



Interventions on Culture and Climate Action and Culture, Heritage and Crisis

Interventions at Parallel Session on Culture and Climate Action and Culture, Heritage and Crisis by Mr. Eirikur í Jákupsstovu, Minister of Social Affairs and Culture of the Faroe Islands, at MONDIACULT 2025 on 30 September 2025.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to UNESCO, to the Government of Spain, the Government of Catalonia and to the City of Barcelona for hosting Mondiacult. This conference is a vital reminder of our shared responsibility to place culture at the centre of global cooperation.

When we speak of climate action, we must also speak of culture. Culture shapes the way people live with nature, the choices we make as communities, and the values that guide our response to crisis.

Cultural resilience, understood as the capacity of a community or society to sustain, adapt, and transmit its identity, values, knowledge, and practices in the face of disruption, constitutes a cornerstone of environmental resilience.

In the Faroe Islands, an island nation in the North Atlantic, culture and nature are inseparable. For centuries, our way of life has depended on a close relationship with the land and the sea. The traditional clinker boat—a tradition now inscribed on UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity—was for centuries the only means of transport between the islands and the foundation of our fisheries. Though those times are long past, the Faroese clinker boat remains a cherished symbol of identity, and the ability to read the land, the ocean, and the weather continues to be a highly valued skill in modern life.

This living heritage is not only something to be safeguarded — it also serves as a vital resource for adaptation and resilience.

Climate change presents significant risks to coastal cultural heritage, including impacts from sea-level rise, erosion, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Enhancing the resilience of these heritage sites requires a combination of physical protection measures and adaptive management approaches that safeguard their historical and cultural significance, making it an urgent political priority.

Just last week, I visited a local land restoration project where ecologists and botanists from the National Museum work hand in hand with local farmers and

schoolchildren to restore areas damaged by heavy rainfall and landslides. The lesson is clear: dialogue between those who use the land and the experts in biodiversity and conservation is essential — and it works. It shows how cultural institutions, schools, local communities, and climate action can meet on common ground to shape solutions together.

The knowledge and practices of local communities — whether in the North Atlantic or in societies worldwide — must be recognised as part of our global toolbox for climate adaptation.

For the Faroe Islands — as indeed everywhere in the world — culture and climate actions are closely linked, since cultural practices both shape and are shaped by the environment they depend on.

In times of crisis, culture and heritage play a crucial role in sustaining identity, continuity, and resilience. This cannot be achieved in isolation — it requires cooperative frameworks at local, national, and international levels.

The cultural Conventions of UNESCO are central in this respect. They provide a normative basis for cooperation — frameworks through which communities and countries can share knowledge, mobilize resources, and protect both tangible and intangible heritage.

When schools, archives, museums, religious and spiritual heritage are destroyed or neglected, communities lose more than buildings — they lose anchors of meaning and belonging. The implementation of the Hague Convention and its Protocols is therefore a powerful tool: to safeguard cultural property, to prevent its deliberate targeting, and to ensure that heritage remains a foundation for recovery and reconciliation.

Protecting the diversity of cultural expressions in times of crisis is not only about memory — it is about identity, dignity, and the possibility of recovery.

The right to one's own language is a fundamental part of cultural rights. It enables communities to transmit knowledge, values, and traditions across generations. Protecting culture, heritage, and linguistic rights is therefore essential not only for safeguarding diversity but also for strengthening societal resilience in the face of global challenges.

I warmly congratulate the organizers for their successful effort in including Catalan as an official language of this conference. As a speaker of Faroese — a language

preserved for centuries through oral tradition and today spoken and written by some 70,000 people — I feel a profound connection to this important question of linguistic recognition and cultural resilience.

At the Side-Event hosted by the Nordic Countries and Co-hosted by the Nordic Council of Ministers earlier today, the panellists presented some very inspiring points. Abdullah Alkafri, Executive Director and Co-founder of Ettijahat-Independent Culture spoke of Artistic freedom as an early warning system: The crucial role of artists in expressing societal tensions before they escalate into open conflict, and how protecting artistic freedom strengthens societies.

It is strikingly relevant that the Faroese National Theatre's latest production is based on German theatre practitioner, playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht's *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*. A play that shows how fear, suspicion and oppression marked every aspect of society under the regime.

Culture is anchored in our societies as a pillar of just, peaceful, inclusive and sustainable development — and in times of crisis, culture becomes a lifeline.

Thank you.