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G20 CULTURE MINISTERS' MEETING

G-20 nations arrive at consensus on issues of cultural heritage

Although the meeting discussed the impact of the war in Ukraine, China and Russia rejected the inclusion of a paragraph on the subject

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Union Minister for Culture, Tourism and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), G. Kishan Reddy addressing at the G20 Culture Ministers' Meeting in presence of the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Law and Justice, Parliamentary Affairs and Culture, Arjun Ram Meghwal and the Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture, Meenakashi Lekhi, in Varanasi on August 26, 2023 | Photo Credit: ANI

The G-20 nations on August 26 arrived at a consensus on cultural issues such as the need to address the destruction of cultural heritage in situations of conflict, the curbing of illicit trafficking of artefacts, the restitution of cultural property and the need to protect living heritage, specially of indigenous people.

However, there was no unanimity on “geopolitical issues” like the war in Ukraine. Russia and China rejected inclusion of references on the war in the outcome document released after the **meeting of G-20 Culture Ministers** in Varanasi.

“The Outcome Document comprises the entire text, which was unanimously agreed to by all G-20 members, except for Paragraph 15 (dealing with Ukraine),” the document titled ‘Kashi Culture Pathway’ said.

The document said the nations were united against destruction of cultural heritage “whether intentional or collateral, notably in situations of conflict”.

They called for a strengthened and effective global coalition to bolster the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

The document sought cooperation among nations and strengthening of appropriate tools to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement collaboration and investigations through voluntary data and information exchange for better support to investigations and prosecution on cultural crimes.

It sought enhanced research, documentation, awareness-raising and capacity-building of specialised cultural professionals, judiciary and law enforcement authorities, and other relevant stakeholders to the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

The document also sought preventive action and regulation of illicitly exported cultural property specially in online trade. It sought an inclusive dialogue on the return and restitution of cultural property by building on a broad historical perspective that renews relationships between countries, while also enabling alternate dispute resolution mechanisms.

The G-20 nations also reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen institutional and policy frameworks to harness living heritage for sustainable development.

The countries recognised the misuse and misappropriation of living cultural heritage, practices and cultural expressions, particularly of local communities as well as of indigenous peoples, specially for commercial use.

It said this contributes to the destruction and degradation of their cultural heritage and discussions should be held at appropriate international fora to protect such living cultural heritage, including intellectual property.

The forum also discussed **the war in Ukraine**.

The document said that “the war in Ukraine has further adversely impacted the global economy. There was a discussion on the issue” where all countries expressed their national positions.

“Recognising that the G-20 is not the forum to resolve security issues, we acknowledge that security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy,” it said.

Both Russia and China have rejected the inclusion of the paragraph, saying they do not support the inclusion of the content on geo-politics.



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