

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture**

24 January 2023

Celebrated every 24 January, the World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture marks the African Union's adoption of the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance on this date in 2006. In its preamble, the Charter says, "the African peoples were able to find in African culture the necessary strength for resistance and the liberation of the continent".

On this World Day, it is not simply a single, individual culture which we are celebrating, but a multitude of cultures of exceptional diversity. We are also honouring artists from every country and in every field – from film, music and dance to fashion and design, all creative industries which sustain artists – in order to foster the African cultural renaissance.

Notably, within the framework of Global Priority Africa, UNESCO is committed to cultivating this enormous creative potential.

This is what we are doing, for example, in the film and audiovisual industry. UNESCO's publication of the first-ever comprehensive mapping of the industry in Africa was followed by the establishment of strategic recommendations to help the sector fulfil its potential. In partnership with the Nara Residency, an artists' residency which every year hosts, and supports the work of, young African women filmmakers, our organization also encourages African women directors with a view to ensuring that Africa's female voices can participate fully in this cultural renaissance.

The safeguarding of the cultural heritage and practices of African and Afrodescendant communities is also a key priority for UNESCO.

Thus, in order for the true value of African heritage to be recognized and for their nomination proposals to be submitted, we are providing, by 2030, technical assistance to all 12 African countries which do not yet have any properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.

It is also in this spirit that we are increasing our training for African heritage professionals and that we are combatting the illicit traffic of cultural property throughout the world.

The arts, customs and traditions of peoples of African descent also bear the legacy of everything which African culture has given to the world, in its myriad manifestations, such as the Cuban rumba, whose roots lie in the Congolese rumba; both musical genres are inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. And we cannot fail to mention jazz, born in the southern United States, a musical style whose rhythms and cadences, inspired by West African melodies, have embodied the fight against racism and discrimination.

This day is therefore an opportunity to pay tribute to a veritable treasure trove of diverse cultures and to the commitment of those who bring them to life. To paraphrase the Martinican writer Aimé Césaire, culture is everything which humans have imagined in order to shape the world, to make the best of the world and to bring dignity to the world.