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**CONCEPT NOTE ON THE THEME AND SUB-THEMES OF THE  
AFRICAN DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DAY (ADD)  
2021 edition**

**THEME: « THE CONTRIBUTION OF ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE TO THE  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN CITIES AND TERRITORIES »**

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Security (DPAPS)  
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the African Union Assembly held in February 2020 declared 2021 AU Year for the Arts, Culture and Heritage, recognizing the latter as levers for building the Africa We Want.

The 5<sup>th</sup> aspiration of the African Union Agenda 2063 envisages on its part an Africa with strong cultural identity, values and ethics, which strengthening is a critical factor for the emergence of Africa on the global stage.

Arts, Culture and Heritage are at the heart of building the sense of the cultural unity of the African people and their consciousness for their common destiny. In fact, African people have a high sense of family and community belonging, that makes them consider solidarity and Ubuntu value as their DNA. Ubuntu value affirms that “I am because we are, you are because I am”. This intrinsic linkage between the individual and the group is what is at the basis of the sense of solidarity that is spread out across Africa as one of the most solid shared value of the African people.

Arts, Culture and Heritage characterize specific places, cities and territories. They however also contribute to and participate in the world heritage and the culture of the universal, for which UNESCO has developed and maintains a world heritage registry. Any site included in the UNESCO world heritage registry have obviously an advantage in terms of attractiveness in the tourism market. That is why many countries and cities across the world are striving to get their tangible and intangible heritage classified in the UNESCO world heritage registry.

Furthermore arts, culture and creative industries form part of a globalized market worth 2,500 billion dollars yearly. The contribution of African cultural and creative industries is growing in the total economic activity of the continent with 20 to 23 billion dollars in annual exports of the African continent, but this represents only 1% of the global total of the industry.

By declaring 2021 the Year of Arts Culture and Heritage in Africa, the Africa Union wishes that member states recognize the contribution of professionals of the sector of arts, culture and heritage in the development and radiance of the African continent. It equally wants that Africa takes its rightful share in the global turnover of the cultural and creative industries. It finally wishes that the sector contributes to building self-esteem and pride of the African people.

## **BACKGROUND**

The call by Heads of State and government of the African Union to consider 2021 as the Year to put emphasis on arts, culture and heritage could not have happened at a worst moment. In fact, during the year 2020 the world was stroke by the COVID-19 pandemic that hit very severely the cultural sector. In almost all countries the world over, cultural activities were suspended or strictly restricted. The sector witnessed its most severe crisis in recent years, and this situation is still prevailing during the first part of 2021.

To try and address this crisis, the sector has accelerated its digitalization. Digital platforms are being developed to host virtual museums, art or photography exhibitions; broadcast films or music; or deliver lectures and training courses in the area of

literature, arts, culture and heritage. To that end a new creative infrastructure is being developed that will increasingly support the cultural and creative industries, especially so since no one knows when the pandemic will be behind us.

Three elements should however be considered in order to take full advantage of this new creative infrastructure: the availability of a physical and payment infrastructure to allow the cultural and creative content to reach the consumers and the latter to pay for it; the development of an ecosystem of investors and entrepreneurs willing to develop and promote, literature, arts, cultural and creative industries, and heritage; and an enabling legal and regulatory landscape.

The physical infrastructure is developing fast in Africa, including the smartphone infrastructure. Africa has one of the fastest growing and popular mobile phone-based payment systems in the world. Also, the newly established African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers a unique opportunity for the expansion of infra-African trade, including in the area of digital platforms to market African cultural and creative products. The only limitation to this dynamic is the poor enabling and regulatory environment which explains why Africa is still lagging behind in this area.

## **OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE OF THE AFRICAN DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DAY (ADD)**

In June 2014, the Heads of State and Government meeting at their Summit in Malabo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea, adopted the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development. This Charter is a genuine unifying instrument adopted by the leaders of African States at the highest level, with a view to encouraging the implementation of decentralized and democratic governance policies in the management of public affairs, in accordance with the stated hared fundamental values of the African Union.

The provisions of the Charter are therefore resolutely consistent with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and are framed in such a way to ensure that the policies defined at continental level have a concrete impact on the populations at the level of cities and territories.

The Charter, in its article 20 paragraph 4, institutes the commemoration of the African Decentralization and Local Development Day (ADD) on 10 August each year. The celebration of the ADD by all AU Member States is organized under the authority of the Sub-Committee on Decentralization and Local Development of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee No. 8 (AU-STC Nb 8) including the African ministers of public service, urban development and local governments and decentralization.

The theme chosen for the celebration of the ADD is based on the theme of the year defined by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. The Heads of State and Government of the African Union have defined 2021 as the Year of arts, culture and heritage in Africa. In line with this choice, the theme proposed for the celebration of the Africa Decentralization and Local Development Day in 2021 is: “***The contribution of arts, culture and heritage in the sustainable development of African cities and territories***”.

The celebration aims to:

- sensitize and inform the general public;
- share positive experiences and good practices among Member States; but also

- recognize and encourage cities and territories that excel in the implementation of remarkable actions in the area of arts, culture and heritage.

## **JUSTIFICATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE SUB-THEMES**

Cities and territories are places where African culture, arts and heritage are supposed to produce the full potential of African creativity. In reality however most African cities and territories do not pay sufficient attention to the arts, culture and heritage sector. It is seldom to find African cities that have defined and are implementing cultural policies. Many do not even have a clear knowledge of the potential of their culture and heritage. Most of them hardly support the professionals operating in the sector of arts, culture or creative industries. Despite the huge prospects arts and culture represent in African cities in terms of job creation, market value or tourism attractiveness, few African cities are yet to understand how they can tap into this potential to market their territories. The celebration of the Africa Decentralization and Local Development Day offers therefore to African cities and territories the opportunity to reflect on the following subthemes:

***Subtheme 1: Using art and culture as levers for social inclusion and for the promotion of the sense of belonging and oneness in African cities and territories***

***Subtheme 2: Mobilizing the energy of youth to boost the contribution of cultural and creative industries in job creation and sustainable development of African cities and territories***

***Subtheme 3: Developing activities around cultural heritage as a way to build city identity and to promote city branding and territorial marketing***

Members states can choose anyone of the three subthemes for the celebration or address two or the three of them. Given the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended that the celebration is envisioned mainly in a hybrid format, with part of the activities organized online. The celebration should also be an occasion to renew the relations between the city authorities and the artists and professionals of cultural and creative industries, in order to recognize their contribution to the life of the city. Particular emphasis should be put on the contribution of women and youth.

It is expected that member states submit a report on the way the ADD was organized, highlighting the theme and/or Sub-themes retained, the agenda of the activities conducted and the number and quality of participants in these activities, as well as the conclusions and recommendations adopted. This report should be submitted no later than 11 October 2021 to the AU-STC 8 Secretariat:

### **African Union Commission**

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