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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Protecting Our Cultural Diversity



September 1, 2004 - Yesterday, I participated in an important roundtable discussion on a proposed international treaty to ensure cultural diversity. Held in Montreal, the meeting was attended by Canadian Heritage Minister Liza Frulla, Quebec Minister of Culture Line Beauchamp, and more than 35 cultural organizations including guilds, unions, producers and broadcasters.

In many parts of the world – including Canada – the voices of local artists are being drowned out by imported entertainment, in part due to multinational media conglomerates and trade laws that limit the ability of nations to support their own artists and cultural institutions.

ACTRA and its partners in the movement for cultural diversity envision a different kind of globalization: one that encourages local cultural production, supports the sharing of these cultures, and encourages the coexistence of a diversity of cultures.

As pressure grows to include more cultural sectors in trade agreements, cultural groups around the world are uniting to make a counter-proposal: the creation of a new international instrument for cultural diversity.

Basically, the treaty will affirm cultural diversity as a fundamental human right and assert that countries and governments are free to protect their culture by adopting the policies necessary for diverse cultural expression.

Yesterday's meeting on the UNESCO draft Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions came on the eve of an international meeting in Paris scheduled for September 20. There, countries will begin the process of approving the text of the convention in time for the next UNESCO assembly in the fall of 2005.

The next year will be critical for the success of the cultural diversity treaty and it is particularly important that members of the arts community are vocal in their support of the process. Ministers Frulla and Beauchamp pledged their support for the initiative and asked those around the table to help make the issue a national priority. We must speak out to ensure that Canadians understand how important cultural diversity is for preserving our national identity, and those of countries around the world.

**Stay tuned for more updates on ACTRA's activities to support the international cultural diversity treaty!**



**Thor Bishopric**  
ACTRA President

**More about cultural diversity can be discovered at:**

[Canadian Coalition for Cultural Diversity](#)

[International Network for Cultural Diversity](#)

[UNESCO \(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization\)](#)

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