



COUNTRY STATEMENT

INDIA

By

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DELIVERED AT

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6th Asia-Europe Culture Ministers Meeting at Rotterdam

Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I extend the warm and hearty greetings of the Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge), Government of India ShriShripadNaik to the 6th Asia-Europe Culture Ministers Meeting. His Excellency ShriShripadNaik could not join the deliberations of this multilateral meeting due to pressing domestic engagements. We would like to thank the host country, the Netherlands for the gracious hospitality to make the 6th Asia Europe Culture Ministers Meeting a success. Our Government reiterates its deep and abiding commitment to multilateralism and democracy in taking forward the ASEM agenda for culture. We are happy to support ASEM agenda of Creative Industries presented by the Netherlands, with emphasis on promotion of creative skills, creative entrepreneurs and creative cities. India's support to multilateralism in the field of culture is reflected in the Delhi resolution signed by SAARC Culture Ministers in New Delhi on September 25, 2014. The New Delhi Resolution outlines the roadmap for implementation of cultural activities to take forward the SAARC agenda for culture for the period 2014-17.

In 1927, our Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore had written, 'In the midst of much that is discouraging in the present state of the world, there is one symptom of vital promise. Asia is awakening. This great event, if it be but directed along the right lines, is full of hope, not only for Asia herself, but for the whole world.'(Rabindranath Tagore, 'An Eastern University,' *ViswaBharati Bulletin*, Number 6.)

Almost ninety years later, the sentiments expressed by Tagore in 1927, ring just as true and urgent as they had in his day and age. The coming together of Asia and Europe can enable development of artistic leadership of highest quality. This can be achieved through policy alignment in the following areas:

- Showcasing ASEM cultural heritage to the world at large;
- Improving the literary interest by enhanced access to libraries;
- Developing cultural and creative industries in the region;

6th Asia-Europe Culture Ministers Meeting at Rotterdam

- Facilitating the Asia Europe Foundation's work in the field of culture;
- Promoting cultural festivals in the ASEM region;
- Enabling ASEM exchange programmes on culture;
- Developing archives in ASEM region;
- Providing support in archaeological preservation and conservation policies;
- Disseminating regional literatures, through translation;
- Preserving folklore and oral narratives in the ASEM Countries;
- Promoting visual and performing arts in ASEM countries.

In the Senior Officers Meeting on October 19, 2014 at Eindhoven, far reaching discussions were held on bringing about a policy alignment to take forward the agenda for 6th ASEM Culture Ministers Meeting. We had also agreed that such far reaching policy alignment can be brought about by working closely together through the ASEF Public Forum, the ASEF's culture 360 web portal and the ASEF's experts meeting and public forum series. These views are supported by India to be incorporated in Chair's statement of the 6th ASEM Culture Minister's meeting.

India has undertaken some major initiatives in the field of cultural festivals, most notably through the 'Festivals of India Abroad' series, in which cultural festivals have been conducted in 2014, in China, South Africa and Japan, and are proposed to be held in Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia and Myanmar by March 2014. We are also preparing for the Namaste India in France in 2016.

I would like to present some of the policy interventions being undertaken in India to take the cultural agenda forward.

1. India is symbolized by the plurality of its cultures and culture plays a critical role in ultimately shaping the development agenda of a nation. It represents a set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices. Culture and its children – the arts – manifest themselves subtly in almost all economic, social and other activities.
2. While many of the tasks of the government are undertaken by it directly, its cultural agenda is facilitated by a network of organizations – attached, subordinate and autonomous. Through its own activities and those of its

6th Asia-Europe Culture Ministers Meeting at Rotterdam

institutions, the Ministry of Culture aims at the protection, development and promotion of three different aspects our cultural treasures: Tangible Heritage, Intangible Heritage and Knowledge Resource Heritage. In addition, the Ministry is responsible of maintaining Gandhian Heritage and commemoration of important historical events, as well as celebrating the centenaries of great personalities. Through the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the Ministry is engaged in the protection of monuments of national importance, as also the accomplishment of excavation and exploration programmes. The Ministry is also promoting a 'Museum Movement' in the country. Most of India's finest museums, the National Museum, the Indian Museum, the Salar Jung Museum and the National Gallery of Modern Art, are directly under the purview of the Ministry of Culture. In addition, the Ministry promotes regional and local museums by way of providing financial support through grants in-aid.

3. India is one of the world's largest repositories of music, dance, theatre, folk traditions, songs, performing arts, rites and rituals, paintings and writings that are known, collectively, as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' (ICH). In order to preserve these elements, the Ministry implements a number of schemes and programmes aimed at providing financial support to individuals, groups and cultural organizations engaged in theatre and performance, visual studies and literary arts. This endeavour is supported by the three national academies – SahityaAkademi, SangeetNatakAkademi and Lalit Kala Akademi, as well as the National School of Drama and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, which represent a confluence of the finest creative minds in the literary, performance and visual arts. The Ministry aims to recognize excellence achieved in these fields through the prestigious awards it has instituted, such as those bestowed by the three Akademies. The seven Zonal Cultural Centres under the Ministry involve themselves in activities focussed on the folk and traditional art forms. The National Library, Kolkata, has, as one of its important functions, the acquisition and conservation of all significant books and publications in the country.
4. The Ministry endeavours to promote library development in a big way, and extends grants-in-aid through the Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation,

6th Asia-Europe Culture Ministers Meeting at Rotterdam

Kolkata, to achieve this objective. The National Mission on Libraries and the National Mission on Manuscripts are major efforts in conservation and promotion of ancient and contemporary literary traditions of India.

5. The maintenance of all archival records of the country is the responsibility of the National Archives of India. The Government of India has undertaken a major initiative in weeding out records, and in training personnel in records management practices. The transfer of official records to the National Archives of India for historical record-keeping is a significant initiative of the government.
6. The Ministry is also involved in protection and promotion of Buddhist and Tibetan Culture and is doing this through several institutions located at Sarnath, Varanasi, Leh and Dahung as also the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda.
7. The Ministry of Culture extends its activities in the international arena too, by way of organizing various activities abroad, such as exhibitions and performances. It is also responsible for implementation of various UNESCO Conventions in the field of Culture, and has entered into bilateral cultural agreements with 126 countries and has initiated 'Cultural Exchange Programmes' with 55 countries. Festivals of India abroad have been organized in countries as far-flung as Peru, Cuba, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, South Africa, China and Japan.

To conclude, let me reiterate Mr Chairman, our abiding commitment for multilateralism, plurality of cultures, and policy alignment in the ASEM region through the Culture Ministers meeting.

Jai Hind.