

International Network on Cultural Policy (INCP)

Organization: International Network on Cultural Policy (INCP)

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Date Entered: 2005-05-06

Description Based in Ottawa, Canada, the International Network on Cultural Policy (INCP) was founded in 1998 to provide an ongoing venue for the discussion of cultural policy issues by national culture ministers. The INCP currently boasts sixty-four member nations and will hold its seventh annual ministerial meeting in the fall of 2005 in Shanghai, China. Significantly, the United States has not been invited to join the organization.

The INCP was formed in response to the perceived threat posed by (American) mass culture to global cultural diversity. Members of the INCP believe that cultural diversity within states (and thus the value of plurality of cultures or multiculturalism) and across states is an essential element of cultural and social development. In a globalizing world, where people and cultural forms move across long distances and affect most societies, recognizing and valuing cultural diversity becomes key to building strong democracies as well. Accordingly, the INCP has sought to raise awareness about the importance of cultural diversity and the special role played by culture in human development, and has worked to keep culture "on the table" in international policy-making.

Part of the impetus of the INCP comes from the fact that some of the major international trade agreements of the contemporary globalizing period such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) treaties make no provision for the special status of the cultural sector in fostering local forms of cultural expression and production. Rather, they push in the direction of seeing culture as a commodity and one that should be thus subject to liberalizing trade rules. Accordingly, the INCP has created and advocated an International Instrument on Cultural Diversity that would provide legal means for the preservation and protection of cultural diversity.

Suggested Reading: **International Network on Cultural Policy website.** www.incp-ripc.org (accessed 3 January 2005).