

**Opening Speech**  
**at**  
**28<sup>th</sup> ENCATC Congress on Cultural Management and Policy in a Post-digital World:**  
**Navigating Uncertainty**

**by Mr. MORIKAWA Toru,**  
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Greetings from the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), from Singapore.

Distinguished participants,

It is a pleasure to welcome you, the ENCATC family and audiences from across the world to this timely conversation on cultural management and policy in a post-digital world.

For those who do not know us, ASEF was established by the agreement at the ASEM Leaders' Meeting in 1997. Since then, publicly funded, ASEF has been facilitating multilateral co-operation in Asia and Europe. Culture & Education have always been priority areas for us.

I am very happy to share that ENCATC and ASEF will embark on a new partnership. We will organise joint educational and cultural activities in 2021. I look forward to this new beginning.

Distinguished participants,

As cultural and educational actors on the global stage, we are all navigating great uncertainties, as the title of your Congress so aptly puts it. If we are to cross these choppy waters and arrive safely on the shores of the new post-digital world, we need to create a new code for our work. One that re-assesses what Adaptability, Diversity, Inclusion & Respect mean in the new normal. Allow me to make some points related to this.

First is about the basic recognition on the cultural management. The cultural sector around the world remains severely affected due to the pandemic. With physical distancing, closure of public venues and travel restrictions, artists are experiencing a crisis. It is a matter of survival for many individuals and organisations in the cultural sector. It is critical that we make a firm commitment to support arts and culture through this tough time.

Through the crisis, we noticed how important the culture is to society's emotional well-being. We must reaffirm the intrinsic value of the arts for the wellbeing of society, particularly at this time of great uncertainty for humanity.

So, we must commit to advocating this unique value of culture and protect the people who support it even in the deep economic hardship. I quote the Indian arts administrator and theatre personality, Mr. Anmol Vellani from an essay he wrote for the ASEF's "Enabling Crossovers" publication in 2014: "The state must spur the risk-taking propensity of the cultural entrepreneur as well as the artist absorbed in relating expression to self rather than to the market. Economic policies that enable the cultural entrepreneur to succeed must be moderated by cultural policies that allow the artist to fail."

Therefore, our commitment to the arts should also include a willingness by educational & cultural institutions as well as funding bodies, to radically re-think their programmes and approaches depending on the rapidly changing needs on the ground.

Distinguished participants,

Second point is about international co-operation. It faces a unique challenge: how to ensure trans-national networking and collaborations in a time of travel restrictions?

This is particularly important in the context of Asia-Europe connections, where great strides have been made in the last decade to offset existing imbalances in cultural mobility and create equal opportunities for all.

If we are **not** to lose the gains we have made in the past, we need to think more innovatively about how to use technology to nurture meaningful social and professional connections. We need to find creative formats to gather online, formats that will enable a true exchange of ideas where all sides are heard, and new connections are made.

This brings me to the all-important human dimension in cultural exchange. Being human is all about being a social animal. We can all agree that being human at a time of physical distancing and increased social isolation is not easy on any of us. As educators and cultural operators, it is important, therefore, that we create programmes and projects that address the ongoing loneliness pandemic around us.

Distinguished participants,  
Let me turn now to the third point, post-digital reality for which all our institutions are preparing.

Of course, we acknowledge that digital technology is here to stay and is, in fact, the only medium that can reach most of us, in times of physical distancing.

Digital has also brought new audiences to the arts. Arts Council England's report "[From Live-to-Digital](#)" confirms that streaming does indeed appear to attract younger, less wealthy and more ethnically diverse members of the population.

Yet, it does not reach all of us. A recent UNESCO report acknowledges that the internet is now an essential service but is still not accessible to 46% of the world's population. This shocking statistic must make us sit up and re-think access to our programmes. How can we reach those who are on the other side of the digital divide?

Similarly, it is time to rethink diversity and inclusion parameters in our virtual programming. There are many new vulnerable groups – for example, young cultural professionals at the start of their career; or freelancers who have no stable support systems during a prolonged crisis.

Thus, data and knowledge gaps are still realities or even bigger in our post-digital world. Huge gaps exist in access to data on participation in culture in the digital world, while culture statistics is critical to informed cultural policymaking. Here, universities, research centres and networks such as ENCATC could have an important role to play, by working towards the data needed to elaborate good public policymaking.

Distinguished participants,  
Last, but certainly, not the least, locally-created knowledge is needed on cultural management and cultural policy from some parts of the world, that are still 'invisible' to us in a hyper-connected post-digital world. Supporting the production of new knowledge is critical, if we are to successfully decolonise curricula in arts & cultural education.

Distinguished participants,  
These are some of the ideas from ASEF that I would like to leave with you at the start of the 28<sup>th</sup> ENCATC Annual Congress. I hope they will serve somehow as 'food for thought' for your collective reflections.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations in the days to come.

Thank you.