

## IMC's ADVOCACY OF THE CONVENTION

*Silja Fischer, IMC Secretary General*

As stated by IMC President Richard Letts a few minutes ago, cultural diversity is in the IMC's DNA. The IMC's concern about and involvement with the UNESCO Convention for the promotion and protection of the diversity of cultural expressions goes back to well before the discussion about a convention as a normative instrument in the international policy arena was even launched.

The 29<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the IMC, held in Tokyo in 2001, decided that IMC should explore the issue of musical diversity. This gave birth to the programme MANYMUSICS.

During the years 2002-2003, IMC carried out a major research programme on musical diversity in the fields of music education, music production and international policy. It also held an international conference on the subject in conjunction with its General Assembly in Montevideo in 2003. The conference produced a set of important recommendations.

At its 30<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Montevideo in 2003, IMC adopted its new vision statement, which is to become the main professional music organisation dedicated to the promotion and the development of diverse music.

When governments started to talk about a convention on the international arena, and in particular on the occasion of UNESCO meetings, IMC was present. IMC participated in the three intergovernmental expert meetings on the preparation of a preliminary draft convention. In November 2004, IMC submitted its comments and amendments to UNESCO for consideration in the preparation of the final version of the *July 2004 Preliminary Draft of a Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions*. The thorough analysis and revision was carried out by a working group of the IMC Executive Board – called the ManyMusics task force. The position paper presented then also made reference to IMC's recent activities geared towards the promotion and development of diverse music.

When the convention was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in October 2005, I had the pleasure of making a presentation on behalf of IMC to the General Conference to express our organisation's satisfaction as well as hopes connected with the convention.

Throughout the following two years (2005 and 2006), IMC advocacy action focused on securing support for the rapid ratification by UNESCO Member States of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Recognising the role of members, in particular national music councils, IMC provided members with advocacy tools – a written argument and information about effective advocacy - and encouraged members to form or join cross-art form alliances to mount effective advocacy in their respective countries.

The Secretariat offered regularly information on the evolution of the ratification process worldwide. We also disseminated information material from UNESCO to our constituency.

One may note that in certain countries, it was members of the IMC who brought the convention to the attention of some government officials who then seemed not to even have heard of it.

I should also note that in 2005, IMC was contracted by UNESCO to carry out a major research project which resulted in a report titled "The Protection and Promotion of Musical Diversity". Richard Letts served as Principal Investigator and was assisted by consultants for Africa, Arab world, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Oceania. All consultants were proposed by regional secretariats or IMC member organizations. UNESCO has given IMC authorization to publish the report. It is available for download on the IMC website.

IMC included in its activity plan for 2007-2008 the following action line: "To relevant international fora and through the members, continue to advocate i) national ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and ii) active implementation of its

provisions and recommendations by national governments and as appropriate, by international governmental alliances and organisations.”

IMC participated in several meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Promotion and the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (June and December 2008, March 2009) which dealt above all with the elaboration of operational guidelines for the implementation of the Convention. IMC also participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> conference of State Parties to the 2005 Convention, which took place last June. During these meetings, the IMC representative made statements on behalf of the participating NGOs and contributed to joint statements made by other NGO representatives. It should be noted that joint statements proved to be the best way to make the voice of NGOs strongly heard in this context. My friend and colleague Garry Neil from the International Network for Cultural Diversity will confirm this. Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding work accomplished by INCD and its Executive Director Garry Neil. INCD as well as the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity offered highly valued guidance to the IMC in its own advocacy efforts.

I hope my presentation demonstrated to you that IMC's advocacy work for the convention, and for cultural diversity as such, has a long history. We did not simply jump on a train. What IMC has done in the recent past, has been the consequence of our long-term commitment to musical diversity.

Thank you very much.