

SPEECH BY MINISTER GILBERTO GIL IN NEW YORK / JANUARY 19, 2006

Good morning everyone.

I am because we are.

The theme of this conference refers to the individual's repertoire and that which comprises his personality. To each individual's place and being. What makes us who we are.

It also refers to the relationship between the individual, the collectivity, the institutions, the culture, the history and the geography. We are not simply we. We are in relation to something and to someone.

Therefore, we are speaking about identity and diversity. We are also speaking about difference and proximity. Of place and stand.

We are in time. We are in space. A time and a space that correspond to groups, communities and societies. And these constitute processes. They are in movement. We are not what we are, but what we are in movement.

Fundamentally, we are the product of an interaction between our unique genetic code and our life experiences, not forgetting, or underestimating, of course, the impact of nature and geography.

When I speak of experiences, I am referring to encounters and exchanges of all types. Therefore, we are dealing, as you may see, with the basic interaction between our nature and our culture.

And the idea of culture incorporates the idea of "another", of "others". We exchange something with someone. We encounter something or someone; we interact with "others".

We are different. Each one of the fingers of our hands is different from the others. But we, as the fingers, are close: links, connections, synchronies are created that also define and situate us.

Time and space can be the same. But the genetic code is not. Nor are the experiences and the places, of course. And nor is the perception of this time and space. And of the experiences.

People from the beach use to look forward, through the horizon, aspiring more: new experiences, new ideas, and new knowledge. People from the land, otherwise, use to look up, through the sky, and down, establishing roots. Dreams and/or reality. That's a small example of geography and differences.

Therefore, we are the measure of our differences and our closeness. We are in the culture, the history and the geography. We are "in relation to" and we are "in relation with".

We are, above all, diverse identities, comprised of pluralities, inserted in multiple identity diversities, in process, in transformation.

I am Gilberto Gil. I am a musician. I am temporarily Minister. I am Brazilian. I am from Bahia. I am temporarily from Rio and from Brasília. I am a tropicalist. I am an environmentalist.

I have within me the legacy of genetics and the legacy of my experiences, my apprehensions, my interactions and my sensations.

This being became and transformed itself over time through exchanges and encounters, through what I learned and lived, what I saw and heard.

Therefore, I am Gilberto Gil, in relation to territories, in relation to knowledge, in relation to experiences, in relation to groups, to people, in relation to what I was and to all of you.

I am one. But I am one formed from many. And I am in the midst of ones who are equally formed from many. And I change, the more I live and experience extraneous changes.

And what is the importance in reflecting about all of this? First of all, because it points to a non-contradictory vision of the relationship between the individual and the collective.

A vision that does not lead to the exacerbation of individualism, nor of collectivism. That does not deny tradition, nor invention. Nor continuity, nor change.

Second, because it points to a relativizing vision of existence and of living among human beings, their identities and their diversities, their creations and their undertakings.

Third, because it points to a deep recognition of the notion of autonomy and the notion of freedom, which condition our individual and collective paths.

Fourth, because it points to a generous understanding of what is common, public, to go beyond the restrictive concepts of public, state-owned and private.

Fifth, because it not only incorporates understanding, but also the exercise of tolerance and the respect for differences, projecting the yearning for equality in diversity.

This deeply marks not only who I am, but also what I do, whether as a musician, a minister, a father and husband, or an environmentalist.

In my interventions overseas, whether in debates like this one, or in multilateral entity meetings, I have spoken about this, or started with this.

And starting from this point, I have celebrated three important issues, which is a way to call attention to them.

I speak of celebrating the healthy and stimulating dialogue between nations and governments, as well as between societies and communities.

We are here to exchange information, ideas and achievements. And to seek a possible consensus to make coordinated multilateral actions and partnerships feasible.

That has been the meaning of my participation in debates such as this one at the UN, the OAS, the OIS, UNESCO, and at international forums.

What we say and what we decide obviously has its merit. But it is the "how" that shapes the process.

I also speak of celebrating the planet's cultural diversity.

We are here to jointly formulate ideas and measures capable of valorizing and protecting our societies' cultural expressions and goods.

And to stimulate fair interchange among our cultures.

There is no sovereignty, there is no inclusion, and there is no citizenship, if there is no right to one's own individual and collective expression. One's own language, for example.

And finally, I speak of celebrating the strategic role of public policies for culture in the planet's sustained development process.

We are here to expand upon the notion that culture is a vital dimension of citizenship, of social inclusion, and of quality of life.

The notion that culture is a duty of the State.

The notion that culture is the priority of all priorities.

The notion that culture has, and can have an even greater role in the process of development and integration of our countries, understanding development as being access to human rights and well being.

Therefore, the notion that culture and cultural expressions are the most powerful, effective and involving instrument for the promotion of peace and understanding, internal and external, for economic justice, social justice and political justice, most especially in the emerging countries.

The development process is not complete, does not achieve its existing potential in society, the nation, the continent, the planet, if it is without culture.

In other words... If it does not incorporate broader access by the population to the means of production and dissemination of cultural content; and broader access to the fruition of these contents, and the contents of each country to other countries.

If it does not incorporate the protection and value of the local culture and its dialogue with national and global culture. The exchanges, the encounters.

Finally, if it does not incorporate the enthusiasm for the discovery, for the creation, for the expression and the disclosure, for the interchange and the affirmation.

A global citizenship, a global governance, a global peace, all pass through the globalization of values and symbols. A globalization of tolerance.

We, while countries, are also, each one of us, what we all are. I, Brazil, am what we, The World, are. And we, The World are, in part, what I, Brazil, am.

Enthusiasm, by the way, originally meant "having God within you".

Therefore, it is not enough to have economic growth; or income distribution; or equal opportunities; or the sustainable use of natural resources.

That is all fundamental. But all of us here know it is necessary to go beyond that.

Today, the planet is on a path towards the construction of a democracy and a global citizenship. The correction of economic and cultural disequilibrium is on the agenda.

We currently have a multilateral system that works, and that little by little unveils new means to expand its scope and its effectiveness.

Public policies for culture can no longer be secondary, fragile and peripheral. They are the social and infrastructure policies of the 21st Century.

Global democracy is also cultural democracy. Global citizenship is also cultural citizenship.

Social inclusion is fundamentally the cultural inclusion of all to the free territory of expressions and cultural exchanges and encounters, whether collective or individual.

Our countries cultural and creative industries have yet to realize their potential for inclusion in production or in dissemination. In access to how to produce or access to what is produced.

Nor have they realized their potential in the generation of income, jobs, and foreign exchange credits.

And they also have yet to realize their potential for diversity, equal opportunity, plurality, and freedom of expression and creation and of self-esteem.

The same holds true for the Government's action. It does not have the function of creating culture, but of creating a favorable environment for society's cultural development.

That is our challenge. That is the meaning of this meeting. Of so many meetings I have embarked upon in Brazil and beyond Brazil's borders.

It is our historical task to take advantage of the favorable conditions that exist today and to move on from celebration to transformation.

~~The greatest objective of the Lula government, in the broadest terms possible, is to recover Brazilian national dignity – internal and external dignity, interwoven.~~

~~It is the construction of a new Brazil, more balanced socially, healthier, and capable of establishing itself as a sovereign nation on the international scene.~~

A project for the future, therefore, a preview of Brazil completely fulfilling itself as a nation: for us – and for the world.

~~However, the discussion of this project first of all concentrated, as would be natural, on the political and economic fields.~~

~~But that first moment is already behind us. It is now time to broaden the scope, to expand the range of discussion and intervention, in order to interweave politics, economics, education and culture.~~

From the perspective of the Ministry of Culture, from my perspective, the desire to "build a new Brazil", to recover Brazilian national dignity, has a greater chance of success if it passes through the world of culture.

Culture not in the sense of academic conceptions or the rites of an "artistic-intellectual class".

But in its fullest, anthropological sense. It should be said: culture as a symbolic dimension of Brazilian social existence.

As a workshop and as a set of signs for each community and for the nation as a whole. As the keystone for our identities, continuous constructions that result from the encounters between the multiple representations of feeling, of thinking and of making Brazilians and the planet's cultural diversity.

As a space to achieve citizenship and to overcome social exclusion, whether through the reinforcement of self-esteem and the feeling of belonging, or also due to the potentialities inscribed in the universe of artistic-cultural manifestations with their multiple possibilities of socio-economic inclusion.

Yes. Culture as an economic fact, too, capable of attracting foreign credits to the country, and from within, to generate employment and income.

Thus understood, culture imposes itself from the beginning on the scope of government duties. It is a space where the State must intervene.

Not according to the old nationalization handbook, but even further from the neo-liberal model that has gone bankrupt. We see the government as a stimulator for cultural production.

But we also see it, through the Ministry of Culture, as a formulator and executor of public policies and projects for culture.

In other words: at the Ministry of Culture we think in the context where the State begins to reassume its place and its role in Brazilian life. In short, we think of the Lula government's cultural policy as part of the overall project for the construction of a new hegemony in our country.

As part of the overall project for the construction of a truly democratic, plural and tolerant nation. As part and as essence for the construction of a Brazil for all.

This understanding takes me back to something I want to share with you, and that also has to do with today's theme.

In 2004, the Ministry of Culture launched its most encompassing and penetrating program in the field of cultural citizenship.

It is a do-in anthropological initiative, to use an expression I mentioned in my speech when taking office three years and 18 days ago.

We already have nearly 500 Culture Points spread throughout Brazil, as well as overseas, already in operation or in the process of being organized.

During our first days in office, we defined the Ministry of Culture's action to start from a concept of three articulated dimensions: culture as symbolic production, culture as a right and as citizenship, and culture as economy.

This program can be included in the first and third dimensions, but it mostly has to do with the second.

The Culture Points are acute interventions in the depths of urban and rural Brazil, to awaken, stimulate and project what is most unique and positive in the communities, the periphery, the maroon communities, the villages: local culture.

I am not speaking of giving any fish, or of teaching how to fish. I am speaking about getting the most out of the fishing being practiced for so long, especially in areas of social risk, in invisible territories, in the backwoods and in the ghettos of large Brazilian cities, where you feel the strong heartbeat of a culture and an art, so strong there is no misery, no abject poverty, no amount of ignoring or violence that will silence them.

Quite the contrary. They grow, consolidate, unfold and interact with other manifestations, directly influencing the culture of the national and media sphere.

Each Culture Point is an amplifier of cultural expressions for its community. For those who make (or want to make) music, there is a digital recording studio that can record, make a small number of CDs and place whatever was recorded on the Internet.

For those who make (or want to make) videos, cinema or community television, there is a digital video studio, with a camera, and editing area, microphones and lighting equipment.

And more: dance, theater, reading, visual arts, web, in short, whatever the community wants and can, dares and does, dreams and makes happen.

The Ministry of Culture enters with the concepts, resources, follow-up, training of monitors, institutional articulation and the network, which is a vital aspect of the program.

But the communities decide.

All of the Culture Points are on-line to exchange information, experiences and achievements.

The local partners, in turn, enter with the spaces, the management and several commitments: responsibility, transparency, and loyalty to concepts, community insertion, democracy, and interchange.

The Culture Points have the look of their users, their artisans, and their communities.

Thus, the public resource reaches those who need it directly. And those who receive it have the autonomy to administer it.

It is a flexible program that adapts to reality rather than adapts reality.

A program that is not what the governing authority thinks is right or appropriate, but what the citizen desires and is able to advance.

It certainly is not grandiose. But its integrated multiplication, with broadband and sites, community TV and radio stations, programs on public TV and community newspapers, should produce a silent revolution in the country, inverting the flow of historical processes.

Now it is from the periphery to the periphery and then to the center. It is no longer from the center to the periphery. It is from the people to the people, and then to the elite, and no longer from the elite to the people.

This is a vital shift we are producing here at the Culture Points and in the other Ministry of Culture programs and actions.

Brazil is a happy example of a cultural synthesis. We are the product of diverse traditions and lives that together comprise our imagination and our way of life, a Brazilian cultural identity.

Therefore, we know that these tangible and intangible cultural values have been increasingly threatened by globalization's homogenization process, one of the negative sides to globalization.

For that reason, and taking into account the fact that Unesco is a world forum, by excellence, for cultural issues, Brazil unconditionally and enthusiastically supported the approval of an international convention about cultural diversity.

It is important for this process to have the presence of the largest possible number of countries, and for each country to mobilize its artistic sector, the different cultural groups and all of civil society for an effective and conscientious contribution in this undertaking.

In this context, the adoption of a convention for the preservation of immaterial heritage represents a fundamental step towards affirming the principle of cultural diversity.

All of the points I have raised here today, all of the vision behind them, all of the concepts, refer back to the theme you proposed to me.

The constitution of global citizenship occurs precisely from the moment it is understood that, at the same time, I am what we are, and we are what each and everyone of us is.

That goes for people, groups, communities, societies, countries and for our dear globalized world.

As some artists from here, the United States, have already said, we are the world. And the world is what we make happen.

Thank you.