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The economic crisis we have been facing in 2009 results from the globalized wreckage in the financial markets and its systemic failures. It has brought us to a state of perplexity vis-à-vis our worsening living standards, escalating unemployment and mounting social pressures. In this hostile environment, how can we cope with the turbulence that has so quickly invaded markets and countries? Obviously, there is no simple answer to this complex situation. There are signs of a paradigm shift and it seems imperative to bring ethics back into economics. In searching for a remedy to overcome the current difficulties and move forward, the creative economy can be an innovative response to deal with some aspects of the current recession. It is important to recall that the creative economy is omnipresent in our daily lives, providing stimulus for our happiness and well-being. Every individual in any part of the world consumes creative products every single day through education or work, as well as in moments of leisure and entertainment. We wake up in the morning, we dress ourselves (fashion), we read newspapers (media), we listen to music, we watch television and listen to the radio (audiovisuals), we consume digital services, software and video games (new media) and we go to cinemas, theatres and exhibitions (performing and visual arts), to name but a few. In summary, the economic crisis may stimulate the demand for some creative products, particularly those that are consumed at home like music, television and radio broadcasting, video games and films. While some tourist-led products such as art and crafts might be negatively affected, the crisis may encourage domestic tourism, stimulating the organization of local festivals and traditional festivities. So let's try to use our creativity and find solutions to make the crisis a moment of renewed hopes and creative thinking.

Strengthening creative industries in Fiji



Fiji was the fifth country visited by a joint mission by UNCTAD, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 2–6 March 2009. The mission was led by ILO, the coordinating agency in the country, with a view to launching the pilot multi-agency project of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) and the European Union (EU). A stakeholder meeting gathered about 30 participants from the government, cultural institutions, creative entrepreneurs, artists and creators. The Director of the ILO Office and the Ambassador, Head of the European Commission opened the session. A lively dialogue took place about the expected impact of the project on national policies and how it can enhance the contribution of creative industries to socio-economic development through employment and trade.

Government ministries, institutions and civil society organizations voiced willingness to support the project's activities during 2009–2011. UNCTAD is envisaging four modes of intervention: (a) policy advice for shaping a strategy for the creative economy; (b) technical assistance for institution-building to facilitate inter-ministerial actions; (c) capacity-building on trade and investment related issues; and (d) support for some sectors aimed at improving creative capacities and the competitiveness of selected creative products. Coincidentally, at the end of mission the Fiji Arts Centre was officially inaugurated and the Director of the Fiji Arts Council presented its strategic plan for 2009–2012. UNCTAD was invited to address the ceremony on behalf of the multi-agency project. A plan of action to start the implementation of the project activities has been jointly prepared by the three implementing agencies and is in the process of being validated.



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Edna dos Santos-Duisenberg, Chief
Creative Economy Programme
UNCTAD
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland



E-mail: creative.industries@unctad.org
Tel: +4122 -9175735 / 5829 Fax: +4122- 917-0044
Web: <http://www.unctad.org/creative-programme>

Thailand's policy dialogue on the creative economy



At the invitation of the Thai government, UNCTAD carried out an official mission to Bangkok from 11–15 March 2009. Its aim was to hold high-level consultations with the government to explore areas for possible bilateral cooperation in the area of the creative economy. The official agenda included a courtesy call to the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Advisor to the Prime Minister and Representative of the National Economic and Social Development Board, as well as meetings with officials from relevant ministries. As proposed by UNCTAD, a workshop on “Policy Dialogue on Creative Economy Thailand” was organized by the International Institute for Trade and Development, in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event, attended by over 40 participants, discussed the main findings of the Creative Economy Report, taking into account that the creative sector will be one of the priorities of the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan.

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Creative Thailand Facing the challenges

Furthermore, UNCTAD addressed the international conference “Creative Thailand – Facing the Challenges” organized by the Thailand Creative and Design Centre, as part of the ongoing TCDC “Creative Thailand: Building Thailand’s Economy with Creativity” program. This high-level event was attended by nearly 500 participants; it was impressive to see how the centre is already operating efficiently and mobilizing all the relevant stakeholders from students, artists, and members of the private sector up to ministers. Judging from the positive feedback and the big affluence of the youth, the event was a success. As a follow-up of the above activities, the National Economic Social Development Board organized a meeting on May 25, to better classify Thailand’s creative economy with a view to establish a roadmap for the development of the Thai’s creative economy. There is a great scope to build fruitful cooperation between UNCTAD and the Thai Government on creative economy matters.



Shaping a creative university in Latin America

UNCTAD visited São Paulo, Brazil from 17–20 February 2009, at the invitation of the Dean of the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC). The aim was to establish a partnership to articulate a strategy not only to advance the policy debate, but also to put in place concrete actions around the creative economy in Brazil with the involvement of the academia, seeking to deepen research, share knowledge and carry out joint activities of mutual interest. The university intends to update its curriculum and become an important “creative university” in Latin America, by introducing new Bachelor, Master and PhD courses around the creative economy, focusing on the multi-disciplinary approach as well as the concept and policy framework put forth by UNCTAD in the Creative Economy Report. In this context, a seminar was organized and UNCTAD gave the keynote speech. UNCTAD representative spent a couple of days interacting with the Dean, the Vice Dean and the professors to exchange ideas on how to move this project forward. Meetings were organized with authorities from the State of São



Paulo and with advisers of the Minister of Culture; both expressed support for the initiative at the State and Federal levels. The PUC/UNCTAD partnership can become a useful tool to promote cooperation and knowledge sharing among universities and students around the world, particularly for those already involved in research in areas related to the creative economy. As a follow-up UNCTAD is updating the information on its webpage about the Creative Economy Programme aiming at providing a list of universities active in the field of the creative economy in order to facilitate interactions and cooperation among research institutions and academics. This will help promote the undertaking of policy-oriented publications, research studies and the organization of seminars, for example. PUC is also envisaging a programme to support the carnival industry in São Paulo and invited UNCTAD to visit the School of Samba Nene da Vila Matilde to discuss with its President about the role of carnival for Brazil’s socio-economic life. It was extremely interesting to exchange views with choreographers, musicians, designers, dancers and all the technical creative staff who work behind the scenes of the carnival



The creative economy : a strategy for development

This section highlights the various UNCTAD's interventions contributing to the European Year for Creativity and Innovation, reinforcing policy dialogues between Africa and Europe, highlighting the progressive and innovative creative cities and stimulating the creation of new services, processes and products of the creative economy.

Bilbao Creative International Forum



UNCTAD was invited to participate at the Bilbao Creative International Forum from 25 to 27 March. The event was organized by the Basque authorities, the UNESCO National

Commission and the Bilbao Creative Center. The aim was to promote a debate on the creative economy and its impact for the revitalization of cities. Indeed, Bilbao has become a good example of a “creative city” thanks to the inauguration of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao in 1998, which completely transformed the image and the social and economic development of the city, with an increased focus on cultural life and creative services. The Guggenheim has generated 220 million euros for the gross domestic product, 30 million euros in additional tax income and 4,400 jobs in 2007, according to studies carried out by the University of Economics of Bilbao.



European Conference Creative Industries driver of growth and innovation



This conference was held in the context of the European Year for Creativity and Innovation 2009. It was opened by the Deputy Minister for Development of Greece, the Coordinator of the European Year from the European Commission and the Chair of the Committee for Culture and Education and Greek Member of the European Parliament.

EU institutions have put the creative industries and their link to Europe's innovation potential on their policy agenda. The European Commission highlighted that the creative industries will lead to new services, processes and products, which will constitute the hotbed for Europe's innovation in many other fields, such as information and communication technologies (ICT), consumer electronics and tourism. The EU will support programmes to foster creativity and innovation in Europe's regions and cities, often helped by EU structural funds. UNCTAD was invited to make the keynote speech focusing on the Creative Economy Report. This was the first conference on the topic organized in Greece.

Creative Africa Initiative and the European Parliament

This event was a follow-up to the UNCTAD Creative Africa Initiative launched at UNCTAD XII, under the initiative of two European Parliamentarians (one from Spain and the other from the Netherlands) who attended the conference in Ghana and wanted to bring greater political support for “Creative Africa”. A working luncheon was organized in Brussels for 60 participants, mostly ambassadors and parliamentarians from the EU and Africa, as well as the Director General for Development of the European Commission and a representative of the Secretary General of ACP States. UNCTAD addressed the audience on the potential of the creative economy to foster development in Africa and shared ideas on ongoing actions around Creative Africa. Four concrete deliverables were highlighted: (a) the second session of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Culture held in Algiers in October 2008 debated the concept of Creative Africa in the context of the African Cultural Policy Framework; (b) UNCTAD has been collaborating with the ARTERial Network and the Observatory for Cultural Policies of Africa by providing technical advice on the setting-up of an African Fund for Arts and Culture along the lines of its proposal for the Creative Africa Fund;

(c) the Vice President of Nigeria launched the Nigerian Chapter of Creative Africa in Abuja in November 2008, emphasizing that “Creative Africa is a brainchild of UNCTAD XII”; and (d) the Alta-Moda fashion show held in Rome in February 2009 presented the collections of the Ghanaian designer Kofi Ansah, who engaged in the debates at UNCTAD XII last year in Ghana “From fashion to African communities and the MDGs”. Creative Africa helped to link the African Federation of Fashion Designers with the Italian Fashion Group. UNCTAD also briefed about the implementation of the multi-agency (UNCTAD/ILO/UNESCO/ACP/EU) project for strengthening the creative industries through employment and trade in five ACP countries, of which Mozambique, Senegal and Zambia in Africa. Noteworthy was the support expressed by the European Commission's Director General for Development in aligning the EU with the UNCTAD approach on the importance of the creative economy as a strategy for development, as presented in the Creative Economy Report.



EU - International Colloquium Culture and creativity as vectors of development

Annual Conference of Performing Arts Association of Europe

This was a highly policy-oriented event organized under the initiative of the EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, in collaboration with the EU Commissioner for Education, Culture and Youth, in the context of the EU-ACP policy and economic relations. It gathered about 800 participants from 65 African, Caribbean, Pacific and EU countries, including policy-makers, development professionals, artists, creators and the civil society. The colloquium sent a very strong message about the growing importance of culture and the creative economy in the EU policy agenda, at a time of intensive negotiations of the EPA agreements between the EU and the different regions in Africa and the Pacific. In this regard, it should be noticed that the EU-CARIFORUM EPA concluded in October 2008, for the first time had a special "Protocol on Cultural Cooperation", providing for bilateral cooperation on cultural fronts with special provision on the audio visual sector. It was interesting to see how the concepts put forward by the Creative Economy Report have influenced the approach of the official documents and the overall debates. UNCTAD was invited to moderate the transversal workshop on "creation and production" attended by around 80 participants. The most innovative aspect of the colloquium was that the "Brussels Declaration" was prepared by artists and cultural and development professionals, rather than by politicians. It sets three types of objectives at policy, economic and cultural level, as well as a number of recommendations addressed to the professionals, to national and regional authorities as well as to the European Union. As regards UNCTAD, we expect to enhance the cooperation with EC, the ACP secretariat and their member States during the implementation of the Brussels declaration on issues related to the creative economy.



The Council of the EU and the European Parliament proclaimed 2009 as the 'European Year of Creativity and Innovation'

based upon a European Commission proposal. The purpose of this European year is to promote creativity and innovation among individuals, enterprises and organizations; to raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation for personal, social, and economic development; to disseminate good practices; to stimulate education and research; and to create debates on these issues. In this context, the annual conference of the Performing Arts Employees Association League of Europe - PEARLE held in Geneva on 29 May 2009, invited UNCTAD to address the session with a view to highlight to its members the findings of the Creative Economy Report with focus on performing arts issues. The meeting held at the Grand Theatre of Geneva was hosted by the City of Geneva in conjunction with the Union of Swiss Theatres. The Director of the Federal Office of Culture, made a presentation about the cultural policy of Switzerland and its legal framework. Issues related to the state of the global economy and its impact on the performing arts, as well as matters relating to taxation of artists and theatre technical training were also discussed.

Up coming events :

Events	Date	City, Country	Website / contact	Agencies
EU-Africa Campus on Cultural Cooperation	22-25 June	Maputo, Mozambique	www.interarts.net	OCPA/ InterArts /AEC/ UNCTAD
UNCTAD Policy dialogue on creative industries	29 June	Maputo, Mozambique	www.unctad.org	UNCTAD/ UNESCO/ ILO/ ACP/ EC
UNCTAD Policy dialogue on creative industries	2 July	Lusaka, Zambia	www.unctad.org	UNCTAD/ ILO/ UNESCO/ ACP/ EC
World Summit on Internet and Multimedia	22-25 September	Shenyang, China	www.fiam.org	FIAM/APIA/UNCTAD
World Summit on Arts and Culture	22-25 September	Johannesburg, South Africa	www.ifacca.org	South Africa gov./Arterial



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Text by Edna dos Santos-Duisenberg in collaboration with Carolina Quintana

Dissemination: Clisse Medeiros Ramos

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