

"Globalization and Diversity, UNESCO and Cultural-Policy Making: Imperatives for U.S. Arts and Culture Practitioners and Organizations"
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Cultural goods and services have special cultural characteristics that should be promoted through a cultural diversity treaty. Films, like other types of cultural goods and services, reflect the culture of the creators and societies that produce them. They express the history, aspirations, language and values of their creators. The world is a richer place because small art films and big-budget blockbusters, films from China, France, Brazil, Korea, Nigeria, India, Iran, join American films in delighting or challenging worldwide audiences. Too often the debate over audiovisual services and trade is defined as a choice between American hegemony or cultural diversity, a choice between "Hollywood films" or "cultural films." These are false dichotomies. We can have both.

Cultural goods and services also are highly traded and need to share in the benefits of clear trade rules. MPA companies also acquire distribution rights for films produced in foreign markets, helping ensure international distribution for non-US films. Export markets are important to MPA member companies -- forty percent of the revenues of the members of the Motion Picture Association (MPA) come from export markets -- but also to industries in other countries. For example, 57% of all revenues from distribution of Canadian film productions in 1999/2000 came from exports, compared with about one-third a decade earlier. Exports represent 42% of total film revenues for the Indian film industry.

Trade is necessary to ensure cultural diversity. Without trade, one would only have local films. However, free trade does not guarantee diversity. Trade is a necessary, but not sufficient, way to ensure ensuring diversity.

One of the biggest threats to cultural diversity today is piracy – the unauthorized, uncompensated copying of the creative expression protected by copyright. MPAA works closely with creators and creative industries around the world in this fight, which unite in the value of strong copyright protection and the need to confront piracy.

The world trading system should cover trade in all sectors and all countries. It should promote growth and predictability in commerce, while taking into consideration public policy objectives, including the important objective of promoting cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is too important a goal to be banished from trade agreements and left to the anarchy of competing national laws. In a world where audiovisual goods and services are highly traded, disagreements are inevitable. Trade rules can help moderate the ensuing conflicts. However, it is also true that cultural diversity is too important a value to be left to trade agreements. Cultural diversity deserves an agreement of its own – that respects the trade aspects of cultural goods and services while promoting diversity.

MPAA supports a cultural diversity convention that aims to strengthen cultural expression, preserve cultural heritage, and assist creators in smaller countries to reach out to audiences around the world. We could not support provisions that seek to absolve countries of their trade commitments in the cultural sector. It is necessary to find the right balance.