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Parallel event

YOUTH FORUM

Summary prepared by the Conference secretariat

1. The Youth Forum discussed the main challenges and prospects for LDCs in the music industry by examining the important new trading opportunities that the music industry presents in the economic development of LDCs. It was noted that, since 1980, cultural industries in general have increased their share in global trade. More specifically, the music share of global trade, in cultural industries has grown by 50 per cent. In order to maximize their growth, coherent action should be taken to enable LDCs to benefit from the opportunities this presents.
2. It was pointed out that LDCs have a distinct comparative advantage in cultural assets and in particular in musical traditions and folk heritage. The challenge for LDCs is to transfer this into marketable products. Several speakers addressed the critical barriers for commercial development in these countries and the initiatives that were needed to facilitate the development of the music industry, in particular, the importance of sustainable efforts in musical education, specialized business skills and access to radio and TV platforms. The role of professional musicians' associations and professional music-business professional associations was stressed and it should be complemented by effective institutional and legal mechanisms. Public intervention is considered critical in a number of areas: HRD (formal and informal training for artists); education; regulatory framework for copyright protection; public broadcasting as a platform for artist promotion; assisting with the establishment of basic production and publishing facilities; promotion of private/public partnerships; and public policies that support and promote private sector investment in the music industry.
3. The Youth Forum reviewed the new important trading opportunities for LDCs to exploit their creativity in international commercial markets, as well as the difficulties they experience

in accomplishing this task. The potential for electronic commerce in digital networks was highlighted, allowing consumers in the developed world, in theory, to discover new creations from anywhere in the world. A prerequisite for success, however, is strong, efficient, transparent intermediaries looking after the interests of creators, collecting and distributing revenues. The dangers of the concentration of rights ownership, manufacturing and distribution in the global music industry were echoed by several speakers. The extended period of copyright protection (to 70 years in both the European Union and the United States) seemed to be driving the process of mergers and could have a negative effect on diversity. There is a critical need for more research in this area, as well as for closer local and regional collaboration between academia, Government and those active in cultural industries.

4. The need to strengthen copyright regimes in LDCs and thereby fight piracy was highlighted. Serious concern was expressed however that mergers between influential actors in the Internet arena with content owners could threaten diversity, and thereby the ability of creators in the LDCs to reach out worldwide. Countries such as India have been quick to adopt laws covering digital storage and distribution. In music, the big driver was Indian film music – most music consumption was national material. Piracy rates have shown an impressive decrease. Combating piracy is the main objective of the “younger” music copyright societies in South Africa. But it is an uphill climb. One problem has been the refusal of some major collecting societies to sign reciprocal agreements allowing African societies to deduct a 10 per cent collection for social and cultural purposes (allowed under CISAC rules). Such funds are critical during this infancy period. In some LDCs, it is almost impossible to establish a functioning collection society due to lack of funds and outdated laws. This encourages many talented creators to emigrate, thus depleting the respective LDCs of their vital cultural and economic assets.

5. Furthermore, the discussion focused on the national and international dynamics of the music industry and their implications for repertoires and creative practices of musicians. A critical issue concerned the role of major companies and their potential to impede or facilitate musical creativity and the development of markets within which a diversity of styles may flourish. It was particularly instructive to balance the critical comments of musicians, music-business entrepreneurs and academia. For example, what is known as “Brazilian music” is not necessarily identical to the music that is played daily on the radio in Brazil. Successful international artists from LDCs are culturally, politically and economically important; they can become ambassadors for their countries (perhaps more influential than politicians) and can instil a sense of pride in the population. This in turn can help to direct the energies of youth toward more positive uses.

6. Best practices and policies in a number of successful case studies, such as Ireland, Brazil, India, Sweden and Senegal, were studied with a view to emulating other countries’ more successful experiences in the music industry. The main conclusion of the Youth Forum was that music is of crucial significance to a country’s political, economic, cultural and social life and that this industry should be central to the economic and social policies of LDCs.