

**INFORMAL MEETING OF EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF CULTURE – CÁCERES, 25-26
SEPTEMBER 2023**

CÁCERES DECLARATION

Culture is what gives meaning to life. Culture widens what is real through what is dreamt. Culture turns the banal into the essential, the ephemeral into the eternal. Culture makes the small giant, the perishable infinite. Culture is rights, culture is freedom. Culture is progress and above all democracy.

Preamble

While the echoes of war ring and hurt in the heart of Europe, we, the Ministers of Culture, here gathered, wish to affirm our public commitment to culture. Because culture is both reason and heart, it is past, present and future. Because culture is a cornerstone of the European project. Thereby, we condemn without qualification Russia's unjustified and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine, its people and its cultural identity.

Thus, all the Ministers of Culture gathered in Cáceres on 25 and 26 September at the Informal Meeting on Culture have adopted this Declaration in support of culture to be placed at the highest policy level, and hereafter considered to be an essential public good.

Because life without culture is mere survival.

From this city that is a World Heritage Site, we pledge to work to make culture a crucial element of policies promoting peaceful, fair and egalitarian societies, because culture plays an essential role in the construction of democratic societies and in the personal development of citizens: culture is essential for achieving healthier, fairer, more critical, free, tolerant, inclusive and egalitarian societies, and that is why, we are committed, without pre-empting the coming post-2030 discussions, to working for culture to be recognised in and of itself as a new sustainable development goal.

We would also like to quote the words of Federico García Lorca, spoken at the opening of a library in his hometown, Fuente Vaqueros, in 1931, in which he spoke of books as 'horizons, ladders to climb to the summit of the spirit and the heart'. Like Lorca, we recognise the role of culture in building wiser, freer and happier people, and we are committed to working for those people, because we want food for the body and the spirit, we want bread and we want books, we want well-being, social justice and equal opportunities. We want, we demand, and we commit ourselves to work to achieve these goals, to build educated societies, because life in such societies will always be better.

As it now seems that the pandemic caused by Covid-19 is beginning to be a thing of the past, we wish to remember and be grateful for the way in which culture proved indispensable in those difficult times. Culture is life, health, integration, resistance and hope. Culture unites us, connects us and integrates us. Culture recognises us, protects us and welcomes us. Culture opens doors, breaks down barriers, heals wounds and offers paths to better lives and societies. Culture and life are never separate, but form part of a whole.

This is because culture is a source of well-being, wealth and policy for the future. Culture is part of the shared European identity and also of the identity of each of the countries we represent. Culture is indispensable, because it is at the heart of our history and because it paves the way for the future. Culture saves us and separates us from hatred, intolerance and barbarism. Commitment to culture, to the freedom of creators, to their rights, to their working conditions, to participation and access, must always be part of the objectives of any public authority, because culture defines us and is the path to freer and more tolerant, sustainable, generous and happy societies.

FOR ALL OF THESE REASONS, FROM CÁCERES, WE AFFIRM:

Culture is the heart of democracy,

Culture is tolerance, respect and human rights.

Culture is freedom of creation and thought.

Culture is pluralism, diversity and wealth.

Culture is peace.

Culture is identity.

Culture is equality.

Culture is universal access and inclusion.

Culture is the participation of citizens in cultural life.

Culture is health and physical and mental well-being.

Culture is sustainability and the pathway to a future world for generations to come.

Culture is a key element against climate change.

Culture is an essential element of economic development.

Culture is dignified lives for cultural workers.

Culture is heritage, history and memory, because these are the wellsprings of the future.

Culture is, in short, a right for citizens that it is an obligation for the public authorities and every individual to safeguard. That is why we are making this commitment today, so that culture will henceforth be considered as an essential public good, a global public good, at the highest policy level.