

Speech by UNESCO's Representative
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Deputy Assistant Director-General for Culture
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Enterprise

2004 UNESCO/IMC Prize
(Aachen, Germany – 28 October 2004)

Mr Jürgen Linden, Mayor of Aachen

Mr Kifah Fakhouri, President of the International Music Council

Excellencies

Mr Youssou N'Dour

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is both an honour and a pleasure to represent the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Koichiro Matsuura, at the UNESCO/ICM award ceremony to pay tribute to one of the greatest African contemporary musicians of our time, Mr Youssou N'Dour.

Youssou N'Dour, for you, as for the greatest musicians, music is altogether an art, a language allowing communication among peoples, a pedagogy, a prayer, and also a means of enjoying life and loving humanity.

You have been using your music for tolerance and anti-racism, for arts education, understanding between cultures, as well as for arising critical awareness regarding major issues on the continent to which you belong.

To me what links together all these issues is the common struggle for freedom: Freedom of thinking, freedom of being, freedom of learning, freedom of creating: freedom in a nutshell. What keeps

peoples from a better understanding between Western and African societies is definitively a lack of freedom in their lives.

Your attempt to have these two cultures dialoguing through music was materialized by the creation of a new musical style, known as M'balak, which deliberately mixes European and Wolof folk songs. Through this endeavour your purpose is to perpetuate, to carry on, to pursue promoting an artistic dialogue between African and Western music. Do I need to remind us that this goal was attained a century earlier by those musicians and group of musicians who started to work in this very direction. I am referring, of course, to those musicians who first introduced new musical styles to the world, such as Jazz in America, Tango in Argentina, Reggae in Jamaica, Son in Cuba, to mention the most important of the 20th century.

Your contribution to the promotion of a new vision and a better understanding between these two cultures is directly in line with the goals of your glorious predecessors.

There is however another side to your musical message, which in my opinion is equally important as the one I have just referred to. It is your contribution to create new forms of music based on musical tradition with a multicultural approach. Through your collaboration with other contemporary outstanding musicians, Peter Gabriel, Sting, Neneh Cherry, Wyclef Jean, there is a rewarded attempt to pursue a tradition in music, aiming at promoting multi-cultural patterns, enriching dialogue, contributing to the creation of wider musical repertoires, as well as participating into a global undertaking to make people aware of other art forms and cultures.

Your goals overlap and meet UNESCO's one in many fields. For instance you are certainly informed that UNESCO has undertaken a very important task in promoting cultural diversity. Today we are in the process of drafting a normative instrument entitled Towards a Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions. As a start, our Organization launched last year the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*.

Please allow me to read Article 7 of the Universal Declaration relating to creativity, which focuses on contemporary creation and reads as follows:

"Creation draws on the roots of cultural tradition, but flourishes in contact with other cultures. For this reason, heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations, so as to foster creativity in all its diversity and to inspire genuine dialogue among cultures."

This article speaks for itself and I trust that it describes your own artistic and creative endeavour.

As I said it before UNESCO devotes its work and programmes to the same aims and objectives as yours. Another example is our programme in the field of arts education for children and adolescents as an important tool for democratising the arts and promoting quality education or our action in favour of developing working conditions for professional musicians. I am sure that the titles of programmes that I have evoked are meaningful to you.

Having experienced what music can bring to people's lives, children or adults, and being a fervent defender of childhood through your most remarkable contribution to UNICEF, I trust that you will also be sensitive to UNESCO's concerns, related to the promotion of the arts and creativity.

I am particularly pleased to congratulate you for winning this prize, which, since 1975, has been awarded to the most important composers, musicians, musicologists, institutions and educators of our time. It is also an honour to welcome you in our UNESCO/IMC Family.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Permit me also to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the International Music Council, its President, Mr Kifah Fakhouri, its Secretary-General, my friend Mr Damien Pwono, and the Director of Programmes, Mrs Silja Fischer. Their devotion to music and to its international cause is to be strengthened and supported.

My warmest thanks also go to the International Jury for their hard work and their interest in UNESCO's programme related to music.

Last, but not least, möchte ich mich besonders an die Stadt Aachen und Sie, sehr verehrte Damen und Herren, wenden, die der UNESCO und dem Internationalen Musikrat, dank des weitsichtigen Engagements von Herrn Oberbürgermeister Dr. Jürgen Linden, seit zehn Jahren den einzigartigen Rahmen dieser Preisverleihung mit finanzieller Unterstützung von Sponsoren ermöglichen.

Aachen platziert sich damit an die Spitze von Städten, welche die Begegnung von Kulturen und den interkulturellen Dialog in das Zentrum der Strategie Ihrer nachhaltigen Entwicklung stellen. Diese Belangen sind für die Zukunft einer Stadt heute genauso wichtig wie wirtschaftliche Impulse.

Diese Beispielwirkung Aachens kann nicht genügend unterstrichen werden.

Vielen Dank!

Thank you!

Merci