

African Union, African Regional Bodies

Cultural Charter for Africa

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African Union

Cultural Charter for Africa

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Preamble

We, Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity meeting in its Thirteenth Ordinary Session, in Port Louis, Mauritius, from 2nd to 5th July, 1976,

GUIDED

by the Organization of African Unity Charter,

by Resolution CM/Res. 371(XXIII) adopted by the Twenty-third Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers and by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU (June 1974, Mogadiscio),

by the Declaration of principles of international cultural co-operation adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its fourteenth session in 1966,

by the Pan-African Cultural Manifesto of Algiers (1969), and by the Inter-governmental Conference on cultural policies in Africa organized by UNESCO in Accra in 1975 in co-operation with the Organization of African Unity;

CONVINCED

that any human society is necessarily governed by rules and principles based on traditions, languages, ways of life and thought in other words on a set of cultural values which reflect its distinctive character and personality;

CONVINCED

that all cultures emanate from the people, and that any African cultural policy should of necessity enable the people to expand for increased responsibility in the development of its cultural heritage;

AWARE OF THE FACT

that any people has the inalienable right to organize its cultural life in full harmony with its political, economic, social, philosophical and spiritual ideas;

CONVINCED

that all the cultures of the world are, equally entitled to respect just as all individuals are equal as regards free access to culture;

RECALLING

that, under colonial domination, the African countries found themselves in the same political, economic, social and cultural situation;

that cultural domination led to the depersonalization of part of the African peoples, falsified their history, systematically disparaged and combated African values, and tried to replace progressively and officially, their languages by that of the colonizer,

that colonization has encouraged the formation of an elite which is too often alienated from its culture and susceptible to assimilation and that a serious gap has been opened between the said elite and the African popular masses;

CONVINCED

that the unity of Africa is founded first and foremost on its History,

that the affirmation of cultural identity denotes a concern common to all Peoples of Africa,

that African cultural diversity, the expression of a single identity, is a factor making for equilibrium and development in the service of national integration;

that it is imperative to edify educational systems which embody the African values of civilization, so as to ensure the rooting of youth in African culture and mobilize the social forces in the context of permanent education;

that it is imperative to resolutely ensure the promotion of African languages, mainstay, and media of cultural heritage in its most authentic and essentially popular form,

that it is imperative to carry out a systematic inventory of the cultural heritage, in particular in the spheres of Traditions, History and Arts;

GUIDED

by a common determination to strengthen understanding among our peoples and co-operation among our States in order to meet the aspirations of our peoples to see brotherhood and solidarity reinforced and integrated within a greater cultural unity which transcends ethnic and national divergencies;

AWARE

that culture constitutes for our peoples the surest means of overcoming our technological backwardness and the most efficient force of our victorious resistance to imperialist blackmail;

CONVINCED

that African culture is meaningless unless it plays a full part in the political and social liberation struggle, and in the rehabilitation and unification efforts and that there is no limit to the cultural development of a people;

CONVINCED

that a common resolve provides the basis for promoting the harmonious cultural development of our States;

AGREE

to establish the Cultural Charter for Africa as set out below.

Part I – Aims, objectives and principles

Article 1

The aims and objectives of this charter are as follows:—

- a) to liberate the African peoples from socio-cultural conditions which impede their development in order to recreate and maintain the sense and will for progress, the sense and will for development;
- b) the rehabilitation, restoration, preservation and promotion of the African cultural heritage;
- c) the assertion of the dignity of the African and of the popular foundations of his culture;
- d) the combating and elimination of all forms of alienation and cultural suppression and oppression everywhere in Africa, especially in countries still under colonial and racist domination including apartheid;
- e) the encouragement of cultural co-operation among the States with a view to the strengthening of African unity;
- f) the encouragement of international cultural co-operation for a better understanding among peoples within which Africa will make its original and appropriate contribution to human culture;
- g) promotion in each country of popular knowledge of science and technology; a necessary condition for the control of nature;

- h) development of all dynamic values in the African cultural heritage and rejection of any element which is an impediment to progress.

Article 2

In order to fulfill the objectives set out in Article 1, the African States solemnly subscribe to the following principles:—

- a) access of all citizens to education and to culture;
- b) respect for the freedom to create and the liberation of the creative genius of the people;
- c) respect for national authenticities and specificities in the field of culture;
- d) selective integration of science and modern technology into the cultural life of the African peoples;
- e) exchange and dissemination of cultural experience between African countries, in the field of cultural decolonization in all its forms.

Part II – Cultural diversity and national identity

Article 3

The African States recognize the need to take account of national identities, cultural diversity being a factor making for balance within the nation and a source of mutual enrichment for various communities.

Article 4

The African States recognize that African cultural diversity is the expression of the same identity; a factor of unity and an effective weapon for genuine liberty, effective responsibility and full sovereignty of the people.

Article 5

The assertion of national identity must not be at the cost of impoverishing or subjecting various cultures within the State.

Part III – National cultural development

Chapter I

Basic principles governing a national cultural policy

Article 6

Each African State recognizes that it is the working people who make history and establish the foundations and conditions for the advancement of culture. As culture has an innovating and beneficial influence on the means of production and on man, each African State agrees:—

- a) to work out a national cultural policy for each State. This policy should be designed as a codification of social practices and concerted activities whose aim is to satisfy cultural needs through the optimal utilization of all the available material and human resources;
- b) to integrate the cultural development plan in the overall program for economic and social development;

- c) that individual States shall be free to establish their priorities and select the methods they consider best suited for attaining their cultural development objectives and to that end individual States regard the following priorities and methods as guidelines;

1. Priorities

- a) the transcription, teaching and development of national languages with a view to using them for the dissemination and the development of science and technology;
- b) the recording, conservation, use and dissemination of information on oral tradition;
- c) the adaptation of educational curricula to development needs and to the National and African Cultural and Social realities;
- d) the promotion of cultural activities, encouragement to artists and assistance to creativity in the people;
- e) the protection of creative artists and cultural assets;
- f) the development of research and the establishment of permanent research centres in the field of culture;
- g) research, on the basis of modern science, in the field of local African medicine and pharmacopeia.

2. Methods and means

- a) the introduction of African Culture into all national educational systems;
- b) the introduction and intensification of the teaching in national languages in order to accelerate the economic, social, political and cultural development in our States;
- c) the establishment of appropriate institutions for the development, preservation and dissemination of culture;
- d) the training of competent staff, at all levels;
- e) the concrete and effective establishment of links between the school and the national realities as well as the life of the people, a link which should be apparent in the school curricula and structure;
- (f) the sensitization and exhortation of all citizens to ensure their willing participation in the field of culture;
- g) the provision of a budget corresponding to the needs of culture and of research in the humanities, natural sciences and technology;
- h) the financing of cultural programmes essentially out of national resources in order to implement certain cultural projects;
- i) the organization of competitions offering prizes;
- j) the organization of national and Pan--African cultural festivals, in the spirit of this Charter.

Chapter II

The democratization fo culture

Article 7

The African States recognize that the driving force of Africa is based more on development of the collective personality than on individual advancement and profit, and that culture cannot be considered as the privilege of an elite.

Article 8

The African States agree to undertake the following:—

- a) create conditions which will enable their peoples to participate to the full in the development and implementation of cultural policies;
- b) defend and develop the peoples' culture;
- c) implement a cultural policy providing for the advancement of creative artists;
- d) to, whenever necessary, abolish the caste system and rehabilitate the functions of artist and craftsman (griots and craftsmen).

Chapter III

The need for active participation by youth in national cultural life

Article 9

Continuous cultural development in Africa rests with its young people. Therefore the African States should create conditions for the active and enlightened participation of young people in African cultural life.

Article 10

The African States shall endeavour to raise continually the cultural awareness of young people through the introduction of African cultural values into education and through the organization of national and Pan-African festivals, conferences, seminars and training and refresher courses.

Article 11

The cultural policies of the various States shall ensure that young African people also have the means of familiarizing themselves with the whole of African and other civilizations in order to prepare them for fruitful inter-cultural relations.

Part IV – Training and life-long education

Chapter V Training

Article 12

Professional training is as important both for cultural development as for economic and social development. Consequently, the African States should devote themselves to creating conditions favouring large scale participation of culture by the African working class and peasant at the actual work-sites.

Article 13

To achieve the aim laid down in the preceding Article, States should adopt a training policy for specialists at all levels and in all fields.

Article 14

Professional training for creative artists should be improved renewed and adapted to modern methods, without breaking the umbilical cord linking it with the traditional sources of African art. Hence, special its training should be provided in national, regional and sub-regional training centres.

Chapter V Life-long education

Article 15

African governments will have to pay special attention to the growing importance of life-long education in modern societies.

Article 16

African governments should take steps to organize continuous training in a rational way and to establish an appropriate system of education which satisfied the specific needs of their people.

Part V – The use of African languages

Article 17

The African States recognize the imperative need to develop African languages which will ensure their cultural advancement and accelerate their economic and social development and to this end will endeavour to formulate a national policy in regard to languages.

Article 18

The African States should prepare and implement the reforms necessary for the introduction of African languages into education. To this end each state may choose one or more languages.

Article 19

The introduction of African languages at all levels of education should have to go hand-in-hand with literacy work among the people at large.

Part VI – Use of mass media

Article 20

The African States should recognize that there can be no cultural policy without corresponding policies on information and communication.

Article 21

The African States should encourage the use of the information and communication media for their cultural development.

Article 22

- a) The African Governments should ensure the total decolonization of the mass media and increase the production of radio and television broadcasts, cinematographic films which reflect the political, economic and social realities of the people in order to enable the masses to have greater access to and participation in the cultural riches.
- b) African Governments should create publishing and distribution institutions for books, school manuals, records and instruments of the press in Africa to combat market speculators and make them into instruments of popular education.
- c) African Governments should establish joint co-operation in order to break the monopoly of non-African countries in this field.

Part VII – The role of Governments in cultural development

Chapter VI Assistance to artistic creation

Article 23

African states should be active in promoting national cultural development through a policy of effective assistance both as regards collective methods of creation and in favour of individual artists.

Such assistance may take various forms:

- a) Organization of competitions offering prizes and mobile exhibitions of works of art and artistic visits;
- b) fiscal assistance through a policy in which African cultural assets are exempted wholly or partly from tax;
- c) supporting artists, writers and research workers by providing financial assistance and scholarships for training or refresher courses;
- d) the creation of National Fund for the promotion of culture and the Arts.

Chapter VII The protection of African works

Article 24

African States should prepare inter-African convention on copyright so as to guarantee the protection of African Works. They should also intensify their efforts to modify existing international conventions to meet African interests.

Article 25

African governments should enact national and inter-African laws and regulations guaranteeing the protection of copyright, set up national copyright offices and encourage the establishment of authors' associations responsible for protecting the moral and material interests of those who produce work that gives spiritual and mental pleasure.

Chapter VIII

Protection of the African cultural heritage

Article 26

The African cultural heritage must be protected on the legal and practical planes in the manner laid down in the international instruments in force and in conformity with the best standards applicable in this field.

Article 27

The African Governments should have to adopt national laws and inter-African regulations governing the protection of cultural property in times of peace and in the event of war.

Article 28

The African States should take steps to put an end to the despoliation of African cultural property and ensure that cultural assets, in particular archives works of art and archeological objects, which have been removed from Africa, are returned there. To this end they should, in particular, support the efforts exerted by UNESCO and take all other necessary steps to ensure the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the reinstatement of works of art removed from their country of origin.

Article 29

The African States should take steps to ensure that the archives which have been removed from Africa are returned to African Governments in order that they may have complete archives concerning the history of their country.

Part VIII – Inter-African cultural co-operation

Article 30

The African States acknowledge that it is vital to establish inter-African cultural co-operation as a contribution to the mutual understanding of national cultures and enrichment of African cultures, thus to take the form of a two-way exchange, firstly, among all the countries on the continent and, secondly, between Africa and the rest of the world through specialized institutions like UNESCO.

Article 31

To achieve the aims set out in the previous Article, the African States agree:

- a) to consolidate their co-operation by way of joint cultural activities and periodical discussions of major issues on which cultural development of Africa depends;
- b) to develop the exchange of information, documentation and cultural material by;
 - strengthening the Association of African Universities;
 - university and specialist exchange, in order that scientific cultural studies can develop in the research institutes;
 - exchange and meetings between young people;
 - the organization of joint cultural events such as festivals, symposia, sports and art exhibitions;

- establishment of cultural research centres on national, regional and pan-African level;
 - creation of an Inter-African Fund for the support and promotion of cultural studies and programmes.
- c) to endeavour to ensure that African cultural values are deployed to maximum effect in order to illustrate that all African States are members of one and the same community;
- d) Creation of Regional Specialized Institutions for the training of specialized cultural cadres.

Article 32

The African Cultural Council should function in close co-operation and consultation with the OAU Commission on Education, Science, Health and Culture in the field of cultural policies.

Part IX – Final provisions

Article 33 – Signature and ratification

- i) This Charter shall be open for signature to all Member States of the Organization of African Unity and shall be ratified by the signatory States in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.
- ii) The original instrument, done if possible in African languages and in English and French, all texts being equally authentic, shall be deposited with the General Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity which shall transmit copies thereof to all OAU Member States.
- iii) Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the OAU General Secretariat which shall notify all signatories of such deposit.

Article 34 – Entry into force

This Charter shall come into force immediately upon receipt by the OAU General Secretariat of the instruments of ratification and adhesion from two-third of the total membership of the OAU.

Article 35 – Registration of the Charter

This Charter shall, after due ratification, be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations through the OAU General Secretariat in conformity with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Article 36 – Interpretation of the Charter

Any question which may arise concerning the interpretation of this Charter shall be resolved by decision of Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU.

Article 37 – Adhesion and accession

- (a) Any OAU Member State may at any time notify the General Secretariat of the OAU, of its intention to adhere or accede to this Charter.
- (b) The General Secretariat shall, on receipt of such notification, communicate a copy of it to all the Member States. Adhesion and accession shall take effect fourteen days after communication of the applicant's notice, to all Member States by the General Secretariat of the OAU.