

## **Joint intervention in defense of Civil Society**

**February 10, 16th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee**

**UNESCO, Paris**

On February 8, we, representing more than 30 civil society organizations, delivered an intervention in this room in which we denounced a dangerous and disturbing precedent. Indeed, on that day, a member state of the Committee requested the eviction of an organization from this 16th session. To justify this unprecedented request, the member state made accusations against this organization, including that it was engaged in illegal activities - without supporting these accusations in any way, which we know are unfounded.

This issue remained unresolved until late yesterday. The Parties then adopted a decision in which the participation of the organization in question is accepted for the present session, subject to more information to be provided by the organization at the next session, adding an obligation for the Secretariat to make public at least two weeks before the opening of a session the list of observers to the Committee members.

In our February 8 statement, we recalled that civil society is at the very heart of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

The participation of civil society in UNESCO bodies related to the Convention had never before been questioned or subjected to conditions, other than those listed for its admission. We reiterate that this is not only a dangerous, but also an unacceptable precedent, in the face of which we cannot remain silent or immobile, and that it is essential that the country of origin criterion currently in the texts, as well as the analysis by an independent body on the activities of a non-governmental organization or even a profit-making enterprise, must be guaranteed by a body independent of any political bias.

During this session, fundamental principles were flouted: a state was allowed to make unsubstantiated and unfounded accusations without even being asked to demonstrate them in the decisions, while the organization in question was asked to provide more information, against any principle of presumption of innocence. Furthermore, the right of reply of the targeted parties has not been fully respected. Yesterday, neither the targeted organization, nor the ambassador of the country hosting it, Portugal, were able to express themselves.

But more than that, beyond the rules that were circumvented, this week's event raises fundamental questions for the future of this convention. Have we just opened the door to a right of scrutiny, or worse, a right of veto by member states over civil society representatives participating in the processes?

The participation of civil society is the target of an attack that we denounce. By the same token, and we are weighing our words, it is the freedom of expression of those who should be protected by this convention and which is, among other subjects, at the heart of your work, that is affected.

In this context, we refuse to continue to participate in this work. We will also ensure that we denounce this highly worrying situation to the highest authorities. Finally, we salute the solidarity of our colleagues who were offered an important platform this morning and who refused to take

advantage of it. We hope that this unfortunate situation will be resolved and that the panel that was supposed to take place this morning will take place in the future.

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AFRICALIA

International Music Council

European Theatre Convention

International Affiliation of Writers Guilds

International Theatre Institute

Coligação Portuguesa de Diversidade Cultural

International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity

International Council for Film, Television and Audiovisual Communication

Coalición Paraguaya para la Diversidad Cultural

Coalition Suisse pour la diversité culturelle

Coalition Malienne pour la Diversité Culturelle

Fundación Arte al Paso Colombia

Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Canada) La Coalition pour la Diversité des Expressions Culturelles (Canada)

Coalition togolaise pour la Diversité Culturelle

Coalition Française pour la Diversité Culturelle

Culture et Développement

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

CID International Dance Council

Nhimbe Trust

Cultura Contra Conflict

CFW- Culture Funding Watch

PEN International

Asociación Cultural Baizara

Association Nationale Cultures du Monde

European Writers' Council (EWC)

Zone Franche, World Music Network

NGO - UNESCO Liaison Committee

Fédération Internationale des Musiciens (FIM)

Fondation Marcel Hicter pour la démocratie culturelle

Culture, Paix et Développement (Togo)

Culture All Nippon (CAN)