

**ROAD TO THE 2021 NANJING
PEACE FORUM A SUB-REGIONAL
DIALOGUE**

Session Report



19 October 2021

Organizer:
UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office

Venue:
ZOOM Platform

The Session. *Cultural heritage and creative industries: Build our peaceful future from the heritage of the past* organized by UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office was held on 19 October 2021.

The Session of 2021 Nanjing Peace Forum in Central Asia and South Caucasus was dedicated to the demonstration of connections between cultural heritage and creative industries that can foster intercultural dialogue and peace building in the sub-region and allow young people to use innovation and creativity to use the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and creative industries to build peaceful and resilient societies.

Conducting the event was directed to the achievements below results:

- Ensure that young women and men have access to information about common cultural heritage to foster intercultural dialogue among youth networks in the region;
- Ensure that the Agenda underscores the importance of managing cultural diversity and achieving a rapprochement of cultures as a prerequisite for creating and sustaining peace;
- Positive values will be strengthened amongst participants through an intercultural communication that combats cultural stereotypes and prejudices and brings people closer to each other;
- A cross-regional youth dialogue will be developed to facilitate rapprochement and cooperation around the common historic, cultural and human interests and values.

More than 80 participants attended the session from Central Asia, various parts of Eurasia reflecting the diverse background, age, organizations, professions, and activities of the participants.

The session moderator was *Ms. Arina Myassoyed*, SHS, UNESCO Almaty Office.

In an Opening Speech, *Ms. Krista Pikkat*, Director UNESCO Almaty Office, noted that the Cluster Office in Almaty was glad to join the Nanjing Peace Forum. She welcomed the session participants and highlighted the importance of the promotion of the dialogue and peacebuilding measures that are focused on and engage the youth. Youth are willing to become UNESCO partners, and UNESCO gives them this opportunity to become the agents of change in a world.

Ms Pikkat also noted that the topic of cultural heritage will always remain relevant, since our heritage predetermines our identity, understanding of our origin and integrity. It allows us to be open to dialogue with others. The knowledge about our culture and heritage allows us to better interpret this world and triggers curiosity in us to learn more about other cultures and their possible relationship with ours.

However, in a rapidly changing world following technological progress and digital education the preservation of cultural heritage is increasingly relegated to the background and that entails irreparable consequences - the neglect of the value of cultural heritage for future generations. If tangible cultural heritage objects are protected by us from armed conflicts and destruction, when it comes to intangible cultural heritage, including our traditions, customs, forms of self-expression, knowledge and skills that are passed down from generation to generation, happen to be under the threat of digitalization brought by youth, trends in social networks and decreasing attention to the heritage of their own cultures. Thus, the mandate of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage that aims to preserve this fragile heritage, ensure its viability and create an environmental to fully unleash its potential for the benefits of sustainable development becomes more and more significant.

Concluding her remarks Ms Pikkat thanked her colleagues from the UNESCO Office in Beijing, China's National Commission for UNESCO, the Information Office of the Jiangsu Provincial Government and the Nanjing Municipal Government for the invitation to participate and the opportunity to contribute to the global dialogue.

She also expressed her gratitude to all the speakers who have joined the session today to share their experiences and knowledge with young people.

After that the session moderator Ms Arina Myassoyed gave the floor to Maria/Mimi Ilnitskaya. Ms Ilnitskaya is a painter, illustrator, creator of her own trademark (brand), who graduated from the National Academy of Arts named after Zhurgenov and the Kazakh Leading Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture.

Ms Ilnitskaya in her speech drew down on the hands-on practical experience from her art related work and demonstrated her vision of how Kazakh culture with its centuries-old tradition can successfully and in a conflict free basis exist in an increasingly globalized world. In her speech, she emphasized that digital technologies having enormous communication potential and erasing material boundaries between people from different countries and continents, do not harm or prejudice national culture, but on the contrary. With a competent approach, correct motivation and talent, they are able to open up the opportunity to broadcast and actualize in the course of constant contact with the outside world the ancient cultural codes of Kazakh traditions, breathing life and bringing into everyday routine bits of history by that establishing a strong connection between the present and the past while helping to face the future with confidence.

After giving the floor to the forum moderator Ms Ilnitskaya invited everyone to her workshop to exchange experience and ideas with young creators. This invitation boosted considerable excitement among the audience that blew up the chat with the words of support and gratitude.

The opening remarks session has ended and Ms Arina Myassoyed introduced the first speaker Ms Elina Altynbekova, expert in graphic reconstruction, a member of the well-known full cycle laboratory of works on conservation, restoration and scientific reconstruction of historical monuments and culture "The Island of Crimea", who graduated from the Kazakh Leading Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Hermitage School of Restoration.

Ms Altynbekova spoke in detail about what historical reconstruction was and about its role in the preservation of cultural heritage of the nation on the example of the work of "The Island of Crimea" laboratory on the reconstruction of the so-called Urzhar priestess. The speaker made a special emphasis on the scientific validity and the ability of the re-enactor to combine seemingly disparate facts into a coherent picture, thus breathing life into seemingly long dead matter. Ms Altynbekova also emphasized the role of modern technologies in the analysis of the artifacts obtained and in close cooperation with representatives of archaeological science.

Then the speaker responded to a portion of the bunch of questions addressed to her in the chat regarding the general aspects of conducting such type of works.

Ms Myassoyed introduced the next speaker - the famous Tajik film director, screenwriter, a graduate of the London Film School, a laureate of international film competitions, including the Best Director Award at the New York Film Festival for the author's debut film "The Crying of Tanbur", co-organizer and director of the online platform "Tajik Culture Online" engaged in presenting the culture of Tajikistan and its historical heritage on the vastness of the world wide web, - Ms Anisa Sabiri.

Ms Sabiri spoke about her understanding of history and how it interacts with the present. Expressing her concerns about the current trends in treating the historical past (when a human being seeks to bring himself into history, and not to perceive the present as part of an ongoing process with all its multiple layers and contradictions) opposing them with her activity as an artist and the activity of her colleagues, peers sharing the online platform as well as those creative methods that are at the heart of her work. During her speech *Ms Sabiri* said: “I am primarily interested in the present, our present, and I will explain why. Cultural practice first of all is the archeology of looking for one's own identity, the work on placing oneself in the local world and the global one.” She also explained why and how she actualizes history with the help of cinematic idiom (*Ms Sabiri*'s words literally: “memory restoration by means of a filmdocument”) and digital technologies while preserving cultural heritage in the now and not turning it into a soulless monument.

After the moderator spoke about *Ms Cholpon Tentiyeva*, an art expert and deputy director of the Kyrgyz National Museum of Art named after *Gapar Aitiyev*, the founder of the creative group OYOUM and the online school “Znak Solntsa” (The Sign of the Sun), giving the floor to her. Thanks to *Ms Tentiyeva*'s work in Kyrgyzstan the level of cultural awareness has been raised. For instance during the COVID-19 pandemic last year *Ms Cholpon Tentiyeva* launched an online project allowing people in isolation to be able to immerse themselves in the world of fine art and even take on the role of artists and art experts.

The speaker informed about an integrated approach on attracting a larger audience into the museum space by expanding its digital walls. With the active use of all kinds of media in the form of social networks, as well as the use of the museum as a platform where communication is possible using the language of contemporary art on the most pressing topics, be it the cult of consumption or the environmental agenda, by appealing to folklore and customs, thereby contributing to the revival of cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz nation and making it an integral part of today both within the boundaries of Kyrgyz Republic and beyond.

Afterwards *Ms Myassoyed* introduced to the audience *Ms Shirin Melikova*, the art expert and curator of many major art exhibitions and festivals, lecturer at leading textile museums and universities around the world, Director of the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum in Baku, and the Chairman of the Azerbaijan National Committee ICOM where many innovative museum projects originated, including the first inclusive programs in the country.

Ms Melikova shared the experience of the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum in the area of cooperation with contemporary painters and young fashion designers with a view to popularize the art of carpet weaving which is a landmark activity for the traditional culture of Azerbaijan. And if in the first case it was about the continuation of the tradition that has developed over the centuries by enriching it, in particular, in this example, it was about the development of an absolutely new previously unknown pattern designed by a master of the twenty-first century, but expressed within the framework of traditional applied art in full accordance with its canons. In the second case, an attempt was made to transfer the content into a new form and in a different format. The carpet as a canvas gave way to a product on the high fashion catwalk. The audiences based on both examples had an opportunity to convince themselves that the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan is not only alive but developing without compromising its relevance nowadays.

After a minor technical hitch the moderator *Ms Arina Myassoyed* gave the floor to the Uzbek film director and painter *Ms Saodat Ismailova*, whose feature-length debut “40 Days of Silence” was first shown at the Berlin Film Festival and was supported by the Cannes Film Festival, the French Cinematography Center, the Sundance Institute, becoming the first Uzbek film that have received such widespread international support and attention.

Ms Ismailova prior to engaging herself in talking about the projects selected by her to be presented at the meeting identified the main issue for herself as the author and the artist. Echoing the words of *Ms Ismailova* this issue can be defined as the loss of intergenerational knowledge that carries in itself, not only on the spiritual level, but also bodily, in the form of aromas and tastes, a certain idea of how the world is arranged and where there is a place for a human being in this complex system expressed by means of those layers of national art that make up the cultural heritage of not only the Uzbek people, but the entire Central Asian region. And therefore, in both cases whether it is a stage performance based on the epic "kyrk kyz" (forty ladies) or a social project "Makhalya Sorok" the main task that the painter and creator *Ms Ismailova* pursued was building up the process of restoring the lost transmission chain of the earlier mentioned intergenerational knowledge and consequently to continue with that special form of spiritual life in the anything but simple technology driven world of new millennium.

By concluding the session *Ms Myassoyed* expressed the participants' opinion saying that the content of the event was relevant and timely. The discussion platform allowed its participants, young people, to expand the boundaries of awareness on the issues being discussed and provided them with new impetus to use their creative and their cultural heritage to build more peaceful and tolerant societies.

