



11 December 2025

THE AGORA MEETING

#Culture2030Goal

The Culture2030Goal Agora met on 11 December 2025 for a meeting to discuss progress against the campaign's goals over the year, and to look forward to 2026. These were the two main substantive points on the agenda.

1. PROGRESS OVER 2025

Jordi Pascual (UCLG) opened the Agora meeting by emphasising that the work of the campaign has proven that culture is both “goal-able and globable” (i.e. that it is suitable to be turned into a goal, and that it is globally relevant). He also noted that the current proposal should be finalised within the following 15–20 days.

John Crowley provided an overview on the status of the drafting process, underlining its emphasis on co-development, which draws on the collective intelligence of all those involved. The circulation of the draft before and after the meeting is intended to include as many inputs as possible from partners and diverse stakeholders, encouraging critical engagement and contributions that help shape a proposal that reflects shared reflection and collaborative inputs, as well as the ambition of the campaign. Crowley also identified some challenges that emerged in the drafting process, including the need to more effectively address emerging issues such as artificial intelligence and heritage, as well as aspects of the cultural and creative economy that were not sufficiently developed in the initial draft.

The campaign had met its objective of developing an updated version of the draft Culture Goal, thanks in particular the support of all those who had contributed time and money over the preceding months.

The updated goal, prepared by John Crowley, includes updated language for the targets (both to simplify, and to reflect growing concern around the impacts of AI), as well as a set of indicators. Through this, it helps demonstrate that culture is ‘goalable’ – i.e. can be tracked like other policy areas.

Stephen Wyber (IFLA) and Jordi Pascual (UCLG) explained the proposal “The Culture Goal: from Necessity to Reality.” was presented in two meetings around MONDIACULT 2025. First, the release of the Proposal at the Civic Agora (and UCLG Culture meeting) on Saturday 27 September (see videos [here](#)), and then in an official side-event within MONDIACULT on Monday 29 September. The proposal is accompanied by a short explainer of the goal (an infographic entitled “The Culture Goal in Brief”), as well as “The Analytical Report on the Culture Goal, its Targets and Indicators”, that is, the complete analysis of the inputs contributed both through a survey and wider consultations.

In terms of overall messages from MONDIACULT 2025, the Declaration (officially, the Outcome Document) is perhaps weaker than the Steering Group of the campaign would have hoped. Indeed, some governments expressed regret about this in Barcelona, but the Outcome Document had already been finalised. On the negative side, there are still arguments about it not being the right time to promote a culture Goal, or doubt this more generally. More positively, the Declaration – as well as the background report – do at least contain (different) lists of themes that look somewhat like targets.

The UNESCO General Conference (held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan from 30 October to 13 November 2025) had been marked by concern about limited resources, but there had nonetheless been agreement to advance an international decade of culture for sustainable development.

Outside of UNESCO, we had seen some more intense discussions than usual around references to a Culture Goal in the G20 outputs, while the UN General Assembly Resolution on Culture and Development was being put to a vote for the first time ever. While it was potentially a positive that our issues are receiving attention, it also underlines that success will not be easy.

Questions focused on the importance of linking culture and nature, and pursuing nature-based approaches. It was noted that Target 8 of the campaign's goal indeed looked to do this. Matti Hakamaki (ICH – NGO Forum) noted the growing interest in the SDGs and support for a culture Goal among the intangible cultural heritage community, while Shireen Jaceen (WCCF) and Rainer Kern (GPM) pointed out that local governments remain very positive about the Goal.

2. LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

Stephen Wyber (IFLA) presented the draft plan for the year 2026, which includes suggested goals for the year:

- to be formally recognised as part of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders mechanism, and so take a more official role in processes around the SDGs
- to have engaged other groups and sectors within the SDGs space (example, key Major Groups such as the Indigenous Peoples, the Education and Academia, the Children and Youth, etc.)
- and to have identified a network of champions among UN Member States that are committed with the existence of the Culture Goal.

We also highlighted key considerations: that work towards the 2027 SDG Summit would likely start in 2026; that there has just been a change in management at UNESCO, and will be one at the UN; and that we have already a very strong proposal for the Culture Goal. The campaign will not need to produce a proposal... but it can be improved, if there was consensus, in 2026 and 2027. This does not stop other publications which would allow for a dialogue between the Goal and the issues promoted by other groups.

Finally, broad areas of action were proposed – promoting shadow reporting as well as the integration of culture into more Voluntary National Reviews; outreach to other stakeholder groups and potential joint activities; and engagement with Member States in order to identify potential champions.

Questions and comments highlighted the need to intensify work to promote the inclusion of culture in VNRs. We noted that countries identified as leaders so far in this have been Chile, Croatia, the EU, Guyana, Lithuania, and Portugal in 2023, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Oman, Palau, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in 2024, and the Federated States of Micronesia, Finland, Malta, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Seychelles, and Suriname in 2025.

Dorine van Norren noted that the language of Target 7, focused on promoting Indigenous governance of culture could be broader, underlining the merits of such approaches for everyone. It was noted that we should be clearer about the Targets being interconnected in order to make this connection clear. It was also recommended to explore closer alignment with the UN Harmony with Nature programme.

Yves Zimmermann (Strasbourg) noted early steps in some European countries to reflect on the shape of the post-2030 agenda, creating a moment to influence. There was agreement in France to run webinars to talk about experience with using a culture Goal at the municipal level.

There was the suggestion to organise a session at the 2026 World Urban Forum which could help inform and mobilise cities.

It was noted that there were other fora with relevance, such as COP. This would be held in Türkiye in 2026, and so locals were already active in preparing for this.

3. ACTIONS

The meeting leads committed to sharing a note of the meeting, and in turn invited participants to share their views on the [draft plan](#) (also in annex), as well as any experiences they had of promoting the goal, and what response they had received.

ANNEX

Draft Plan for 2026

By December 2026, we want to have:

- I Formed a stakeholder group.
- I Brought other stakeholder groups more effectively on board.
- I Have a solid group of supportive countries (both culture and foreign ministries).

Considerations for our work include:

- I We have a version of the culture goal which we probably do not need to revise so soon (maybe for 2027).
- I We are not sure about how supportive the new leadership at UNESCO and the UN will be - there is still resistance of course from among some Member States.
- I The process of preparing outcomes from the 2027 SDG Summit may well begin already in 2026.

Considerations for our work include:

- I Promote shadow reporting
 - Continue to engage cities in adopting an SDG18 approach.
 - Develop tools that Campaign members' members can use to shape national policy reforms.
 - Engage VNR countries, including through cooperation between Campaign members' members at national level.
- I Identify (inter)governmental champions and allies
 - Develop a programme of regular (but not too frequent) communications out to UN Missions and UNESCO Delegations in order to detect potential fans - use statements, short reports, event invitations as hooks.
 - Deliver on an engagement strategy with the new UNESCO leadership to ensure continuity in their level of support.
 - Monitor the place of culture in other UN/intergovernmental spaces (World Urban Forum etc), as well as engage the EU.
- I Build partner coalitions
 - Encourage engagement around Version 1, inviting relevant thinkers to respond and critique the goal as it is, and featuring partners in meetings.
 - Continue to push for Other Stakeholder status at the UN.

BACKGROUND

During the process of creation and adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, several global networks campaigned, under the banner ‘[The Future We Want Includes Culture](#)’, for the inclusion of one specific Goal devoted to Culture, and the integration of cultural aspects across the SDGs. In the context of this [#Culture2015goal](#) campaign, 4 documents were produced: a [Manifesto – Proposal for a Goal](#) (September 2013), a [Declaration on the inclusion of culture in the 2030 Agenda](#) (May 2014), a [proposal of indicators for measuring the cultural aspects of the SDGs](#) (February 2015), and a [Communiqué on the final 2030 Agenda](#) (September 2015) which highlighted “progress made” but also noticed that “important steps remain ahead”.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the [#Culture2030goal](#) campaign released on 20 April 2020 a Statement entitled “[Ensuring culture fulfils its potential in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)”, which was [officially launched](#) on 21 May 2020, on the occasion of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. The Statement has been [endorsed by the President of the United Nations General Assembly](#) and signed by more than 280 individuals and organisations worldwide.

The campaign has published two analytical (and critical) reports on the cultural dimension of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: “[Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda](#)”, analysing the National Voluntary Reviews, in 2019, and “[Culture in the Localization of the SDGs: An Analysis of the Voluntary Local Reviews \(VLRs\)](#)”, in 2021. The campaign has also promoted several discussions in the context of the [2020](#) and [2021](#) United Nations High-Level Political Fora (HLPF).

In 2021, the campaign published its [strategic vision](#). The campaign wants a stronger place for culture throughout the implementation of the current UN 2030 Agenda, the adoption of an explicit Goal for Culture in the Post-2030 Development Agenda, and the adoption of an ambitious and comprehensive Global Agenda for Culture.

In 2022, in the context of the UNESCO Global Conference on Cultural Policies organised in Mexico City, Mondiacult 2022, the campaign launched a [Zerodraft of a future Culture Goal](#), and welcomed the undertaking in the Final Declaration of the Conference to integrate a specific Culture Goal in the post-2030 development agenda, with the Statement “[Commitment to an explicit Culture Goal in MONDIACULT Declaration welcome: now is the time to deliver](#)”. In 2023, we have seen five key high-level, cross-governmental declarations that recognise the need for an explicit Culture Goal.

- I** First of all, on 23 August 2023, the leaders of the [BRICS group](#) committed to integrate culture into their national development policies as a driver and an enabler for the achievement of the SDGs.
- I** Second, on 9-10 September 2023, G20 heads of state and government released their [G20 Leaders Declaration](#) including a whole heading on culture as a transformative driver of the SDGs. In particular, they called to advance the inclusion of culture as a standalone Goal in future discussions on a possible post-2030 development agenda.

- I Third, all UN Member States, meeting at the [SDG Summit](#) on 18 September 2023, reaffirmed the role of culture as an enabler of sustainable development, contributing to more effective and sustainable development policies and measures at all levels.
- I The Ministers of Culture of the European Union adopted the [Caceres Declaration](#) on 26 September 2023, committing to work for culture to be recognised in and of itself as a new sustainable development goal.
- I The UCLG Culture Summit, on 30 November 2023, in the [Dublin Statement](#) reaffirmed the commitment of cities and local and regional governments in favour of a Culture Goal.

These declarations point to a strong and positive trend in favour of substantial efforts to integrate culture into development agendas.

In September 2024, the Ministers for Culture of the G7 released the [Ministerial Declaration “Culture, common good of humanity, common responsibility”](#), in which they commit to “promote the inclusion of culture as a standalone goal in future discussions on how to advance sustainable development beyond 2030”. Also in September 2024, the [UN Pact for the Future](#) committed “to protect and promote culture and sport as integral components of sustainable development” (article 11).

In 2025, the campaign published a detailed proposal of the Culture Goal, in “[The Culture Goal: from Necessity to Reality](#)”. This proposal was accompanied by “[The Analytical Report on the Culture Goal, its Targets and Indicators](#)”, that is, the complete analysis of the survey and the wide consultation undertaken by the campaign in 2024-2025. Also, the campaign published an infographic entitled “[The Culture Goal in Brief](#)”. These documents were released in September 2025, in Barcelona, in the frame of UNESCO’s Mondiacult, whose [Outcome Document](#) mentions the importance of a Culture Goal in the post-2030 development agenda.

The Culture2030Goal campaign and its members stand ready to accelerate work in this area, working in partnership with relevant actors at all levels. The campaign looks forward to leading cross-governmental work programmes around the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the Pact for the Future. This includes the exploration of the feasibility of a Major Group within the UN system, as well as a robust advocacy for a Culture Goal that includes UN member states as well as Major Groups and other stakeholders.



- I Arterial Network**
Web: www.arterialafrica.org



- I Culture Action Europe**
Web: www.cultureactioneurope.org



- I ICOM - International Council of Museums**
Web: www.icomos.org



- I ICOMOS - International Council on Monuments and Sites**
Web: www.icomos.org



- I IFCCD - International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity**
Web: www.ficdc.org



- I IFLA - International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions**
Web: www.ifla.org



- I IMC - International Music Council**
Web: www.imc-cim.org



- I UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) Committee on Culture - Agenda 21 for culture**
Web: www.agenda21culture.net



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NO FUTURE
WITHOUT CULTURE

Culture 2030 Goal Campaign:
Contact: info@culture2030goal.net
www.culture2030goal.net

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