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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: The Naples Conference of the Ministers of Culture of the Euro-Mediterranean Region – The First Culture Ministerial Meeting of the EU-Southern Partnership (Naples, June 16-17, 2022)
- Information from the Italian delegation

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Italian delegation on the above subject, which has been put on the agenda under ‘Any other business’ for the next Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 4-5 April 2022.

**The Naples Conference of the Ministers of Culture of the Euro-Mediterranean Region
– The First Culture Ministerial Meeting of the EU-Southern Partnership -
(Naples, June 16-17, 2022)**

In coordination with the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Italy will convene in Naples the **first meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the EU-Southern Partnership**. In addition to Ministers and leaders from the European Union and Southern Neighbourhood partner countries, other countries from the region, relevant IOs including UNESCO, the Union for the Mediterranean, UNODC, ICCROM, ICOM, ICOMOS, the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) and more will take part in a two-day program. This opportunity will offer a platform for a joint conversation on the most relevant topics of the international agenda of **cultural diplomacy**.

The purpose of the Naples meeting is to develop joint strategies and actions to better protect, enhance and valorise **culture as a common good** for the Euro-Mediterranean area. The debate will revolve around **three axes of intervention** matching the strategic objectives¹ of the *New European Agenda for Culture* with external dimensions with the five policy areas² of the *New Agenda for the Mediterranean*.

Culture is thus identified as a pivotal **asset for peace and security**, particularly in relation to the protection of cultural heritage in disasters and crisis scenarios and in the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods. Furthermore, the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal shed a light on the role of **culture as a driver for sustainable development and the green transition**; to this end, the COP27 meeting in Egypt offers the opportunity to better exploit the great potential of culture and cultural heritage for the green transition. Finally, there is a

¹ Support culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development; Promote culture and intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations; Reinforce cooperation on cultural heritage.

² 1) Human development, good governance and the rule of law; 2) Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition; 3) Peace and security; 4) Migration and mobility; 5) Green transition: climate resilience, energy, and environment.

growing recognition of **culture's role in supporting resilient, inclusive and sustainable economies**, by harnessing the resilience, prosperity and the digital shift and foster the mobility and upskill of artists, culture and heritage professionals by promoting mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue, thus creating opportunities for all, especially women and youth.

This Conference will likely build upon the growing national, EU and international frameworks concerning the protection and enhancement of cultural diplomacy. Through the **Rome Declaration** (July 2021), the **G20 Ministers of Culture** jointly recognized the transformative power of culture for human development and its role to foster the resilience and the regeneration of our economies and our societies heavily affected by the Covid -19 pandemic. **The EU** has consistently acknowledged cultural aspects in approaches to peace, stability and development, particularly in fragile contexts, as addressed by the 2018 **New European Agenda for Culture**. The EU Council took a further step in 2019, establishing a framework for action and calling on EU Member States, the Commission, and the European External Action Service to **strengthen coordination and strategic guidance** on the best way to promote international cultural relations. In 2021, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted **Conclusions on EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in Conflicts and Crises**, recognising the key role of cultural heritage in promoting peace, democracy and sustainable development.

The Conference perfectly aligns with the priorities identified by the EU in relation to the **European Neighbourhood Policy**, particularly at this critical juncture in time. Indeed, the recently approved MFF 2021-2027 aims at deepening strategic and historical bonds with neighbouring countries, and specifically through the NDICI instrument, in a plethora of fields, including culture. The **New Agenda for the Mediterranean** (9 February 2021), recalls the importance of deepening inter-religious and intercultural dialogues and building capacity to protect and fight against illicit trafficking of cultural heritage. The New Agenda acknowledges as well the role of digital access to culture and cultural heritage in boosting innovative digital transformation and includes culture among the key policy areas for cooperation actions for human development.

To achieve the ambitious agenda set up by the Conference, the **proposed final declaration** of the first Culture Ministerial of the EU-Southern Partnership aims at highlighting the strategic value and importance of culture, cultural heritage and landscape and the need to better understand it, protect it, and enhance it. Concrete proposals will envision an increase cooperation between national and international actors in order to **better protect and increase the security of cultural heritage in the face of crises and conflict** and in the cross-sector **fight against illicit trafficking**, understanding its linkages with the financing terrorism. Fostering appropriate EU Programmes and Projects will further be crucial to **support the training and mobility of artists**, culture and heritage professionals through the Euro-Mediterranean area.
