



Culture, heritage and arts in Africa and its relationship with human rights

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Summary:

The AU choose “Arts, Culture and Heritage: levers for Building Africa We Want” as its theme for 2021. The idea of the theme was inspired by the fact that Africa has all forms of cultural diversity, such as arts, crafts, folklore, religion, clothes, food, music, language, and other forms. It is also rich in cultural diversity, which was found not only across different countries but also within the single country. Consequently, the African Union (AU) has recognized the role that arts, culture and heritage can play as a catalyst for the socio-economic development and integration of the African continent. To that effect, the preservation of valued African property such as historic buildings, artwork, books/manuscripts, and other artifacts that passed down from previous generations will take center stage henceforth as the AU strives to uphold these values by dedicating an entire year.

There were many international, regional and local attempts - at the level of African countries - to legalize the African heritage, culture, and art protection. For example, the UNESCO issued nearly six conventions and treaties in the second half of the twentieth century regarding the protection of African heritage, as follows: The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the 1970 Convention against Illicit Trade in Cultural Property, the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 1989 UNESCO Convention on Technical and Vocational Education, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and finally the 2005 Convention To protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions. On the regional level, the African Union and its Committee on Human Rights have issued the African Commission on Human and Peoples 'Rights several charters within the framework of African cultural diversity and trying to protect and develop it, such as the Cultural Charter for Africa 1976, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) 1981 and the African Cultural Renaissance 2006. However, these charters and agreements texts included some shortcomings, such as neglecting the indigenous peoples' rights to enjoy their culture and protect their heritage. In addition to not focusing on the heritage and culture role in social and cultural development. Moreover, there is no global agreement on the protection of cultural property during national political conflicts, since many African countries with well-recognized cultural heritage suffer from a political conflict that can undermine the sustainable existence of



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cultural heritage. Culture has played a marginal role in SDG 2030 agenda. So, it is a weak reference because it is not specific to cultural heritage; none of the 17 SDGs focus on cultural heritage. The goals associated with it is Goal 11, Target 4, Goal 4, Target 7, and Targets 8.9 and 12.b, with Target 7 in Goal 14, and Target 16.3, 16.8, and 16b, they focused on the protection and preservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage.

Targets deal only with the cultural heritage protection and safeguards without reference to its valorization or regeneration, especially the fourth goal. The urban agenda also recognizes cultural heritage as a key factor for sustainable urban development. However, many points highlight the role of cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) in sustainable urban development, to promote and implement sustainable consumption. African countries tried to exploit this cultural heritage in their economic development, in particular, some of which are summarized as follows:

- Tunisia is distinguished in the field of tourism development. It turned into a tourist oasis that attracts large markets. Tunisia succeeded in using its cultural and environmental heritage represented in cities, historical city centers, heritage buildings, desert archaeological sites, and many palaces. Tunisia takes measures aimed at divers the tourism product through a governmental interest to make heritage economic, social, and cultural development elements. Tunisia implements plans for urban heritage protection and preservation through a partnership with all government sectors, interest in the scientific aspect, and interest in crafts and traditional industries.
- Egypt has succeeded in registering handmade weaving in Upper Egypt on the UNESCO Urgent Protection Lists. It succeeded in exploiting it in the country's economic development. It is a step in the Egyptian government's plan implementation to exploit cultural heritage in continuous development through the Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs efforts. Despite the distinctive role of heritage, culture, and art in African socio-



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economic development, it may be a reason for violated human rights. The African continent is a home to hundreds of different ethnicities that exist not only across countries but within the same country. For example, the violation of indigenous people's rights in Benishangul to protect their cultural heritage. The assassination of Ethiopian singer Hachalu Hundessa's has had a remarkable effect on free expression. Also, religious sectarian helps in violate human rights in Central Africa.

Based on the foregoing, Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights recommends African countries to amend their legislation and sign international and regional agreements. As for the sustainable development agenda, it recommended that countries cooperate to benefit from the experiences of successful countries in exploiting their heritage in their local development. And it recommends them to expedite the inventory, development, and valuation of archaeological sites because of their distinctive role in tourism development. Finally, Maat stressed the need for providing adequate compensation for cultural violation victims, and enactment a legal framework to protect them from violations.