**A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE…. REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

**Article By**

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Building on the longstanding work of the UCLG Committee on Culture and UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), the Executive Bureau of United Cities and Local Governments agreed at its meeting in Chicago (April 2010) to mandate the Committee on Culture to develop a Policy Statement on Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development.

The world is now globalized than ever, so too is intercultural competence, dialogue and communication. Cultures have been exported, imported, implemented and instigated across national boundaries. A citizen from the EU can testify this. It was so astonishing when a friend Baveesh who studies in Vienna told me this “*hey guy, we gonna visit Budapest for an all night drink, then go for a cultural festival in Germany and then dance Waltz the next day here in Vienna*”. I was just stunned and pondering on how possible this could be without the Schengen agreement. With such free movements and interaction across interfaces, intercultural dialogue is promoted, meaning that 419,392,429 people, constituting the Schengen population may appear diversed, but the reality is that that they are one, simply because of… Regional Integration.

There are a myriad of success stories, but elsewhere, it’s a sham. Just imagine someone travelling from Cape Town to Tunis without any hitch? Or better still a performer in Cameroon dancing *Ndlamu* from South Africa, or *Adumu* from the Maasaii without any sensation of complexity. Africa is the most culturally diversified continent, yet the culture of one country is adamantly rebuffed by the closest neighbor. Why this cultural divides? Permit me demonstrate this with one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, the Bantus. The Bantu constitute 300–600 [ethnic groups in Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_Africa) who speak [Bantu languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bantu_languages), distributed from [Cameroon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cameroon) east across [Central Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Africa) and [Eastern Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Africa) to [Southern Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Africa). There are about 250 Bantu languages. Totally forgetting the fact that they have a common ancestral origin, divided by artificial geography, they never collaborate or see themselves as one, what a pity? Just imagine an Integrated Africa, with its rich cultural diversity, imagine the 54 African states regarding themselves as one people, under the same cultural umbrella. The continent is yet to experience the above fantasy, the impasse in Africa is so watertight such that integration is farfetched and yet to be accepted in their vocabularies… but I am positive, I can see an integrated Africa, where by people and culture shall move freely, without any fear of cultural barrier

As a master student majoring on International Cooperation, I always wondered why Pr Esoh ELAME took more than 3 semesters giving ceaseless lectures on intercultural dialogue and communication, culture, cultura etc. now I understand, you need to accept the other in order to better deal with him/her. The world could have been a better one without cultural boundaries and since artificial and natural boundaries exist, the only way forward is to submerge the boundaries, thus enlarging them, through Regional Integration