the interests and perspectives of diverse groups within the cultural and creative sector. Therefore, they play an important role in ensuring the sound governance of the Convention by allowing Parties to gain a better understanding of the needs and challenges faced by different stakeholders of the creative ecosystem and facilitating the exchange of ideas and good practices.

ANNEX II

Executive summary of the online consultation with civil society organizations on the organization of the fourth edition of the Forum (June 2023)

I. Introduction

1. An online consultation meeting was organised on 2 November 2022 with civil society organizations (CSOs) participating in the sessions of the governing bodies in order to discuss and exchange on the fourth edition of the Civil Society Forum to be held on 5 June 2023, prior to the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (6-8 June 2023).
2. At its last session in February 2022 the Committee requested the Secretariat to submit preliminary proposals for the organization of the fourth Civil Society Forum for its sixteenth session in February 2023 (Decision 15 IGC 11 para. 16).
3. In the opening remarks, the crucial role played by CSOs in the effective implementation of the Convention was recalled. In this regard, the Secretariat reviewed the different mechanisms that exist to allow CSOs to express themselves and to strengthen their participation in the implementation of the Convention.
4. This online meeting was divided in three discussion rounds, namely (i) the overall vision and expected results of the fourth edition of the Forum, (ii) the format and structure that the day could have and (iii) the strategic way to involve the different stakeholders of the Convention in this fourth edition of the Forum.
5. Interpretation was available in English and French to facilitate discussions at this meeting.

II. Summary of discussions

(i) Overall vision and expected results

6. The CSOs recalled that the overall vision and expected results of the Forum remain the same, namely, to serve as a platform for exchange and cooperation between CSOs for the effective implementation of the Convention.
7. However, CSOs expressed the importance of ensuring a real follow-up to the recommendations made by the Forum. CSOs have called for more follow-up to be undertaken by Parties to the Convention, for example through working sessions, to ensure the proper implementation of the recommendations made.
8. Moreover, some CSOs questioned the process of establishing the provisional agenda of the Committee and the Conference of Parties, believing that they could contribute to identifying relevant themes for the sessions of the governing bodies in line with current issues and challenges.
9. It was also noted that the timing of the Forum was not the most favourable to fully contribute to the reflection of the governing bodies, as the date of the Forum was just before the Conference of Parties, in the context of which the future activities of the Committee are already developed. As such, it was requested that the timeline be redesigned to allow CSOs to play a greater role in shaping the Committee's future activities and work plan.

(ii) Format and structure of the Forum

10. Given the human and financial resources of some CSOs and the geographical location of their headquarters, it was proposed to use a hybrid format for this fourth edition. While this proposal was recognised as relevant, especially after the experience with online formats as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was noted that time differences between different regions of the world would make this option difficult for many CSOs.
11. In addition, some CSOs requested access to the database developed by the Secretariat to facilitate the organization of the Forum. The Secretariat recalled that it was not its role to share confidential data, but that it would proceed, as in previous editions, to invite CSOs to participate in the Forum. The Secretariat recalled, however, that CSOs are welcome to use their own dissemination networks.
12. Concerning the organization of the next edition, it was proposed that the Secretariat work with the members of the taskforce that participated in the organization of the third edition of the Forum while launching a call for volunteers to the CSOs that would like to get involved in the organization of the Forum. The Secretariat will take care of the logistical aspects.
13. Finally, the languages of interpretation will be English and French.

(iii) Involvement of the different stakeholders of the Convention

14. Discussions indicated that participation in the Forum should be limited to accredited CSOs, while facilitating the process for those who request it.
15. Some CSOs underlined the importance of raising awareness of the work and objectives of the Convention among newly admitted CSOs in order to facilitate their participation and enhance their contribution to the Forum and other activities related to the Convention.
16. Finally, some CSOs wanted to open the Forum to other stakeholders, such as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. They felt that creating a parallel consultation mechanism for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises could create confusion, as some CSOs already represent them.
17. In this respect, it was proposed to discuss this point, for example, at the next Forum and to particularly address the definition of civil society in more detail.

III. Conclusion

- It emerged from this meeting that CSOs are asking for better follow-up by Parties on their recommendations and their proper implementation in the framework of the Convention's work.
- A revised agenda for the dates of the Forum and the sessions of the governing bodies could be relevant so that the latter can take the reflections of CSOs more into account.
- The Secretariat will work in collaboration with the members of the taskforce that participated in the organization of the third edition of the Forum while proceeding with a call for volunteers to CSOs interested in participating in the organization of the fourth edition.
- The option of a hybrid format has been mentioned, but its practicalities, especially concerning time differences, seems difficult to implement.
- The Secretariat will continue to provide the necessary logistical support for the smooth organization of the Forum in two working languages, English and French.
- Finally, accredited CSOs will participate in the next edition of the Forum and the Secretariat will try to facilitate these formalities.