

CAM MEETING SINGAPORE, 2011
OPENING ADDRESS
MARTIN SEGGER, PRESIDENT

THE CAM Triennial Symposium: *Culture, Economy, Climate Change and Youth 2011*

CAM is a professional association and an international non-profit NGO working towards the betterment of museums and their societies in the Commonwealth family of nations, and globally.

We are one of some seventy or more NGO's supported by the London based Commonwealth Foundation. They range from the Commonwealth Association of Speakers of the House, the Commonwealth Association of University Presidents, to the Commonwealth Associations of Judges and Lawyers. Obviously we represent countries that share a common heritage, a common legal system, a heritage of democratic governance, and a common means of dialogue, English as at least a second or third language. But more than that we share common values, rooted in human rights: respect for diversity, equality of genders, fair and just governance, freedom of expression, the engagement of youth.

Over the past ten years CAM has facilitated a progressive international dialogue around these themes. Sometimes in the shadow of much larger organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, or for instance the International Council of Museums of which we are an organizational member, and indeed agencies such as ICCROM which are joining with us today, we are able I think to make a difference.

The "conversations" of our CAM family take many courses and venues. Our website, electronic newsletter, our CAM-L forum, the CAM distance course "Introduction to Museum Studies" of which many of you are diploma holders, our on-line CAM Journal and Archive, to which the papers of this conference will be posted, and of course our international and regional workshops and symposia. And we have other initiatives such as the review of the heritage protection law across Commonwealth States, a project being jointly pursued with Commonwealth Association of Lawyers and the International Centre for Sustainability Development Law.

However it is as opportunities such as these meetings today where we have a special opportunities to move agenda's forward. In this case in particular:

- the critical role of culture in social and economic development
- the responsibility of museums in addressing current issues such as climate change and its effects of society and the nation state
- the obligation of museums to play an essential role in the education and engagement of youth.

A series of international documents have been critical to these process. Among them

1. *Our Creative Diversity, Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development.* UNESCO 1995
2. *Civil Society: A Force for Transformation. The Vision and Strategy of the Commonwealth Foundation 2008-12.* London, 2008

3. *Engaging with Faith. Commonwealth Foundation project on Improving Understand and Co-operation between Different Faith Communities.* London, 2008.
4. And the seminal document in into which CAM had direct input, and has been at the core of our deliberations over the past three years: *Putting Culture First: Commonwealth Perspectives on Cultural Development.* London, 2008.

Putting Culture First provided a blue print for debate and action at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago in 2009.

Here are some of the points that were observed.

- Context: "The current global context is one of unprecedented economic and environmental emergency, compounded by continuing challenges of poverty, inequality, mass unemployment and conflict. This demands new ways of thinking and a fresh look at how development proceeds.... The potential of culture to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals has not been realized"
- The aim of development should be the enabling of physical and mental well-being, the fulfillment (of) every individual's potential and the creation of conditions in which people are able to enjoy the full range of human rights (including Article 27 of the "Universal Declaration Human Rights" "*Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community (and) enjoy the arts..*"
- Individuals and communities should be empowered to represent themselves and tell their own stories.
- Diversity is acknowledged as one of the Commonwealth's greatest assets... its rich array of cultural heritage and languages, and traditional and indigenous knowledge, has intrinsic value.
- Freedom of expression and respect for diversity are often collateral victims of security-led attempts to tackle conflict.
- Culture has been treated by most Commonwealth organizations and many governments as peripheral, yet support for the creative industries offers significant potential for economic growth.
- Methods and processes drawing from cultural resources, for example, in education, promoting good governance, or addressing issues of gender equality, help achieve developmental objectives.
- Culture-based processes, such as culture-led training initiatives for young people, allow people to participate more easily and develop self-confidence and life skills.

In Trinidad and Tobago (2009) the Commonwealth Heads of State committed to:

- Empower and strengthen cultural ministries and national heritage, cultural and arts agencies.
- Recognize and work with local and indigenous cultural resources, languages and governance processes
- Promote investment in the creative industries, cultural expression, the safeguarding of cultural assets, and develop cultural policies.

This then sets the table for our conversations over the next three days. Picking up the Putting Culture First agenda we will:

- examine how the museums of Malawi fight poverty, AIDS, and malaria through the lens of culture
- see how heritage plays a critical role in social and economic development in Canada's far north
- learn from Namibia the importance of balancing the relationship between host and guest in managing cultural tourism
- discover how the arts play a critical role within majority and minority populations in shaping the globally oriented cosmopolitan Singaporean outlook and identity
- see how community values can be protected and embedded through the preservation of traditional meeting houses in Papua New Guinea
- note how repatriation of cultural objects can contribute to social reconciliation between Canada and Fiji
- look at the role intangible heritage plays in linking traditions, values and museum collections to both community identity building and environmental protection in India and world heritage sites.
- Discuss how South Pacific museum collections, and the knowledge they represent, can be better protected in the face of natural and man-made catastrophies and the effects of climate change .
- Learn how youth in the face of urbanization and globalization can be re-engaged in both cultural heritage and wider society through museum-based initiatives
- Explore successful case studies in how electronic communications can be a useful tool in connecting youth with heritage, culture and the even wider global issues.

Our conversations begin today. We all look forward to learning from each other.