

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Tel: +251 115 517 700 Fax: +251 115 5517844
Website: www.au.int

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Thirty-Seventh Ordinary Session
Videoconference
16 - 22 July 2020
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

EX.CL/1231(XXXVII)
Original : English

**DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE ON 2021 AS THE YEAR OF ARTS,
CULTURE, AND HERITAGE IN AFRICA**

**Proposed Theme: 'Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building a
Prosperous, Peaceful, Integrated and Resilient Africa in the Context of
Multisectoral Challenges.'**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. From the onset, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and, thereafter its successor the African Union (AU), has placed culture at the top of their agenda, as indicated by Article II (a) of the OAU Charter, which affirms *the commitment of the Member States to the coordination and harmonisation of their policies in the domain of educational and cultural cooperation.*

2. The African Union (AU) has recognised the role arts, culture and heritage can play as catalysts for the socio-economic development and integration of the African continent. In a sense, arts and culture are two sides of the same coin. The former constitutes the artistic and collective production reflecting cultural reality of a society whereas the latter moors the society and constitutes the basis on which social and heritage capital is formed. Together arts and culture are part and parcel of a heritage of a country – though culture may be in turn be regarded as depository and vehicle of heritage.

3. Furthermore, the desire to amplify, streamline and enhance the contribution of arts and culture to Africa's socio-economic development and integration has necessitated the drafting and adoption of continental Plans of Action for Cultural and Creative Industries. The Dakar Plan of Action on Cultural Industries (1992) and the AU Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries (2008) are a case in point.

4. The Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage will happen at a time when AU Member States will still be grappling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is imposing heavy human, financial and economic costs to Africa. The crisis also provides an opportunity to re-examine the continent's socio-economic priorities, including the role of cultural workers, contributing to building stronger and more resilient health and social sectors, towards equality, inclusion, social cohesion and African Renaissance, as inspired by the Ubuntu **Philosophy 'I AM because you are; You are because I Am.'**

5. The significant contribution of Culture to the integration of societies and to the socio-economic development in general and to poverty alleviation through job creation and social inclusion in particular has been undoubtedly evident time and again. Taking all this into consideration, the AU has not only included culture in all major development blue prints, such as the Lagos Plan of Action 1980-2000 and the African Union Agenda 2063; the AU has also adopted various instruments pertaining to culture including the, Cultural Charter for Africa (1978) the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006), the Statute of the African Audio-Visual and Cinema Commission (2019) and the AU Model Law on the Protection of Cultural Property and Heritage (2018).

II. ANTECEDENTS

6. Considering the foregoing, the Ordinary Assembly of the Heads of States and Governments of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in the capital of Mauritius, Port Louis, in 1976, adopted the Cultural Charter for Africa, which was inspired and informed by the necessity to streamline and harmonize cultural policies across the continent in line with the socio-cultural dynamics obtaining across the continent and beyond.

7. Further to deep reflections on the socio-economic situation of Africa, in 1980 the OAU adopted the Lagos Plan of Action for Africa 1980-2000, which called for the mobilisation of internal resources to fast-track the socio-economic development of Africa. Considering the importance culture plays in the development of the continent, the Heads of State and Government of the OAU, in adopting the Lagos Plan of Action for Africa 1980-2000, committed themselves, individually and collectively, on behalf of their governments and peoples, to ***“ensure that “the development of policies reflect adequately Africa’s socio-cultural values in order to reinforce our cultural identity”***.

8. The first Conference of African Ministers of Culture held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 13 to 14 December 2005 (CAMC1) endorsed the Draft Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, which was later adopted by the AU 6th Ordinary Assembly of the Heads of State and Government held in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, in 2006 whose theme was dedicated to Culture, Education and Languages adopted the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance. It should be noted that this was the first Summit devoted to Culture ever since the founding fathers created the continental body on 25 May 1963.

9. Currently fourteen (14) AU Member States have ratified and thirty three (33) have signed the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, which is the result of the revision to the Cultural Charter for Africa. It is therefore, of necessity, to create mechanisms to enhance advocacy within the AU Member States with the view to fast-tracking the signing, ratification and implementation of the Charter African Cultural Renaissance. Hence, mindful of this fact, His Excellency Mr Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was appointed AU Champion for Arts, Culture and Heritage during the 32nd AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2019.

10. Furthermore, considering the important decisions taken at the Khartoum Summit, referred to earlier, that have had a bearing on amplifying the role of Culture as one of the main catalysts for political, socio-economic development and integration of Africa and have also informed and inspired subsequent actions by the AUC as mandated by the General Assembly; chief amongst them were the following (Doc. EX.CL/223 (VIII)).

- 1) Decision on the Report of the First AU Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Culture (CAMC1).
- 2) Decision on the adoption Language Plan of Action for Africa.
- 3) Decision to declare 2006 as the year of African Languages (Doc. EX.CL/223 (VIII)).
- 4) Nairobi Plan of Action for the Promotion of Cultural Industries for Africa’s development as adopted in principle by Ministers of Culture.
- 5) The Nairobi Declaration on CULTURE, INTEGRATION AND AFRICAN RENAISSANCE.

- 6) The African Position Paper on the State of World Heritage in Africa and the proposal for the creation of an African World Heritage Fund, which was created in 2006 and is based in Midrand, South Africa.
- 7) Re-launching by the implementation of the Ouagadougou resolution on the revival of the Great Museum of Africa (GMA) in Algeria in the spirit of African solidarity. The AUC is currently coordinating the activities pertaining to the establishment of the Museum which is a flagship project of the AU Agenda 2063.
- 8) Decision on the implementation of the Language Plan of Action for Africa which is currently being spearheaded by the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN)/AU with headquarters in Bamako, Mali.

11. The above mentioned decisions, policies and instruments have geared and guided the initiatives for the development of the arts, culture and heritage sector at continental level.

III. 33RD AU ASSEMBLY DECISION AND PROPOSED THEME OF THE YEAR

12. Every year, during the African Union Assembly, the Heads of State and Governments propose and approve a theme for reflection in the following year. The theme guides the activities to be organised by the AU Policy Organs and AU Member States. At the 33rd Session of the Assembly, held in February 2020, the Heads of States and Governments endorsed the proposal by H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar KEITA, President of the Republic of Mali, to declare 2021 AU Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage. The Assembly stressed the importance of Culture, Arts and Heritage in the achievement of the objectives of African Union Agenda 2063 as well as those of its Flagship Projects and declared that the African rich and diverse heritage is an essential asset to profile the continent in the global arena and bring about sustainable development, integration and peace in Africa.

13. It is in this context that the following specific theme is proposed for 2021:

‘Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building a Prosperous, Peaceful, Integrated and Resilient Africa in the Context of Multisectoral Challenges

14. In line with the adopted theme for 2021 which is aimed at promoting the arts, culture and heritage sector and building a resilient Africa which provides primary health care and social services to all in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and uses the creative economy as a tool to achieve that objective, the following areas will form the basis of interventions by the AU Policy Organs, the AU Member States and Partners to implement activities and programmes in that regard:

3.1. Arts & Culture

15. The AU Agenda 2063, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance; the Revised AU Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries, and the Statute of the African Audio-Visual and Cinema Commission (AACC), provide the policy guidance on obtaining dynamics and developments in the continent as well as worldwide with special reference to the role Cultural and Creative Industries can play in job creation and income generation

particularly for women and youth, as well as economic empowerment and the mitigation of social exclusion.

16. Moreover, the area of Arts Education is the cornerstone for the development of the creative economy on the continent. Thus, the Commission in collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD will be embarking on the process of developing a continental policy on arts education. The continental policy on arts education will be in line with the Revised African Union Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries. The critical role of the artists and cultural workers in the process cannot be overemphasized and issues pertaining to intellectual property rights and the status of the artists on the continent need to be carefully reflected upon for meaningful and tangible interventions to be undertaken.

3.2. *Health, Wellness and Post COVID-19 Response*

17. The African Union has drafted a Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 response underpinned by coordination, collaboration, cooperation and communication and a Comprehensive Socio-Economic Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic which are centred at developing appropriated approaches for human security.

18. The ultimate goal of the post COVID-19 interventions is to provide fair opportunities and to strengthen human security through the provision of basic primary health care and social services to all. Hence post COVID-19 interventions in the areas of health and culture will include: Continued awareness to sustain focus and attention on the COVID-19 pandemic and basic health prevention measures in order to prevent infections, prevent deaths and limit socio-economic harms; Using of traditional medicines as potential remedies for health challenges faced by the continent; using cultural workers, including musicians, film-makers, actors and writers as advocacy agents for good and inclusive health and wellness.

19. Using cultural workers, including musicians, film-makers, actors and writers as advocacy agents for good and inclusive health and wellness.

20. The role that the arts, culture and heritage sector including the role played by cultural workers in promoting good health and wellness cannot be overemphasized. Cultural workers can also assist to mitigate the social and mental health impacts of COVID-19 through, songs, plays, film and audio-visual materials.

3.3. *Languages*

21. The Language Action Plan for Africa (LPAA) has been based on four main justification of the need to develop and implement a Language Plan of Action for Africa:

- i) To guarantee the cultural independence and development of African States through the use of African languages;
- ii) To promote African unity by developing regional languages as vehicles of communication and helping to break language barriers;

- iii) To contribute to strengthening endogenous efforts by involving the people and explaining to them the meaning and problems of development, in their own languages;
- iv) To maintain links between Africa and the rest of the world through the main foreign languages of communication and the definition of their importance in relation to African languages.

22. ACALAN will therefore launch a campaign for the implementation by Member States of the African Union of the Languages Plan of Action for Africa, whose priority areas include, policy formulation and resources mobilisation.

23. To achieve the objectives of LPAA, ACALAN will principally campaign in the African Union Member States and within the Regional Economic Communities, affiliated regional organisations or institutions to the African Union to have them:

- i. Adopt viable indigenous African languages as official languages and working languages;
- ii. Formulate language policy that places one or more widely used African language at the centre of their socio-economic development;
- iii. Establish national language structures, where none exist, or to strengthen them, where they already exist, and to formulate appropriate national language policies;
- iv. Ensure that the languages prescribed as official languages achieve a level of modernisation that meet the needs of administering a modern State;
- v. Carry out campaigns to systematically educate or re-educate its population on the inherent or practical usefulness of African languages to combat the widely negative attitude of Africans to African languages.
- vi. Ensure that all the sectors (i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary) of the national education systems, are engaged as appropriate in the service of the practical promotion of African language(s) selected and prescribed as (an) official language(s);
- vii. Render national universities and other research and related institutions a primary instrument for the practical promotion of African languages, as regards such critical promotional activities, as the compilation of technical and general dictionaries, the writing of textbooks on useful subjects, the training of teachers of African languages, translators, interpreters, broadcasters and journalists, the production of useful books and other types of literature, relevant to the lives of contemporary Africans and the up-dating of vocabulary in African languages;
- viii. Prescribe as media or vehicles of instruction of African languages, that best and most effectively facilitate the learning process, in recognition of the fact that to impart formal or other types of knowledge, the vehicle of instruction or communication should be a language familiar to the learner;
- ix. Use African languages as media of instruction in national literacy campaigns IN Member States, in recognition of the strategic role of widespread literacy among the national population plays, in the socio-economic development of Member States, and in recognition that literacy education will be greatly facilitated and speeded up, if languages familiar to the national population are employed.

- x. In line with ACALAN's programme to fight COVID-19 and awareness campaign on the prevention measures on the disease translated in African languages will be undertaken.

24. The African Languages Week was adopted by the Third Scientific and Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sport (STC-YCS3/MIN/Report/P11/70), organized by the African Union from October 21 to 25, 2018 in Algiers, Algeria, through the initiative of the Executive Secretariat of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) to be celebrated annually from 24 to 30 January as a major annual event that should be observed by all Member States of the African Union, as a special moment of African identity, as a perpetual *rendezvous* for the promotion of African languages in Africa and the African diaspora. The objective is to commemorate and demonstrate the important role of African languages in the integration and development of Africa. The African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), will take the leader in proposing together with its organs and working structures a rich and varied programme to commemorate the African Languages Week, during which, ACALAN will organize conferences, symposiums, shows, writing and poetry competitions, exhibitions etc, to demonstrate and promote the projects realised within the framework of the sensitisation operation on African languages. A specific theme will be attributed to the commemoration of each edition and the theme for 2021 will be language policies in the member states of the African Union. The African Languages Week and related events will continuously provide an opportunity to the African peoples to celebrate African languages as the main an undeniable pillar of African culture and heritage and factor of cohesion integration and development of Africa

3.4. *History and Oral Traditions*

25. Africa is known as a continent of oral tradition. This oral tradition is characterized by a wide variety of genres that convey all cultural values which belong to the African continent. A. Raphael Ndiaye, a Senegalese ethno linguist, defined oral tradition as ***'the sum of datas a society deems essential, retains and codifies, especially in their oral form in order to facilitate their memorization'***. The African Union Agenda 2063 is aiming to build an Africa with a strong cultural identity of common heritage, shared values and ethic. The Africa we want will only be a reality if African history and oral traditions constitute its bedrock. Therefore, following the programmes initiated since its creation, CELHTO works for the reinforcement of the role of African history and oral traditions in the continent's development while emphasizing on the input of endogenous mechanisms of conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

26. Oral traditions are a very useful tool to undertaken advocacy and awareness campaigns on the promotion of the development of the creative economy sector as well as the health, wellness of African populations in the post COVID-19 era.

3.5. *Heritage*

27. The AU Commission and the African World Heritage Fund will work with the Member States and partners community to promote African cultural heritage. The *"Algiers' Call to Action on African Heritage"* endorsed at the 3rd Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sport (STC-YCS3) in October 2018, expressed with concern, the insufficient financing of national and Pan African

institutions in charge of heritage protection, especially the African World Heritage Fund. The Algiers' Call to Action further expressed with great concern the slow pace of ratification of the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance by the African Member States and stressed the need for Africa to improve its profile on the global map by making bold engagements for heritage related events and issues of outstanding significance. The urgent need to safeguard and sustainably develop cultural heritage in Africa is further demonstrated by the AU Agenda 2063: *"The Africa We Want"*. The Agenda provides a roadmap for safeguarding and sustainably developing cultural heritage in Africa. However, the lack of appropriate legislative frameworks and policies to protect and promote cultural heritage calls for the need to raise awareness of the AU and UNESCO legal instruments.

3.5.1 *The Great Museum of Africa*

28. The Great Museum of Africa (GMA) will be hosted by Algeria on behalf of the continent. The conceptualization of the project is near completion. However, the construction of the premises has not yet started due to lack of funds. H.E. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of Mali and AU Champion on Arts, Culture and Heritage, and the Council of Peers Arts, Culture and Heritage will play an important role in getting support for financial contributions by Member States and partners for the construction of the continental Museum. The Government of Algeria has provided a Temporary Structure for the Museum (*Villa du Trait*), the Technical and Advisory Committee of the GMA, in collaboration with the AU Commission, is working towards launching the first continental exhibition on this space in 2021.

3.5.2 *The African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)*

29. The African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) was created in South Africa in 2006 to support the effective conservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage of outstanding universal value in Africa. The formation of the Fund was as a result of work undertaken by the African Union and UNESCO to develop a strategy for dealing with the challenges faced by African countries in the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. It supports States Parties in fulfilling their obligations as defined in the World Heritage Convention. The formation of the Fund was endorsed by the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit, held in Khartoum in 2006.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/ROADMAP

30. The following table presents the draft roadmap and Implementation Plan of the 2021 as the Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage and they comprise:

- (i) Actions to be taken;
- (ii) Focal points;
- (iii) Time frames;
- (iv) Possible sources of funding; and
- (v) Observations

No.	ACTIVITIES	FOCAL POINTS	TIME-FRAME 2021-2022	SOURCE(S) OF FUNDING	OBS.
1.	Launching of the entry into force of the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance	AUC Special Advisory Unit to the AU Champion on Arts, Culture and Heritage ACALAN CELHTO	January 2021	AUC	
2.	Operationalization of the Temporary Secretariat of the African Audio-visual and Cinema Commission (AACC) and fast tracking the process of ratification of the Statute of the AACC.	AUC	February 2021	AUC Kenya – Host Country	
3	34th Assembly of the African Union - African Nobel Prizes Debate - 2nd Meeting of the Council of Peers - Launch of the book expressing an African perspective on arts, culture and heritage	Mali	February 2021	Mali AUC	
4.	Resource Mobilization Conference for the Great Museum of Africa	AUC Algeria Mali	April 2021	AUC Algeria	
5.	Launching of the first continental exhibition of the Great Museum of Africa at Villa du Trait in Algeria	AUC Algeria Technical and Advisory Committee of the GMA AWHF UNESCO	November/December 2021	AUC Algeria	
6.	Mega African Concert to celebrate Africa Month in the Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage	AUC Mali South Africa All Africa Music Awards (AFRIMA)	25 th May 2021	AUC Mali South Africa All Africa Music Awards (AFRIMA)	
7.	Organization of the 2 nd Pan-African Writers Conference (PAWC2) and Launching of the AU Campaign on the Promotion of Reading	AUC Mali Thabo Mbeki Foundation UNESCO	July 2021	AUC – DSA and HRST	

8.	Development of the African Union Policy on Arts Education	AUC NEPAD AFRAA	January 2021 – October 2022	AUC AUDA-NEPAD	
9.	Launching of the Revised AU Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries	AUC - DSA and Trade and Industry AFREXIM BANK Cultural Workers from different sectors: Music; Fashion and Design Value Chain; Visual Arts etc.	May 2021	AUC - DSA and Trade and Industry AFREXIM BANK Cultural Workers from different sectors: Music; Fashion and Design Value Chain; Visual Arts etc.	
10	Organization of the 6 th Pan –African Cultural Congress (PACC6)	AUC	September 2021	AUC	
11	Campaign in the African Union Member States and within the Regional Economic Communities affiliated regional organizations for the implementation of the Languages Plan of Action for Africa	AUC	January – December 2021	AUC	
12	Commemoration of the African Languages Week	AUC	January 2021	AUC	
13	Publication of the Periodic Scientific Journal on History and Oral Traditions	AUC	January – December 2021	AUC	
14	Collection and Exploitation of Oral Sources and Local Knowledge in order to contribute to the Endogenous Development of Africa	AUC	June 2021	AUC	
15	Constitution of a Collaborative Network on African Oral Traditions	AUC	June 2021	AUC	
16	Collect and Study the Endogenous Mechanisms for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts in Central and Eastern Africa	AUC	February – October 2021	AUC	
17	Organization of the AWHF Partners'/Donors Conference	AUC AWHF Special Advisory Unit to the AU	January 2021	AWHF South Africa	

		Champion on Arts, Culture and Heritage			
18	Youth Forum on Heritage in Africa	AWHF AUC UNESCO	April – May 2021	AWHF AUC – DSA and HRST Gabon	
19	African World Heritage Day Celebrations	AWHF AUC UNESCO	5 th May 2021	AWHF African Union Member States	
20	Roundtable on World Heritage Related Issues in Africa	AWHF UNESCO AUC	June/July 2021 45 th Session of the World Heritage Committee	AWHF	
21	2 nd Biennale of Luanda – Pan-African Forum on a Culture for Peace	AUC - DSA and Peace and Security UNESCO Angola	September 2021	AUC UNESCO Angola	
22	Encyclopaedia Africana Project	AUC – CIDO, DSA, CELHTO UNESCO	October 2021	AUC	
23	Traditional Leaders Forum Focusing on Traditional Medicine	AUC Mali	November 2021	AUC	

V. MONITORING

31. Monitoring is a desirable holistic component, which is deemed necessary, during the implementation process of the different activities pertaining to 2021, the Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage of the African Union. Specifically, while taking into account the time frames for those activities, it serves to gauge the level of their implementation as envisaged on the road map.

32. Furthermore, the monitoring process is expected to provide subsidies for adjusting or reviewing some activities and time frames, particularly as funds are becoming available. It will involve the various stakeholders, mainly the AUC, including ACALAN, CELHTO and AWHF with some kind of a dotted reporting line to the Council of Peers, the Executive Council, and the Specialized Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sport and Member States.

33. A comprehensive report on the implementation of the Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage will be presented to the Executive Council and at the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government in January/February 2022 prior to the adoption of the subsequent theme.

AFRICAN UNION UNION AFRICAINE

African Union Common Repository

<http://archives.au.int>

Organs

Council of Ministers & Executive Council Collection

2020-07-22

Draft Concept Note on 2021 as the Year of Arts, Culture, and Heritage in Africa

African Union

DCMP

<https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/8843>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository