



Crafts in the Creative Economy

Kuwait Declaration &
Summary of Panel Discussions

Second World Crafts Forum
Kuwait 2026



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Forum Overview and Outcomes

The Second World Crafts Forum, convened in Kuwait under the theme "**Crafts in the Creative Economy**," concluded with the adoption of the landmark **Kuwait Declaration**, affirming crafts as foundational pillars of sustainable development, cultural identity, and inclusive economic growth.

Bringing together policymakers, cultural leaders, artisans, and experts from more than 20 countries, the Forum repositioned crafts not as peripheral cultural expressions, but as living economic systems that generate employment, sustain intergenerational knowledge, and strengthen community cohesion.

Nine Thematic Panels

Policy reform, intellectual property, ethical value chains, sustainable fashion, digital transformation, and World Craft Cities

Key Focus Areas

Fair market access, women- and youth-led enterprises, climate-conscious production, and responsible digital governance

Regional Cooperation

Strategic importance of Arab–Asia cooperation in building balanced and multipolar creative economy frameworks

Over nine thematic panels, participants addressed policy reform, intellectual property, ethical value chains, sustainable fashion, digital transformation, and the role of World Craft Cities in translating policy into measurable local impact. Discussions emphasized fair market access, women- and youth-led enterprises, climate-conscious production, and responsible digital governance.

The Forum highlighted the strategic importance of Arab–Asia cooperation in building balanced and multipolar creative economy frameworks. Regional leadership appointments within the World Crafts Council further strengthened global coordination.

The Kuwait Declaration called on governments, cities, and institutions to embed crafts within national development strategies, tourism systems, education frameworks, and public procurement mechanisms—ensuring artisans move from survival to sustainable prosperity.

Kuwait's hosting of the Forum reinforces its position as a regional hub for heritage-led development and international cultural dialogue.



The Kuwait Declaration

Executive Summary

The Kuwait Declaration affirms that crafts are foundational to the creative economy and integral to sustainable development, cultural identity, and inclusive growth. Far from being marginal cultural activities, crafts are living systems of knowledge, skill, and value that generate employment, sustain intergenerational transmission, and strengthen community cohesion. Artisans are recognised not merely as producers, but as custodians of heritage, innovators, educators, and entrepreneurs. Adopted at the Second World Crafts Forum in Kuwait, convened under the aegis of the World Crafts Council AISBL, the Declaration calls for a structural repositioning of crafts within national and regional development agendas. It urges governments, cities, and institutions to embed crafts within economic planning, urban development, tourism strategies, education systems, and public procurement frameworks. World Craft Cities and similar place-based models are recognised as effective platforms where policy can translate into measurable local impact.

Equitable Participation

The Declaration emphasises equitable participation in the creative economy. It calls for institutional and policy mechanisms that enable artisans—particularly women, youth, Indigenous communities, and rural producers—to access finance, intellectual property protections, markets, and digital tools without compromising cultural integrity. Intellectual property systems, geographical indications, and traditional knowledge safeguards must be inclusive, accessible, and supportive of community-based production systems.

Market Reform

Market reform is central to the Declaration. It highlights the urgent need to move from artisan survival to sustainable prosperity through fair value chains, ethical trade practices, transparent pricing, and responsible procurement. Tourism-linked markets, institutional partnerships, and international platforms must operate in ways that ensure dignity, fair compensation, and long-term resilience for artisans and craft enterprises.

Sustainability and Climate Responsibility

Sustainability and climate responsibility are positioned as intrinsic to crafts. Craft-based production aligns naturally with circular design principles, material consciousness, and low-impact systems, offering viable pathways for sustainable fashion, responsible consumption, and culturally rooted innovation.

Digital transformation is recognised as both opportunity and risk. The Declaration calls for ethical governance of technology to prevent misappropriation, unauthorised reproduction, and cultural extraction, while supporting documentation, transparency, and global access. Digital transition must strengthen—not replace—embodied skills and community-based transmission.

- ❑ **The Arab States are recognised as vital actors within the global craft ecosystem.** As cultural and geographic bridges between Asia, Africa, and Europe, the region combines deep heritage traditions with growing investment in the creative economy. Through support for women- and youth-led enterprises, ethical value chains, and heritage-based innovation, Arab States demonstrate how crafts can advance economic diversification, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

Finally, the Kuwait Declaration underscores the importance of cross-regional cooperation in building shared platforms for cultural exchange, policy alignment, and market collaboration. It commits stakeholders to a people-centred, ethics-driven, and implementation-focused approach, ensuring that crafts remain

Summary of Panel Discussions



Panel 1

Crafts, Compassion & Commerce

World Craft Cities as Engines of Local Economies

Moderator: Sundeep Kumar (Asia)

Panellists: Dr. Carol Lopez (USA); Dr. Sonika Soni Khar (India); Ms. Ikromi Nigina Nemon (Tajikistan)

Introduction

This panel examined how World Craft Cities function as integrated local economic systems where heritage preservation, education, tourism, ethical markets, and social inclusion reinforce one another. Rather than treating crafts as marginal cultural activities, the discussion positioned them as foundational infrastructure for sustainable urban and regional development. Central to the dialogue was the proposition that compassion—for artisans, communities, and cultural knowledge—can coexist with, and indeed strengthen, viable commerce.

Overview

Across diverse contexts—from North America and South Asia to Central Asia—the panel demonstrated that successful craft cities do not rely on single interventions. They depend on ecosystem thinking, where institutions, markets, education systems, and governance structures align to support artisans as knowledge holders, entrepreneurs, and citizens. The discussion highlighted three complementary pathways:

- Cultural institutions as economic anchors
- Education and collaboration as innovation drivers
- Public policy and international cooperation as enabling frameworks

Together, these approaches illustrate how craft-led development can generate inclusive prosperity while safeguarding cultural integrity.



Mr. Sundeep Kumar
Vice President World Crafts
Council – Asia Region



Cultural Institutions as Economic Ecosystems

Dr. Carol Lopez (USA)
President, World Crafts Council – North America Region

Dr. Lopez challenged conventional perceptions of museums as static repositories of the past, arguing instead that in thriving craft cities they operate as dynamic engines of economic activity and community engagement. Drawing on the example of Santa Fe, New Mexico—North America's first designated World Craft City—she demonstrated how museums, markets, galleries, and educational institutions can function as a unified ecosystem.

Major cultural events such as the International Folk Art Market and the Santa Fe Indian Market were cited as models of direct-to-maker commerce, where artisans retain authorship, narrative control, and financial benefit. Certification systems and authenticity standards further ensure that value flows to producers rather than intermediaries.

Dr. Lopez emphasised that compassion is not charity but strategic intelligence. Ethical practices—fair remuneration, respect for cultural ownership, and intergenerational transmission—create resilient markets built on trust.

"Compassion is not a moral extra. It is market intelligence."

She also addressed tensions between growth and authenticity, noting that deliberate policy design—such as zoning protections and authenticity regulations—allows cities to scale cultural tourism without eroding community ownership.

Compassion as Economic Strategy

Key Elements Identified

- Artisan dignity and direct market participation
- Fair pricing aligned with sustainable livelihoods
- Protection against imitation and exploitation
- Apprenticeship systems supporting continuity





Education, Co-Creation & Ecosystem Building

Dr. Sonika Soni Khar (India)
Design Educator

Dr. Khar focused on the role of academic institutions as catalysts for craft sustainability, particularly within World Craft City frameworks. She argued that universities and design schools can bridge traditional knowledge systems and contemporary markets through research, documentation, and innovation.

A central theme was the shift from top-down intervention to co-creation models, where designers and artisans collaborate as equal partners.

"Craft sustainability is not about preservation alone—it is about partnership."

In this framework:

- Artisans contribute technical mastery and cultural memory
- Designers contribute market insight and contemporary applications
- Outcomes include product diversification and renewed relevance

Dr. Khar described a triangulated ecosystem involving educational institutions, support organisations, and artisan communities. Such structured collaboration prevents fragmented interventions and enables long-term development.

She also emphasised capacity building beyond technical skills. Marketing, digital literacy, branding, and pricing strategies are essential for enabling artisans to participate competitively in modern markets. Institutional examples from India demonstrated how formal education can strengthen rather than replace traditional knowledge systems, creating pathways for artisans to access broader opportunities while maintaining cultural identity.

The Triangulated Craft Ecosystem

Three Interdependent Pillars

1 Academic Institutions

Research, design, curriculum integration

2 Support Organisations

Policy support, funding, market linkage

3 Artisan Communities

Skills, heritage knowledge, production

Outcome: Innovation with integrity and sustainable livelihoods





Policy Support & International Cooperation

Ms. Ikromi Nigina Nemon (Tajikistan)
Cultural Practitioner & Craft-sector Professional

Ms. Ikromi highlighted the importance of government commitment and international collaboration in strengthening craft sectors, particularly in emerging economies. She emphasised that engagement with the World Crafts Council extends beyond symbolic recognition. It facilitates knowledge exchange, institutional partnerships, and shared development across regions.

In Tajikistan, national policies demonstrate how state support can enable craft-led growth:

A national Handicraft Development Programme

Annual Presidential Grants supporting women entrepreneurs

Tax exemptions for artisans

Strong cooperation amongst government, private sector, and civil society

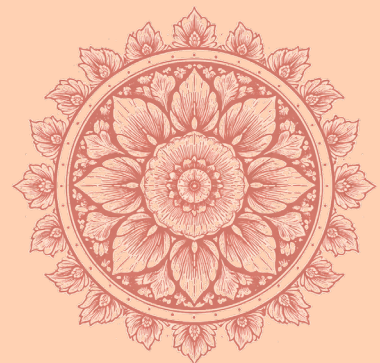
These measures have improved infrastructure, visibility, and livelihoods whilst reinforcing cultural identity. Ms. Ikromi underscored that partnerships with global networks help smaller nations position their crafts within international markets and tourism systems.

"World Craft Cities build bridges between cultures, institutions, and artisans."

Policy Tools for Craft Development

Enabling Mechanisms Identified

- National development programmes
- Direct financial support for artisans
- Women's entrepreneurship initiatives
- Tax incentives
- Public-private collaboration



Cross-Cutting Themes

Craft Cities as Living Systems

Successful craft cities operate through interconnected institutions, markets, education, and governance rather than isolated projects.

Ethical Markets Strengthen Commerce

Fair compensation, authenticity protections, and direct market access build consumer trust and long-term sustainability.

Education Drives Innovation

Collaborative learning environments enable crafts to evolve without losing cultural grounding.

Policy Matters

Government support and international cooperation can scale impact and ensure equitable participation.

Panel Synthesis

"World Craft Cities demonstrate that heritage, livelihoods, and innovation are not competing priorities—they are mutually reinforcing foundations of inclusive development."

Contribution for Policy

The panel's insights support a policy direction in which crafts are recognised as drivers of:

- Local economic resilience
- Cultural continuity
- Inclusive employment
- Sustainable tourism
- Community wellbeing

World Craft Cities emerge as practical models for translating cultural policy into measurable socio-economic outcomes.

Conclusion

Panel 1 affirmed that compassion and commerce are not opposing forces but complementary principles within successful craft ecosystems. Cultural institutions can function as economic anchors, education can stimulate innovation through partnership, and policy frameworks can create enabling conditions for artisans to thrive. Together, these approaches demonstrate that crafts—when supported by coherent systems—can generate dignified livelihoods, strengthen identity, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development. World Craft Cities thus represent not merely symbolic designations, but replicable blueprints for inclusive, culture-driven prosperity.

Panel 2

Crafts in the Creative Economy Policy, Intellectual Property & Markets

Moderator: Dr. Darlie Koshy (WCC Strategic Advisor)

Panelists: Sheikha Fouz Fahad Al-Sabah (Kuwait); Mr. Marcus Höpperger (WIPO); Ms. Lubna Saif Abbas (Kuwait)

Introduction

This panel examined the policy frameworks, intellectual property (IP) systems, and market mechanisms needed for equitable artisan participation in the creative economy, emphasizing the translation of international instruments into locally relevant and culturally sensitive solutions. Crafts were framed not only as cultural expressions, but as dynamic economic assets sustained by education, research, skill development, entrepreneurship, and cross-sector partnerships—described as the “four wheels” that keep crafts living and evolving, in line with UNESCO’s 2003 and 2005 Conventions. Participants also highlighted the role of statecraft in recognizing crafts within the Orange Economy and embedding sustainability in national development agendas.

Overview

As crafts gain prominence globally, a paradox persists: artisans generate significant cultural value yet often lack the legal, institutional, educational, and market tools to protect or monetize it. Effective participation requires coordinated action across key domains:

- Enabling public policy integrating crafts into economic planning
- Accessible IP protection and awareness
- Fair market systems reflecting the value of handmade production
- Education, research, skills, and entrepreneurship pathways
- Strategic partnerships across creative sectors

Without such alignment, crafts risk exploitation and marginalization. When these elements converge, however, crafts can drive identity, innovation, and inclusive growth in the creative economy.



Dr. Darlie Koshy
Strategic Advisor, World
Crafts Council - AISBL

Intellectual Property as a Toolbox for Protection & Commercialization

Mr. Marcus Höpperger (WIPO)

Senior Director Department for Trademarks, Industrial Designs and Geographical Indications, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

Mr. Höpperger presented intellectual property as a flexible but complex set of instruments capable of safeguarding crafts while enabling controlled commercialization. Traditional knowledge and cultural expressions often fall outside conventional IP regimes, making them vulnerable to appropriation when commercialized. Ongoing international debates seek mechanisms that recognize collective ownership and intergenerational transmission.



"IP offers a toolbox—but using it effectively requires awareness, documentation, and institutional support."

Available mechanisms include:

- Geographic indications protecting regional traditions
- Collective trademarks and cooperative ownership models
- Copyright for artistic expressions
- Design rights for product forms

Digital marketplaces intensify risks. Designs can be copied instantly and reproduced at industrial scale, while small producers lack resources to monitor infringement. Documentation therefore becomes a crucial defensive strategy. Recording sketches, prototypes, and work-in-progress images helps establish authorship and timelines.

Licensing agreements and contracts were emphasized as essential tools for ethical commercialization, particularly when collaborating with manufacturers or designers.

IP Pathways for Craft Protection

Individual Protection Tools

- Copyright
- Design registration
- Patents (in limited cases)

Collective Protection Tools

- Geographic indications
- Collective trademarks
- Cooperative ownership structures

Preventive Measures

- Documentation of process
- Contracts for commissioned work
- Licensing agreements

Policy as Participatory Design & Market Readiness



Sheikha Fouz Fahad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief, KhaleejEsque

Sheikha Fouz argued that craft policy should be treated as a design process rooted in the lived realities of artisans rather than imposed through top-down regulation. Policies disconnected from daily practice can inadvertently create barriers, particularly for small producers navigating export requirements, taxation, and quality standards.

"Effective policy begins with listening to makers—not regulating them from afar."

Intellectual property was framed as the primary safeguard of cultural identity. Without legal protection, distinctive craft traditions risk dilution or loss of economic value through imitation. She highlighted the need for:

- Capacity building to meet international market standards

- Awareness campaigns on IP registration and enforcement

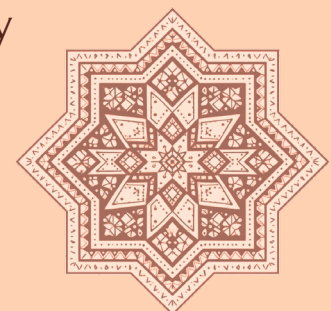
- Alignment between regulations and practical production conditions

- Support systems enabling artisans to respond to misuse

Market success depends not only on creativity but also on logistics, finance, and compliance capabilities. Strengthening internal capacities is therefore essential for global competitiveness.

BOX 2 — Principles for Responsive Craft Policy

1. Participatory development with artisan input
2. Alignment with production realities
3. Integrated capacity building
4. Accessible IP protection mechanisms
5. Support for export readiness



Place-Based Policy, Mapping & Knowledge Transmission

Ms. Lubna Saif Abbas (Kuwait)

Maker, Educator and Artisanal Catalyst

Ms. Abbas emphasized the importance of collaborative policy development starting from artisans themselves and recognizing the diversity of craft practices. She advocated for identifying and mapping makers and creative spaces to increase visibility, accessibility, and economic integration.

Digital tools can play a transformative role. An example is Kuwait's Fohgah platform, which geo-pins artisans, studios, and workshops, enabling consumers and institutions to locate makers directly. Local cooperative societies and municipalities were identified as potential partners for activating neighbourhood-level spaces for craft production and sales.

Ms. Abbas also highlighted the importance of knowledge transfer. Learning processes often involve copying techniques—a traditional method of skill transmission that must be distinguished from commercial infringement.



"Craft evolves through learning and adaptation; policy must recognize this while protecting originality."

She raised broader questions about appropriation versus inspiration, illustrating the complexity of applying IP frameworks to culturally shared techniques.

Place-Based Strategies for Craft Development

- Geo-mapping of artisans and studios
- Community activation of local spaces
- Digital platforms connecting producers and buyers
- Integration with municipal planning
- Investment shifts toward creative economy sectors

Enabling Artisan Participation in the Creative Economy



Cross-cutting enablers include Policy, Education, Digital Tools, Institutional Support, and Finance that support the entire progression from cultural knowledge to sustainable revenue.

Cross-Cutting Insights

1. Protection Must Precede Commercialization

Without legal safeguards, market expansion can lead to exploitation rather than prosperity.

2. Policy Effectiveness Depends on Local Relevance

Regulations must reflect how artisans actually work, produce, and sell.

3. Collective Mechanisms Are Often More Appropriate

Many craft traditions are community-based rather than individually authored.

4. Digital Platforms Are Double-Edged

They increase visibility but also exposure to copying and unfair competition.

5. Knowledge Transfer Requires Nuanced Regulation

Traditional learning methods involve imitation, which must be distinguished from commercial misuse.

Panel Synthesis

"Equitable participation in the creative economy requires not only talent and tradition, but systems that protect, empower, and connect artisans to markets on fair terms."

Conclusion

The panel reinforced the need for:

- Integrated policy frameworks linking culture, economy, and law
- Accessible IP systems tailored to small producers
- Collective protection of traditional knowledge
- Digital governance addressing online infringement
- Capacity building for export readiness and market participation

Panel 2 demonstrated that crafts can thrive within the creative economy only when protection, policy, and markets function as a coordinated system. Intellectual property tools, participatory governance, and place-based strategies together create conditions for equitable inclusion.

Rather than treating artisans as peripheral cultural actors, the panel affirmed their role as economic contributors whose knowledge systems require recognition, protection, and investment. When these elements converge, crafts become engines of innovation, identity, and sustainable development within the global creative landscape.

"Education, research, skill development, and entrepreneurship are the four wheels that enable crafts to remain living and evolving traditions."

Panel 3

Craft, Identity & Soft Power

Heritage Leadership & Cultural Diplomacy

Moderator: Dr. Jawaher Al Bader (Kuwait)

Panelists: Dr. Pick Keobandith (Belgium), Dr. Yalda Mahootchian Asl (Turkiye), Ms. Mashael Al Ali (UAE)

Introduction

Panel 3 examined how traditional crafts can function as instruments of cultural statecraft in an increasingly multipolar world. Rather than treating crafts as static heritage assets, the discussion reframed them as dynamic carriers of identity, credibility, and influence. Participants emphasized that handmade objects communicate values, histories, and worldviews in ways that transcend language, making them uniquely suited to diplomacy grounded in culture rather than politics. The panel highlighted that effective heritage leadership requires balancing authenticity, innovation, and global visibility. When supported by institutional frameworks, design collaboration, and ethical market engagement, crafts can serve simultaneously as economic drivers, cultural ambassadors, and tools of international dialogue.

Executive Synthesis

Five interconnected themes emerged:

Crafts as instruments of cultural statecraft

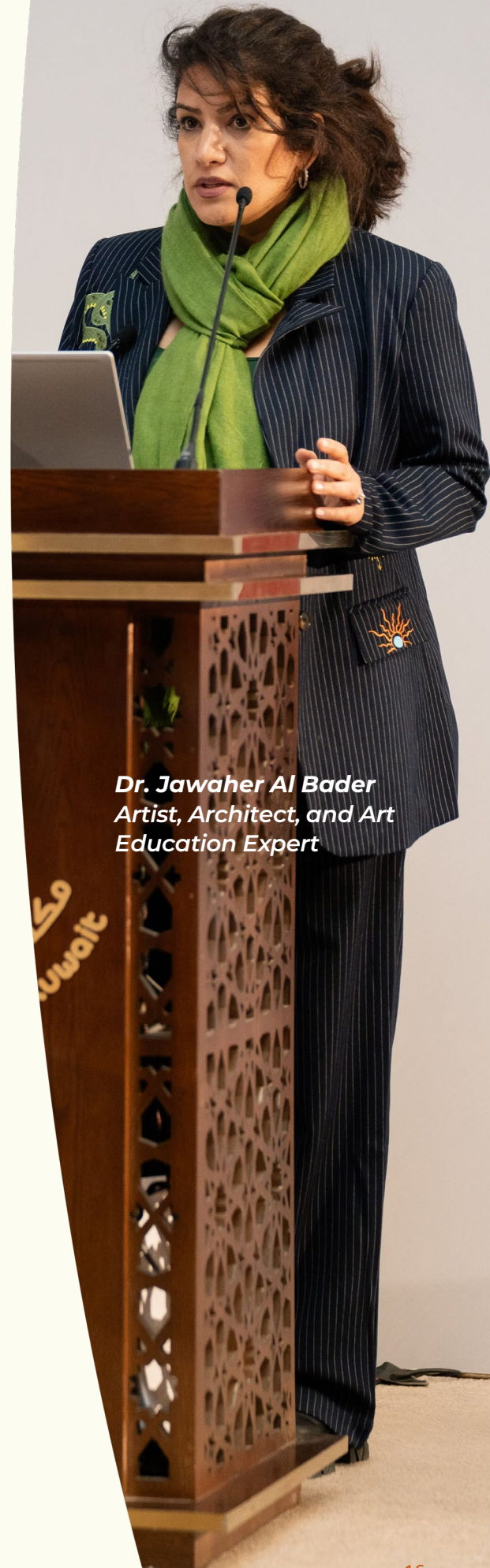
Non-verbal diplomacy through objects

Soft power as a strategic resource

The tension between visibility and commodification

Alignment with emerging global policy frameworks

"Every handmade object that crosses borders carries the cultural DNA of its people."



Dr. Jawaher Al Bader
Artist, Architect, and Art Education Expert

Crafts as Strategic Instruments of Statecraft



Dr. Pick Keobandith (Belgium)
Art and Cultural Diplomacy Expert

Participants argued that crafts must move beyond nostalgic preservation toward strategic deployment in national cultural policy. Traditional production embodies environmental adaptation, material knowledge, and symbolic systems that define collective identity.

Dr. Pick Keobandith emphasized that craft traditions emerge from geography, resources, and social history, forming a cultural fingerprint unique to each society. Because of this rootedness, crafts can communicate identity more authentically than standardized cultural exports. Industrialization, digitalization, and globalized consumption threaten these practices; yet paradoxically, these forces also increase the symbolic value of handmade production in a mechanized world.

Why Crafts Matter for Soft Power

- Embody national identity without political rhetoric
- Build trust through authenticity and continuity
- Foster people-to-people connections
- Humanize international relations
- Offer alternatives to standardized global culture



Craft as Cultural Statecraft



This framework demonstrates how heritage forms the foundation for building soft power through authentic cultural expression and sustained credibility.

The Non-Verbal Language of Diplomacy

Dr. Yalda Mahootchian (Turkiye)
Multidisciplinary Strategist



Dr. Yalda Mahootchian Asl described crafts as narrative media — "written words of people who never wrote books." Handmade objects encode history, ritual, environment, and emotion within material form. Unlike textual diplomacy, crafts operate through sensory experience. A carpet, ceramic vessel, or textile can evoke belonging, spirituality, or memory without translation. This makes crafts powerful mediators in cross-cultural contexts. However, she warned that reducing crafts to commodities strips them of meaning. Without context — maker, place, intention — objects become interchangeable products.

"Crafts are passports without paper — ambassadors without speech."

Living Heritage vs. Museumization

Living Heritage

- Practiced daily
- Economically viable
- Transmitted across generations
- Adaptive

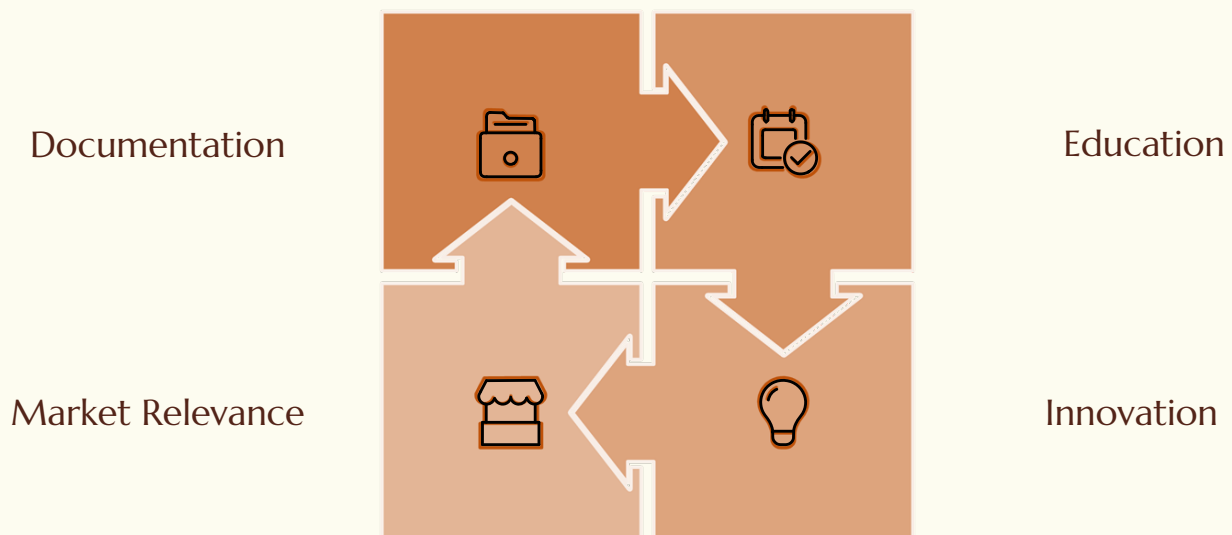
Museumized Heritage

- Preserved statically
- Symbolic only
- Disconnected from makers
- Frozen in time

Innovation, Transmission & the Race Against Time

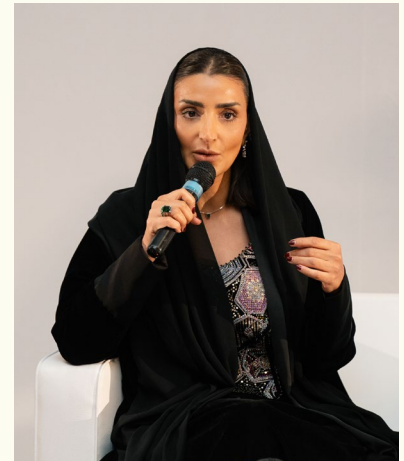
The panel highlighted a critical demographic challenge: many master artisans are aging, placing entire knowledge systems at risk. Loss of a master is not simply personal loss but the disappearance of tacit knowledge accumulated over centuries. Innovation was identified as essential for survival. Rather than replicating historic forms, crafts must re-enter contemporary life through functional products, sustainable design, and new narratives. Technology can support this transition through documentation, education, and global visibility — provided it complements rather than replaces human skill.

Continuity Model for Living Crafts



This model illustrates how documentation and education create the foundation for innovation and market relevance, sustained through intergenerational transmission.

Institutional Leadership & Cultural Diplomacy



Ms. Mashael Al Ali (UAE)
Head, House of Artisans, Abu Dhabi

Ms. Al Ali presented the UAE as a model of heritage-driven innovation supported by strong institutional frameworks. Through initiatives such as the House of Artisans, crafts are integrated into national cultural policy, design development, education, and international engagement. She emphasized that crafts function as active carriers of values, aesthetics, and cultural confidence. Structured ecosystems connect artisans with designers, researchers, markets, and global platforms, enabling transition from subsistence production to sustainable creative enterprise. Design was framed as a mediator between tradition and modernity. Collaborative approaches respect material knowledge and symbolism while enabling contemporary relevance. Emirati traditions such as Al-Sadu weaving and Talli embroidery were cited as examples of living practices recontextualized for modern audiences.

International exhibitions, exchanges, and forums allow crafts to act as diplomatic actors. When artisans travel, they embody narratives of hospitality, sustainability, and continuity, strengthening people-to-people relations. Youth engagement emerged as a priority. Educational programmes and entrepreneurship initiatives create viable career pathways, ensuring transmission of knowledge and future relevance.

"Visibility without commodification is the foundation of ethical cultural diplomacy."

Features of Effective Craft Diplomacy (UAE Model)



State-supported cultural infrastructure



Designer–artisan collaboration



Education and capacity building



International cultural exchange



Ethical branding and narrative control



Youth engagement pathways

Visibility vs. Authenticity: Managing Global Exposure

Participants agreed that expanding global visibility creates risks of commodification, stereotyping, and loss of cultural control. Successful heritage leadership therefore requires frameworks that protect authenticity while enabling economic sustainability. Ethical curation, intellectual property awareness, and community participation were identified as essential safeguards. Crafts should not be simplified to meet external expectations; rather, audiences should be educated to appreciate complexity.

Balanced Global Engagement



This framework demonstrates how authenticity, innovation, and visibility must work in balance to achieve sustainable cultural impact.

Conclusion

From Preservation to Influence

Panel 3 concluded that crafts represent one of the most credible and enduring forms of soft power available to nations. As tangible expressions of intangible values, they communicate identity, resilience, and creativity across political and linguistic boundaries. Effective heritage leadership requires moving beyond passive safeguarding toward active cultural diplomacy grounded in ethics, innovation, and institutional support. When positioned strategically, crafts can shape global perception, strengthen national branding, and foster intercultural dialogue while sustaining livelihoods and knowledge systems.

"Craft is not a relic of the past —
it is a strategic voice for the future."

Panel 4

From Policy to Praxis Institutions, Cities & Implementation

Moderator: Prof. Somesh Singh (India)

Panelists: Mr. Otunba Segun Runsewe (Nigeria)
Dr. Alberto de Betolaza (Uruguay) Ms. Luseane
Meafoou (New Zealand) Mr. Vikas Verma (Canada)

Foreword

Public policy only acquires meaning when it shapes lived realities. Across regions, the craft sector has long been supported by declarations, cultural strategies, and development frameworks — yet the central challenge remains implementation. Panel 4 explored how policies become operational programmes through institutions, municipalities, and partnerships, demonstrating that effective governance requires coordination across scales, sustained investment, and community participation.

Bringing perspectives from Africa, Latin America, the Pacific, and North America, the panel offered a global view of implementation pathways that are inclusive, culturally grounded, and economically viable.

From Vision to Action: Institutionalising Craft Policy

Participants emphasised that policy must be understood not as a static document but as a dynamic process requiring translation into concrete programmes, measurable outcomes, and feedback mechanisms. Implementation depends on division of labour among institutions, professionals, communities, and markets.

"Policy sets direction; programmes create reality."

— Panel insight

Training centres, market platforms, quality standards, and promotional mechanisms were identified as essential components of operationalisation. Without these structures, policy intentions remain symbolic rather than transformative.

□ What Makes Policy Work on the Ground?

- Clear strategic objectives
- Coordinated institutional roles
- Sustainable funding mechanisms
- Monitoring and feedback systems
- Community participation from design stage



Prof. Somesh Singh
Steering Committee
Member, World Crafts
Council - AISBL

National Institutions as Delivery Engines



Mr. Otunba Segun Runsewe (Nigeria)
President World Crafts Council – Africa Region

Drawing on decades of leadership in Nigeria's cultural sector, Mr. Runsewe highlighted how national institutions can translate policy into nationwide programmes. Skill acquisition centres, training initiatives, product development, and international exhibitions were cited as practical mechanisms for integrating crafts into tourism, identity formation, and economic development.

Implementation, he stressed, requires collaboration across the entire value chain — from artisans and trainers to marketers and administrators — supported by continuous evaluation to refine strategies over time.

"Programmes are the bridge between policy ambition and public benefit."

Strategic Planning in the Global South



Dr. Alberto de Betolaza (Uruguay)
Vice-President, WCC-Latin America Region

Dr. de Betolaza presented a Latin American perspective shaped by structural constraints typical of the Global South: limited financing, regional disparities, and competing development priorities. He demonstrated how Uruguay developed a coherent national strategy grounded in statistical data, stakeholder consultations, and cross-sector collaboration.

A key insight was the diversity of policy approaches to crafts — as heritage, industry, tourism asset, or livelihood — each implying different institutional homes and policy instruments.

Implementation success, he argued, depends on inclusive planning processes that involve artisans, NGOs, local governments, and private actors from the outset.

Keys to Successful Implementation (Uruguay Case)



Sector Diagnosis

Comprehensive sector diagnosis



Participatory Planning

Participatory planning across regions



Strategic Guidelines

Clear strategic guidelines



Programmes & Activities

Defined programmes and activities



Feedback Loop

Feedback before final adoption



Culture-Centred Governance



Ms. Luseane Meafoou (New Zealand)
Senior Advisor, Ministry for Pacific Peoples

Ms. Meafoou highlighted policy frameworks rooted in Indigenous and Pacific values, particularly the Treaty of Waitangi as a foundation for partnership and shared decision-making. She underscored the importance of relational governance — policymakers engaging directly with communities to understand lived realities.

Pacific cultural practices such as weaving and tapa making were described as forms of "cultural infrastructure," sustaining identity, language, wellbeing, and intergenerational transmission.

Youth engagement and culturally safe implementation tools were identified as critical for ensuring policies remain relevant and effective.

"Communities are not beneficiaries of policy — they are its co-authors."

Cultural Infrastructure in Pacific Contexts

- Community spaces (churches, family networks)
- Elders as knowledge transmitters
- Language revitalisation programmes
- Arts as identity formation tools

Ecosystem Approaches to Market Integration



Mr. Vikas Verma (Canada)
Designer

Mr. Verma outlined how Canada's craft sector is supported through interconnected systems:

Public Funding Bodies
Provide financial support for arts and cultural initiatives.

Indigenous Governance
Guide and oversee the development of community projects.

Regional Craft Councils
Support local artisans and promote traditional crafts.

Local Market Platforms
Create opportunities for artisans to sell their work.

Digital storytelling, experiential engagement, sustainability practices, and professional development were presented as mechanisms that help artisans transition from policy support to viable livelihoods.

Partnerships with educational institutions and municipalities embed crafts within community life, ensuring long-term sustainability beyond project cycles.

Cross-Regional Insights

Despite diverse contexts, the panel revealed converging principles:



Multi-level Governance

Implementation requires multi-level governance



Community Participation

Community participation enhances effectiveness



Market Sustainability

Markets are essential for sustainability



Cultural Integrity

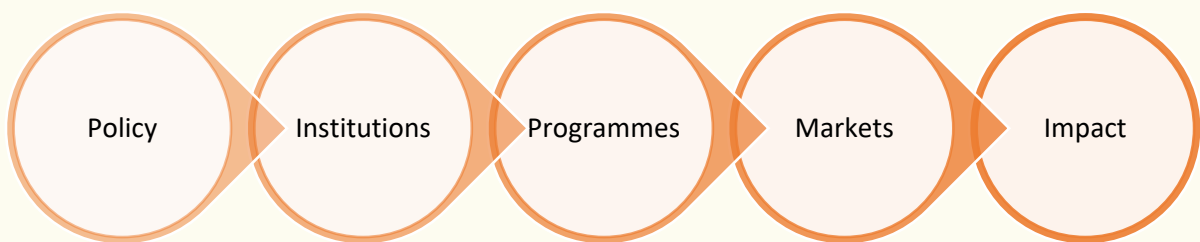
Cultural integrity must guide development



Adaptive Management

Feedback systems enable adaptive management

From Policy to Praxis: A Global Implementation Framework



Conclusion

Panel 4 demonstrated that effective craft development depends not on policy declarations alone but on institutional capacity, stakeholder engagement, and sustained commitment. By presenting real-world models from multiple regions, the panel provided a practical roadmap for transforming policy ambition into inclusive local prosperity.



Panel 5

Reflections of Innovation: Arab States and the Creative Future

Moderator: Mr. Rasul Samadov (Qatar)

Panellists: Ms. Jawida Mansour (Qatar) · Dr. Randa Rizq (Egypt) · Ms. Tayma Abu Hakema (Jordan)

Introduction

Across the Arab States, a dynamic cultural landscape is shaping the region's creative future, where traditional crafts, intangible cultural heritage, and contemporary innovation intersect. Panel 5 examined how the region is repositioning crafts within a rapidly evolving creative economy while confronting climate pressures, social transformation, and shifting cultural identities, highlighting Arab States as both repositories of deep civilisational knowledge and laboratories for innovative, community-grounded policy responses. Strong institutional frameworks—supported by significant public investment—have enabled documentation, revitalization programmes, national inventories, and specialized cultural authorities overseeing diverse heritage domains. These efforts reflect a shared recognition of culture as both identity and a strategic resource for sustainable development.

Yet the long-term vitality of this ecosystem depends not only on institutions but on the active participation of artisans and communities who carry living knowledge. Training programmes, apprenticeships, and heritage education increasingly support intergenerational transmission, while evolving policies integrate crafts into broader creative economies. UNESCO's 2003 and 2005 Conventions provide key guidance, promoting community-centred safeguarding alongside cultural diversity and creative expression. Amid rapid urbanization, digital transformation, and expanding cultural industries, Arab States are working to balance preservation with innovation, laying foundations for a resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking cultural future rooted in living heritage.

Key Insight

In the Arab world, craft is not merely heritage—it is infrastructure for identity, resilience, and future development.

Mr. Rasul Samadov
Programme Specialist for Culture



Safeguarding Endangered Knowledge in a Changing Climate



Ms. Jawida Mansour (Qatar)
Cultural Heritage & Urban Development Expert

Ms. Mansour presented UNESCO's work in the Maghrib and Palestine as a model of integrated safeguarding that links environmental adaptation, institutional policy, and intergenerational transmission.

Across Morocco and neighbouring countries, traditional crafts dependent on fragile ecosystems—such as weaving, pottery, and natural dyeing—face unprecedented threats from drought, resource depletion, and changing livelihoods. UNESCO's interventions aim not only to preserve techniques but to sustain the ecological and social systems that enable them.

A central innovation is the **Living Human Treasures recognition system (al Kounouz al Hirafiya)**, which identifies master artisans and supports them through stipends, training programmes, and apprenticeships.

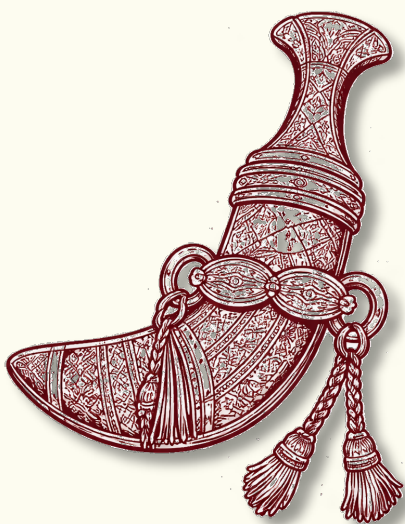
"Safeguarding craft means safeguarding the ecosystems, knowledge systems, and communities that sustain it."

The programme integrates climate policy guidance into national craft strategies, promotes sustainable resource management, and supports youth-led initiatives. Complementary work in Palestine demonstrates how small grants can catalyse innovation, market relevance, and employment whilst preserving authenticity.

Key Policy Tools Highlighted

- Recognition and support for master artisans
- Climate-responsive craft strategies
- Sustainable raw-material systems
- Youth apprenticeships and entrepreneurship
- International funding and exhibition platforms

Grants of up to USD 10,000 in Palestine support glassblowing, olivewood carving, pottery, and textile crafts, linking tradition with contemporary design and market access.



Education, Community Development, and Cultural Revival



Dr. Randa Rizq (Egypt)
Academic Professor & Researcher

Dr. Rizq traced Egypt's long-term collaboration with UNESCO and UN agencies, demonstrating how education, literacy, and community empowerment can drive craft revitalisation.

Beginning with literacy programmes integrated into agricultural life, initiatives evolved into comprehensive community projects linking heritage preservation with income generation. The **Nubian House project** exemplifies this approach: recreating traditional environments whilst training youth in architecture, cuisine, and crafts.

"Education and culture are the true foundations of sustainable development."

Projects expanded to include microfinance, digital marketing platforms, product certification, and branding systems that assign authorship to artisans. Notably, initiatives in underserved urban areas combined health programmes with economic empowerment, illustrating the multidimensional role of crafts in improving quality of life.

Programme Outcomes

- Revitalisation of endangered crafts such as kilim weaving and khayamiya textiles
- Creation of artisan enterprises supported by microfinance
- Expansion into national and international markets via e-commerce
- Integration of heritage into tourism and social development



Impact Snapshot

From Sinai to Aswan, heritage-based enterprises strengthened household incomes whilst reinforcing cultural pride and social cohesion.

Reframing Craft Within Contemporary Design Ecosystems



Ms. Tayma Abu Hakema (Jordan)
Architect and Cultural Practitioner

Ms. Abu Hakema offered a grounded perspective from Jordan, where crafts historically evolved from economic necessity rather than formal cultural policy. Rural and women-led craft practices functioned as livelihood strategies, embedding skills within daily life and community identity.

However, this embeddedness also limited visibility and integration into modern creative industries. A turning point came with platforms such as **Amman Design Week**, which initially separated "design" from "craft," inadvertently reinforcing hierarchical perceptions.

"Craft knowledge must be recognised as creative authorship—not merely production."

Recent iterations of the platform seek to dissolve this divide by integrating crafts and design within shared exhibition spaces, encouraging collaboration between artisans and contemporary designers.

This shift has strengthened youth engagement, expanded market opportunities, and repositioned craft as a dynamic contributor to cultural innovation rather than a relic of tradition.



Lessons from the Jordanian Experience

- Community-rooted practices ensure resilience
- Visibility alone is insufficient without structural support
- Collaboration with designers enhances relevance without erasing identity
- Sustainable models must prioritise knowledge transmission over rapid scaling

Cross-Regional Perspectives and Implications for the Arab Creative Future

Across the three contributions, common priorities emerged:

- Intergenerational transmission of skills
- Youth engagement and employment
- Climate resilience and sustainable materials
- Market access without cultural dilution
- Recognition of artisans as knowledge holders
- Integration of crafts into national development agendas



Maghrib

Climate-driven safeguarding strategies



Egypt

Community-centred development programmes



Jordan

Bottom-up integration into contemporary design ecosystems

Implications for the Arab Creative Future

The panel underscored that the region's strength lies in combining diverse approaches:

- Gulf States' institutional capacity and investment
- Levantine community-based resilience
- North African heritage preservation frameworks

Together, these create the potential for a distinctive Arab model of the creative economy rooted in cultural continuity rather than industrial replication.

Moderator Reflection

The Arab region can lead globally by demonstrating how heritage, innovation, and social development reinforce rather than contradict one another.

Conclusion

Panel 5 provided a comprehensive regional roadmap for aligning heritage preservation with future-oriented development. Its collective value lies in demonstrating that sustainable innovation in crafts depends not on technological disruption but on strengthening the ecosystems—social, environmental, and institutional—that sustain living traditions.

Specifically, the panel:

- Showed how climate action and heritage safeguarding can be mutually reinforcing
- Demonstrated the role of education and community empowerment in sustaining crafts
- Highlighted pathways for integrating crafts into contemporary creative industries
- Emphasised youth as critical carriers of future cultural continuity
- Identified opportunities for Arab–regional cooperation and knowledge exchange

Closing Reflection

"Innovation in the Arab craft sector is not about abandoning tradition—it is about enabling tradition to thrive in new contexts."

Panel 6

Crafts as Living Heritage Artisans, Transmission & Social Impact

Moderator: Ms. Barbara Velasco (Chile)

Panelists: Ms. Shahira Mehrez (Egypt) Ms. Heidi Christ (UNHCR, Switzerland) Ms. Lubna Saif Abbas (Kuwait)

Foreword

Craft traditions are often discussed as objects of heritage; this panel reframed them as living systems sustained by people, practices, and communities. Panel 6 explored how crafts contribute to identity, dignity, and resilience, particularly among vulnerable populations such as displaced communities, women, and marginalised groups.

The discussion demonstrated that artisans are not merely producers but custodians of cultural memory and agents of social cohesion.

Craft as Cultural Continuity

Participants emphasised that craft transmission occurs through practice, observation, and shared experience rather than formal instruction alone. In traditional societies, aesthetic standards and technical knowledge were embedded in collective life, making beauty accessible across social strata.

"Craft is memory made tangible."



*Ms. Barbara Velasco
President, World Crafts Council –
Latin America Region*



Transmission, Patronage and Cultural Confidence

Ms. Shahira Mehrez (Egypt)

Collector, Promotor and Researcher of Traditional Architecture, Arts and Crafts



Ms. Shahira Mehrez framed traditional craftsmanship as a civilizational system linking aesthetics, social organization, and identity. In traditional societies, shared standards of beauty shaped everyday objects—from architecture to household tools—making aesthetic refinement a collective norm rather than an elite privilege.

Transmission occurred through apprenticeship and imitation. Copying functioned as learning, enabling techniques, proportions, and design sensibilities to pass across generations while allowing gradual innovation within tradition.

"Copying was not theft — it was transmission."

Historically, patronage from rulers, institutions, and elites sustained this system by commissioning high-quality work and supporting master artisans. Industrialization and Westernization disrupted these structures, leading to loss of markets, decline of standards, and erosion of tacit knowledge embedded in workshops. Mehrez warned that superficial adaptation to global tastes risks turning meaningful traditions into decorative commodities detached from context.

Pathways to Revival

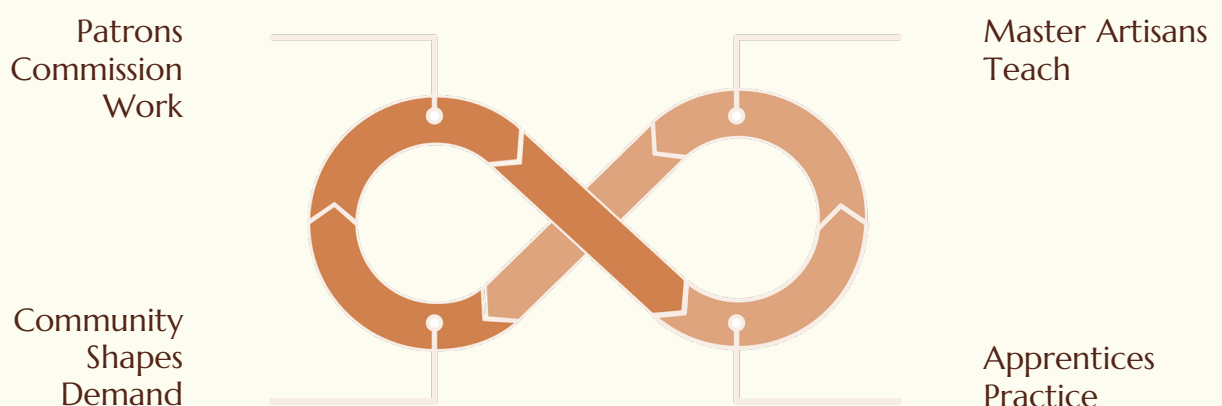
She proposed revitalization through documentation of techniques, restoration of quality standards, educational initiatives, and renewed patronage—especially by cultivating aesthetic awareness among younger generations.

"To save crafts, we must recreate the patrons of the future."

Why Transmission Matters

- Preserves tacit knowledge beyond written records
- Sustains continuity and quality
- Enables innovation rooted in tradition
- Strengthens identity and community pride

Traditional Craft Ecosystem



Mutual reinforcement between production, education, and social value sustains the entire ecosystem of traditional craftsmanship.

Craft in Displacement Contexts



Ms. Heidi Christ (UNHCR)

Ms. Christ highlighted the role of crafts in refugee settings, where displacement disrupts livelihoods, identity, and social structures. Craft skills — often learned informally — can provide both psychosocial support and income opportunities.

UNHCR's MADE51 initiative demonstrates how structured value chains can transform informal activities into professional livelihoods while ensuring fair compensation and ethical engagement.

Craft production in groups fosters social cohesion, reduces isolation, and rebuilds a sense of purpose. Visibility in international markets reinforces dignity by recognising displaced artisans as skilled contributors rather than aid recipients.

"Craft offers the opportunity to earn, to heal, and to belong."

Why Crafts Work in Displacement Settings

- Portable skills requiring minimal infrastructure
- Home-based and flexible production
- Strong participation of women
- Direct link to cultural identity
- Therapeutic effects of repetitive handwork

Diversity and Contemporary Practice



Ms. Lubna Saif Abbas (Kuwait)
Maker, Educator and Artisanal Catalyst

Ms. Abbas emphasised the importance of recognising the full spectrum of craft expertise, from emerging practitioners to master artisans. Innovation arises through exposure to diverse techniques while remaining grounded in tradition.

She argued that sustainable craft development requires structural support beyond market access, including zoning policies, creative clusters, and institutional backing. Viewing crafts solely through economic lenses risks overlooking their cultural and social significance.

"Technique must be deeply rooted for innovation to grow."

Enabling Contemporary Craft Ecosystems



Training

Training across skill levels



Creative Spaces

Access to creative spaces



Experimentation

Support for experimentation



Regulatory Reform

Removal of regulatory barriers



Partnerships

Long-term institutional partnerships

Cross-Cutting Insights

Across the panel, three interlocking dimensions of craft as living heritage emerged:

1. Transmission as Infrastructure

Craft survival depends on active intergenerational transfer of knowledge rather than static preservation.

2. Livelihood and Dignity

Economic viability is essential to sustaining cultural practices.

3. Social Impact

Craft contributes to wellbeing, identity, and community cohesion.

Social Impact Dimensions

The panel highlighted multiple areas where crafts contribute to development:

Psychosocial Wellbeing

Structured activity and community engagement reduce stress and trauma.

Gender Inclusion

Women gain economic agency and social recognition.

Youth Engagement

Skills transmission strengthens identity and belonging.

Community Cohesion

Collective production rebuilds social networks.

Cultural Preservation

Living practices sustain heritage more effectively than static conservation.

"Artisans carry not only skills, but histories, values, and futures."

Conclusion

Panel 6 reaffirmed that crafts are not relics of the past but dynamic forces shaping social resilience and cultural continuity. Effective support requires integrated approaches linking heritage preservation, humanitarian protection, education, and economic development.

By foregrounding artisans as knowledge holders and community leaders, the panel contributed a people-centred perspective essential to building inclusive creative economies.

"To safeguard heritage is to safeguard the people who carry it."

Panel 7

Crafting the Future: Technology, Ethics & Digital Transition

Moderator: Mr. Sundeep Kumar (Asia)

Panelists: Dr. Xu Niansha (China) · Mr. Sahel Alhiyari (Jordan) · Mr. Abhishek Kumar (India)

This panel examined how digital technologies, artificial intelligence, platforms, and data systems are reshaping the craft sector globally. Discussions focused on how these tools can expand preservation, market access, and innovation while safeguarding authenticity, community ownership, and artisan rights. The panel emphasized that technology must function as an ethical enabler rather than a disruptive force that extracts value or erodes cultural integrity.

Context and Key Themes

Digital transformation is rapidly altering how crafts are documented, produced, marketed, and consumed. While new tools promise unprecedented visibility and economic opportunity, they also raise concerns about authorship, cultural appropriation, algorithmic bias, and displacement of artisanal knowledge. The panel brought together perspectives from East Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia to explore how diverse societies are negotiating these tensions.

📌 Key Themes of the Session

- **Technology as Preservation Tool:** Digital archives, cloud platforms, and AI can safeguard endangered techniques and knowledge.
- **Technology as Market Enabler:** Digital platforms expand access but reshape value capture and authorship.
- **Ethics as Governance Framework:** Without ethical safeguards, digital systems can commodify or distort heritage.
- **Human Skill as Irreplaceable Core:** Embodied knowledge and cultural context remain beyond algorithmic replication.



Mr. Sundeep Kumar
Vice President World Crafts
Council – Asia Region



Technology as a Tool for Preservation, Innovation, and Global Exchange

Dr. Xu Niansha (China)
President, China Arts and Crafts Association

Dr. Xu presented a comprehensive overview of China's vast arts and crafts sector and its ongoing digital transformation. He highlighted the scale of the industry — employing tens of millions and generating hundreds of billions of dollars annually — and underscored its deep historical roots spanning more than two millennia.

China's approach to digital transition centers on systematic documentation and preservation. A flagship initiative is the multi-volume China Arts and Crafts Encyclopedia, which uses high-resolution imaging, video recording, and digital archiving to safeguard endangered techniques and patterns. Cloud platforms and centralized databases enable storage, sharing, and research access, while blockchain technologies are being explored to ensure authenticity and traceability.

Dr. Xu also described the use of artificial intelligence to analyse traditional designs and generate variations that artisans can refine. Rather than replacing creativity, AI is positioned as a tool that enhances efficiency and stimulates inspiration. However, he stressed that master artisans' cultural knowledge, intuition, and social understanding remain irreplaceable. Industrial automation is increasingly used for preliminary manufacturing stages, but handwork retains higher cultural and market value due to its individuality and emotional resonance. Government support, industry associations, and hybrid funding models play critical roles in sustaining these initiatives. Ultimately, Dr. Xu argued that technology should build bridges between past and future, tradition and innovation, enabling cultural exchange while protecting intellectual property and authenticity.

"Digital technology must preserve memory, not replace mastery."



Digital Archives

High-resolution imaging, video recording, and cloud platforms to preserve endangered techniques



AI-Assisted Design

AI analyses traditional patterns and generates variations for artisans to refine



Blockchain Traceability

Ensuring authenticity and provenance through decentralized verification



Human-Tech Balance

Automation for preliminary stages; handwork retains cultural and market value





Safeguarding Craft Knowledge in the Age of Algorithms

Mr. Sahel Alhiyari (Jordan)
Architect and Artist

Mr. Alhiyari offered a philosophical and structural analysis of craft within technological modernity. He described craft as historically embedded within daily life, integrating environment, belief systems, material knowledge, and social relations. Knowledge transmission occurred through apprenticeship and repetition rather than formal authorship.

Industrialisation — and later the creative economy — separated thinking from making, reframing craft through visibility, individuality, and novelty. Digital technologies intensify this shift by prioritising precision, optimisation, and repeatability, often flattening the embodied intelligence that defines traditional craft.

Mr. Alhiyari distinguished sharply between digital tools and digital platforms. Tools can extend craft capabilities when they support experimentation and material engagement. Platforms, however, operate through economic logics of scale, competition, and algorithmic visibility, which can conflict with craft's slower, community-based modes of production.

He proposed the concept of a "digital guild" as an alternative governance model, where platforms would prioritize continuity, quality, and livelihoods rather than virality and exposure. Historical guild systems regulated standards, protected workers, and structured transmission — functions largely absent in today's digital marketplace.

The speaker also cautioned against superficial integration of craft into contemporary design ecosystems. Meaningful collaboration requires structural integration of craft's temporal logic — patience, repetition, depth — rather than aesthetic appropriation. In the Middle Eastern context, he noted that many technological initiatives focus on presentation and promotion rather than material research or production innovation. Greater integration between craft knowledge and technological development is needed to avoid dependency on imported systems.

“When craft becomes content, we risk losing the culture that made it meaningful.”

Digital Tools vs. Digital Platforms

Digital Tools: Extend capabilities of making and preservation

Digital Platforms: Reshape markets, authorship, and value distribution

Key Risk: Visibility may increase while livelihoods decline

Ethical Dimensions and Blockchain Innovation



Mr. Abhishek Kumar (India)
Digital Leader & Craftpreneur

Mr. Kumar addressed the ethical dimensions of digital marketing, data use, and authenticity in the global craft marketplace. He argued that representation itself is a form of power: portraying artisans as objects of charity undermines their expertise and devalues their work. Instead, digital storytelling should emphasize mastery, technical complexity, and cultural knowledge. Premium pricing must reflect skill and durability, not sympathy for hardship.

He introduced blockchain technology as a transformative tool for protecting provenance and combating exploitation. By assigning unique digital identities to individual objects, blockchain can create a verifiable chain of custody from workshop to buyer. Time-stamped records of sketches, processes, and materials provide legal evidence of authorship and deter counterfeiting. Transparency is increasingly important to contemporary consumers, who seek assurance regarding ethical sourcing and genuine handmade production. Blockchain systems can document material origins and production stages, supporting sustainability claims and preventing "greenwashing."

Mr. Kumar also emphasized data ethics. Personalization should enhance relationships between artisans and collectors, not become intrusive surveillance. Responsible digital engagement builds trust and long-term market value.

Finally, he noted that digital documentation of making processes can serve as a training resource for future generations, turning technology into a tool for transmission as well as commerce.

"We must sell mastery, not misery."

Blockchain Applications for Crafts

Provenance tracking

Verifiable chain of custody from workshop to buyer

Intellectual property protection

Legal evidence of authorship and design ownership

Verification of handmade production

Authentic documentation of craft processes

Ethical sourcing transparency

Material origins and sustainability claims

Training archives for future artisans

Digital documentation as transmission tool



Collective Insights

Across regions and disciplines, speakers converged on several key conclusions:

1. Technology is not neutral; it embodies economic and cultural assumptions that shape outcomes.
2. Preservation and innovation can coexist when digital systems respect traditional knowledge structures.
3. Human skill, cultural context, and tacit knowledge remain irreplaceable.
4. Governance frameworks — legal, institutional, and ethical — are essential to prevent exploitation.
5. Market access must not come at the expense of authorship, dignity, or community ownership.

Risks Identified

Loss of Context

Craft detached from cultural meaning

Value Extraction

Intermediaries capturing economic benefits

Standardisation

Erosion of diversity and individuality

Algorithmic Bias

Visibility determined by platform logic

Misappropriation

Unauthorised reproduction of designs

Collective Contribution of the Panel

The panel provided a multidimensional framework for navigating digital transition in the craft sector. By combining large-scale institutional experience, critical theoretical insight, and entrepreneurial practice, it articulated a balanced pathway between technological adoption and cultural safeguarding. Its collective value lay in:

- Demonstrating that technology can strengthen craft ecosystems when guided by ethics and governance
- Highlighting concrete tools — archives, blockchain, digital storytelling — that protect authenticity and livelihoods
- Offering alternative models for digital platforms grounded in continuity rather than exploitation
- Providing policymakers and institutions with principles for responsible digital integration
- Contributing forward-looking recommendations to the Kuwait Declaration on managing technological change in heritage sectors

Closing Reflection

The discussion reaffirmed that the future of crafts will not be determined solely by technological capability, but by collective choices about values, rights, and cultural responsibility. Digital systems can either accelerate cultural erosion or enable a renaissance of living traditions — depending on how they are designed and governed. **Technology must serve culture — not the other way around.**

Panel 8

Sustainable Fashion & Craft Futures Climate, Circularity & Responsible Design

Moderator: Mr. Nik Faiz Nik M Amin (Malaysia)

Panelists: Ms. Maha Ghanim Al Sulaiti (Qatar) · Ms. Harita Kapur (New Zealand) · Dr. Sonika Soni Khar (India)

Introduction

This panel examined how craft knowledge can transform fashion from a resource-intensive industry into a regenerative system grounded in cultural continuity, environmental stewardship, and social justice. Moving beyond the notion of artisans as decorative contributors, the discussion positioned craft practitioners as central actors in shaping climate-responsible and ethically grounded fashion futures. Participants emphasized that sustainable fashion cannot be achieved solely through new materials or technologies; it requires systemic change in values, production models, education, and power relations within global supply chains. Craft traditions—rooted in locality, durability, reparability, and intergenerational transmission—offer proven pathways toward circular and low-impact production.

"Sustainable fashion will not be invented in laboratories alone — it already exists in craft traditions."



Indigenous Knowledge as Regenerative Design Infrastructure



Ms. Harita Kapur (New Zealand)
Academic, Researcher, & Design Professional

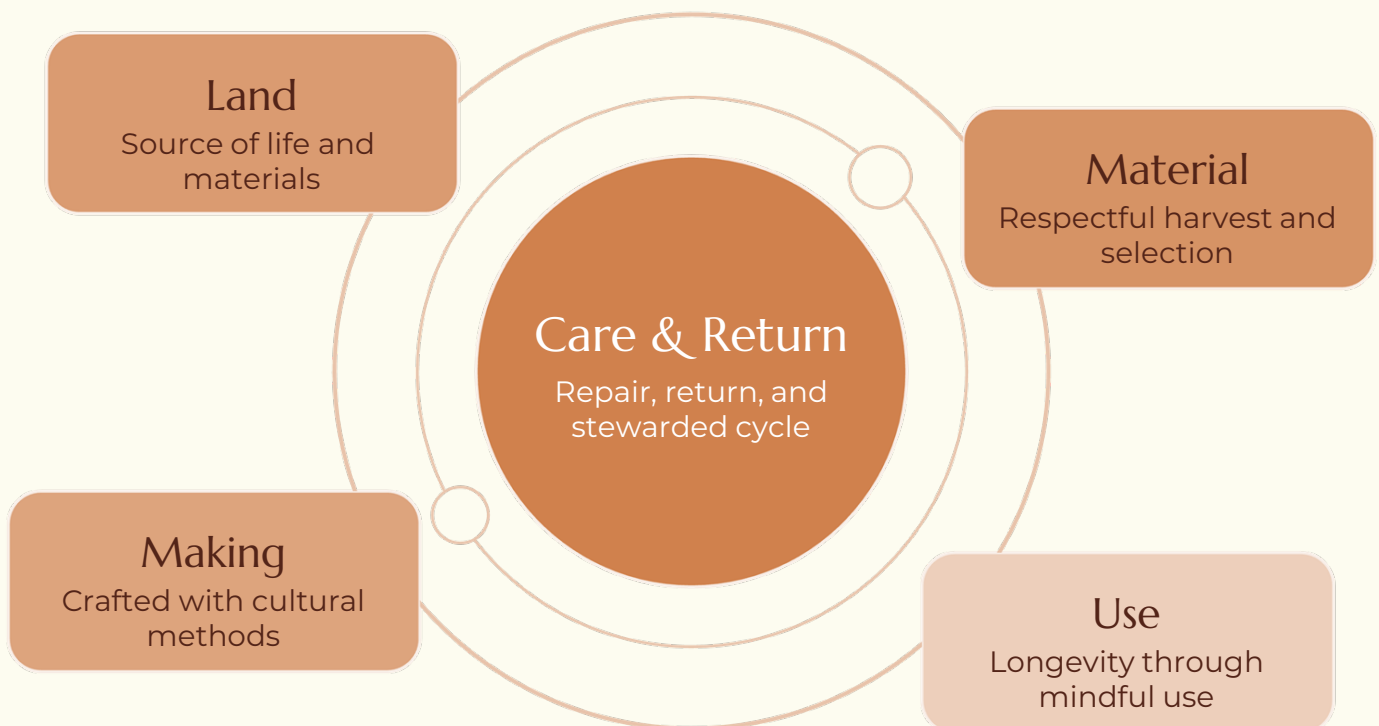
Ms. Kapur emphasized that Indigenous knowledge systems and craft practices constitute living ecological intelligence developed over centuries of interaction with specific landscapes. These systems prioritize reciprocity with nature, minimal waste, and relational ethics—principles directly aligned with contemporary sustainability goals. She argued that such knowledge must not be treated as supplementary inspiration but embedded at the core of design education and practice. Extractive learning models that appropriate techniques without understanding cultural context risk perpetuating colonial dynamics while undermining sustainability itself. True regenerative futures, she noted, require a shift from product-centric thinking toward whole-systems approaches that consider materials, community wellbeing, cultural continuity, and long-term environmental impact.

Principles of Indigenous-Craft Sustainability

- Place-based material use
- Respect for ecological limits
- Intergenerational accountability
- Collective stewardship
- Repair, reuse, and longevity
- Cultural protocols governing production

"Indigenous knowledge is not heritage of the past — it is technology for the future."

Regenerative Design Loop



This regenerative loop demonstrates how Indigenous craft systems create closed-loop production cycles where materials return to the land, guided by cultural knowledge and stewardship principles that ensure ecological balance.

Women-Led Craft Economies & Inclusive Fashion Value Chains



Dr. Sonika Soni Khar (India)
Design Educator

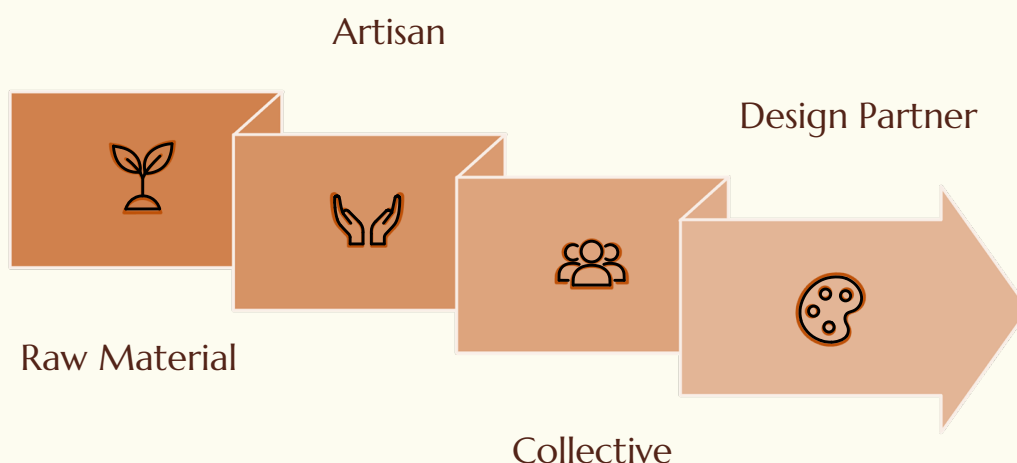
Dr. Khar presented India's craft sector as a major engine of rural livelihoods, gender empowerment, and cultural continuity. With millions of artisans—most of them women—the sector demonstrates how craft-based production can sustain communities while preserving traditional knowledge. Examples such as Kantha embroidery, Sujani textiles, water hyacinth products, and handloom cooperatives illustrate how linking traditional skills to ethical fashion markets can generate stable incomes while reducing migration and social vulnerability. She highlighted the role of government programmes, cooperatives, NGOs, and financial initiatives in supporting infrastructure, training, and market access. Platforms such as the Government e-Marketplace and cluster development schemes help integrate artisans into formal economic systems. However, significant challenges remain limited working capital, lack of digital skills, dependence on intermediaries, and persistent undervaluation of labour. Fair pricing and long-term contracts were identified as essential for sustainable livelihoods.

"Craft is not a marginal sector — it is a foundation of rural economies."

Policy Instruments Supporting Craft-Based Fashion (India)

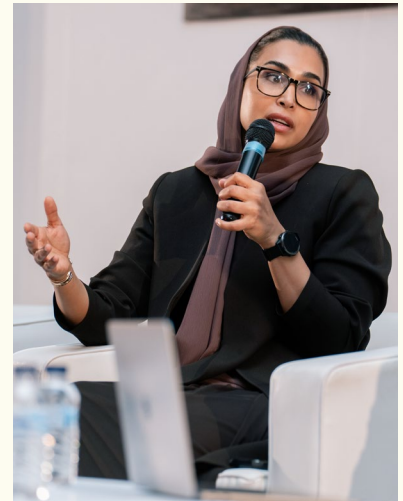
- National Handloom Development Programme
- Cluster Development Schemes
- One District One Product initiative
- Micro-finance and subsidy programmes
- State cooperatives and marketing corporations
- Artisan identification and registration systems

Inclusive Craft Value Chain



This inclusive value chain model demonstrates how policy support and fair pricing mechanisms create sustainable pathways for artisans to access markets while maintaining economic dignity and cultural integrity.

Elevating Artisans from Suppliers to Cultural Authors



Ms. Maha Ghanim Al Sulaiti (Qatar)
Director, M7

Ms. Al Sulaiti emphasized the fashion industry’s responsibility to meaningfully integrate artisans into core design and production processes, rather than treating craft as surface decoration or post-design embellishment. Direct, long-term collaboration with artisan communities helps ensure that traditional skills are transmitted across generations, cultural protocols are respected, and economic benefits flow equitably to the source communities. She argued that fashion is not merely a commercial sector but a powerful platform for cultural expression, identity formation, and narrative ownership. When communities retain agency over how their traditions are interpreted and presented, craft becomes a tool of empowerment and cultural diplomacy rather than appropriation or tokenism.

She further highlighted the importance of visibility and recognition mechanisms—such as awards, curated exhibitions, media platforms, and co-branding models—that place artisans alongside designers as equal creative partners. Public acknowledgment of authorship strengthens dignity, encourages youth participation, and reinforces pride in heritage. Elevating artisans’ status within the fashion ecosystem not only safeguards cultural continuity but also enhances perceived value, authenticity, and competitiveness in global markets, contributing to more ethical and resilient fashion systems overall.

"Craft survives when artisans are visible as creators, not invisible as labour."

Strategies for Artisan-Centred Fashion

- Co-creation between designers and artisans
- Transparent attribution of authorship
- Recognition and award systems
- Direct market access
- Inclusion in sustainability dialogues
- Cultural narrative ownership

From Supply Chain to Collaboration Network

TRADITIONAL MODEL:

Artisan → Manufacturer → Brand Owner

SUSTAINABLE MODEL:

Artisan ⇄ Designer ⇄ Brand ⇄ Consumer



Shared Value & Authorship

Cross-Cutting Insights

Despite regional differences, panelists converged on several key principles:



Sustainability is Cultural as Much as Environmental

Craft traditions embody low-impact production systems shaped by long-term ecological knowledge.



Equity is Central to Sustainability

Environmental goals cannot be separated from fair wages, gender inclusion, and dignified livelihoods.



Education is a Critical Lever

Design education must cultivate ethical responsibility, cultural literacy, and systems thinking.



Recognition Drives Preservation

When artisans receive visibility and status, younger generations are more likely to pursue craft careers.

Integrated Framework for Sustainable Craft Fashion



This craft-based fashion ecosystem illustrates how cultural heritage and innovation work together to create sustainable cycles that support both traditional knowledge transmission and contemporary market needs.

Conclusion

Panel 8 demonstrated that sustainable fashion futures depend not on technological substitution alone but on re-centering human knowledge systems, cultural integrity, and equitable economic relationships. Craft traditions offer tested models of circularity, durability, and social embeddedness—qualities urgently needed in an era of climate crisis and overconsumption. By positioning artisans as co-creators rather than suppliers, strengthening institutional support, and embedding Indigenous and craft knowledge into education and industry, fashion can evolve into a system that sustains both planet and people.

"The future of fashion lies not in faster production, but in wiser making."

Panel 9

Markets, Livelihoods & Equitable Value Chains

From Artisan Survival to Sustainable Prosperity

Moderator: Prof. Somesh Singh (India)

Panellists: Ms. Lafitaga Mafaufau-Peters (New Zealand); Ms. Rocio Blazquez (Mexico); Ms. Salma Al Qatawneh (Jordan); Mr. Yerik Nurlanuly Begaliyev (Kazakhstan)

Introduction

This panel examined how craft economies can move beyond subsistence towards sustainable prosperity, focusing on fair pricing, ethical trade, procurement systems, tourism markets, and institutional frameworks that support dignified livelihoods. The discussion emphasised that inequity in craft markets is not inevitable but results from how value chains are designed and governed.

Overview

Across Indigenous, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Central Asian contexts, speakers highlighted a shared challenge: artisans are often positioned at the weakest end of the value chain despite being its primary value creators. The panel reframed crafts not as marginal cultural outputs but as complex socio-economic systems requiring coordinated policy, market, and institutional interventions. Three interrelated pathways emerged:

Recognition of Cultural Value

Beyond market price

Fair Market Structures

Professional support

Ecosystem Development

Linking production, tourism, and entrepreneurship



Prof. Somesh Singh
Steering Committee
Member, World Crafts
Council - AISBL

Collective Value, Cultural Authority & Indigenous Market Ethics

Ms. Lafitaga Mafaufau-Peters
(New Zealand)

Samoan Cultural Leader and Senior Advisor

Ms. Mafaufau-Peters presented a Pacific and Māori perspective in which craft value is defined primarily by ancestral meaning, community responsibility, and relational ethics, rather than commercial metrics alone. Pacific crafts—considered *measina* or *taonga* (treasures)—are embedded in ceremony, identity, and daily life. Pricing based solely on market demand risks undervaluing both labour and cultural knowledge.

"Value is the cultural, ancestral and relational meaning embedded in the craft—not just its sale price."

She stressed that knowledge is often collectively held. Without appropriate protection, globalisation can lead to misappropriation, dilution, or mass reproduction of sacred forms. Collective intellectual property rights therefore become essential tools for safeguarding authenticity and community authority. A widely cited case involved the unauthorised use of Samoan tattoo motifs by a global brand, demonstrating the vulnerability of Indigenous cultural expressions within global markets.

Equally important was the role of collective negotiation. Pacific women's weaving groups in New Zealand establish shared pricing and quality standards, enabling artisans to negotiate as a unified body rather than as isolated producers.

"When artisans negotiate as a collective, they shift from price takers to cultural decision makers."

Relational ethics—prioritising trust, respect, and long-term relationships—were presented as foundational to equitable exchange.



Indigenous Principles for Ethical Craft Markets

Core Values Identified

- Collective custodianship of knowledge
- Cultural protocols guiding exchange
- Stewardship over ownership
- Relationship before transaction
- Protection of dignity (mana)



Commercialisation as Socio-economic Empowerment

Ms. Rocio Blazquez (Mexico)
Art Historian

Representing the Folk Art Support Program of Fomento Cultural Banamex, Ms. Blazquez demonstrated how structured commercial strategies can elevate crafts into competitive creative industries while preserving cultural identity. Over nearly three decades, the programme has provided technical assistance, exhibitions, publications, and market access to thousands of artisans. Commercialisation was framed not as exploitation but as a vehicle for development and recognition.

Key strategies include:

- Direct sales ensuring fair compensation
- Professional training in logistics and management
- Placement in high-value international markets



A prominent example was Oaxacan master artisan Remigio Mestas, whose organisation of women weavers across communities has enabled large-scale production of high-quality textiles while maintaining traditional techniques and natural dyes. Through targeted support, his work has reached luxury markets and international collectors, transforming perceptions of Mexican folk art from souvenir to world-class artistic production.

"Commercialisation becomes empowerment when artisans control the process and retain cultural ownership."

Three Pillars of Artisan Market Development

Technical & Administrative Support

Skills, logistics, organisation

Diffusion

Exhibitions, publications, cultural visibility

Commercial Access

Direct sales, fairs, global positioning

Market Misalignment & Co-Creation as a Path to Sustainability

Ms. Salma Al Qatawneh (Jordan)
Interior Architect and Product Designer

Ms. Al Qatawneh argued that crafts rarely disappear due to lack of skill or cultural relevance. Rather, they decline when there is a structural mismatch between production realities and market expectations. Artisans today are frequently expected to compete with industrial goods despite higher labour intensity and material costs. This leads to undervaluation and precarious livelihoods.

She highlighted a historical shift: artisans once served as designers responding directly to clients, whereas modern systems often reduce them to executors of externally defined designs.



"Authenticity is not preserved through repetition—it is sustained through meaningful reinterpretation."

Her work across Jordan, Palestine, and Syria demonstrates the value of co-creation models in which designers act as translators rather than authors. Such approaches restore agency, storytelling, and dignity to artisans while producing goods relevant to contemporary markets. She also emphasised the importance of predictable demand through procurement policies, tourism integration, and long-term partnerships.

Designing Markets for Craft Sustainability

Key Interventions

- Fair value chains
- Co-creation rather than extraction
- Procurement policies favouring local crafts
- Material tax exemptions
- Tourism-linked demand
- Long-term institutional partnerships



Creative Economy Integration & Urban Craft Ecosystems

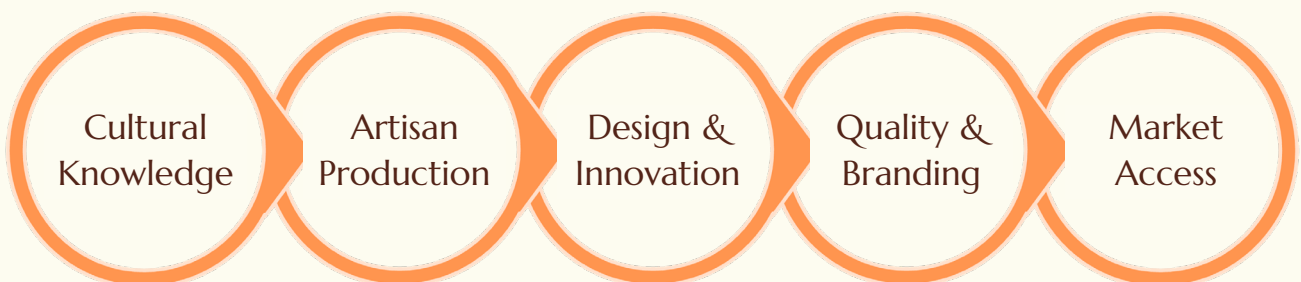
Mr. Yerik Nurlanuly Begaliyev (Kazakhstan)
Chief Specialist — Creative Industries Development,
Almaty Tourism Department

Mr. Begaliyev presented Almaty as a model for transforming traditional craftsmanship into a modern sector of creative entrepreneurship. Crafts are integrated into a comprehensive value chain including design, branding, marketing, tourism, and export. Institutional support—through training programmes, creative hubs, and financial incentives—strengthens entrepreneurial capacity and competitiveness.

Permanent infrastructure such as workshops, galleries, fairs, and creative clusters ensures sustained visibility and market engagement. Youth programmes combine traditional skills with digital marketing and design training, positioning craftsmanship as a viable contemporary profession. Recognition as a World Craft City further enhances international cooperation and cultural diplomacy.

"Craft becomes sustainable when embedded in a full creative ecosystem, not treated as an isolated activity."

Equitable Craft Value Chain



This diagram illustrates how cultural knowledge transforms into community prosperity through a supported value chain with enabling factors operating across all stages.



Components of a Modern Craft Ecosystem

Training & Mentorship

Creative Hubs

Financial Instruments

Tourism Integration

International Partnerships

Social Entrepreneurship

Cross-Cutting Insights & Implications

01

Value Is Cultural as Well as Economic

Pricing mechanisms must reflect knowledge, identity, and labour, not merely market demand.

02

Collective Agency Strengthens Negotiation Power

Community governance structures can protect authenticity and improve incomes.

03

Markets Must Be Designed, Not Assumed

Fair outcomes depend on procurement systems, regulation, and long-term demand.

04

Professionalisation Enables Competitiveness

Training in branding, logistics, and business skills is as important as technical mastery.

05

Ecosystem Approaches Deliver Sustainability

Infrastructure, finance, tourism, and policy must operate in alignment.

"Sustainable prosperity for artisans emerges not from isolated projects but from equitable systems that recognise culture as value and communities as economic actors."

Conclusions

The panel's findings support policy directions that:

- Embed crafts within national development strategies
- Promote ethical trade and transparent value chains
- Protect Indigenous and community intellectual property
- Expand tourism-linked markets benefiting local producers
- Provide institutional and financial support mechanisms

Panel 9 demonstrated that moving from artisan survival to sustainable prosperity requires systemic transformation. Equitable craft economies depend on recognising cultural value, empowering collective agency, aligning markets with production realities, and building supportive ecosystems. When these elements converge, crafts become not only sources of income but engines of dignity, resilience, and inclusive growth. The panel affirmed that equitable value chains are essential for ensuring that artisans remain central beneficiaries of the creative economy they sustain.



Speaker Profiles

Featuring distinguished moderators and panelists from across the globe, representing the World Crafts Council regions and leading institutions in culture, heritage, and the creative economy.



Mr. Sundeep Kumar (Asia)

Vice President, World Crafts Council – Asia Region

Has over four decades of leadership across craft and design, communication, branding, and strategic management. His professional journey spans senior roles with leading global corporations and international advertising agencies, alongside a deep, enduring commitment to culture, heritage, and the crafts sector.

As former CEO of Craft Béton and a key member of the Craft Village team, he has contributed significantly to the conservation and promotion of UNESCO heritage sites and to building integrated museum and tourism ecosystems. A postgraduate of Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, he is the recipient of India's first Cannes Silver Lion, an AME Award at the New York Festivals, and recognition from the International Advertising Association.

Sundeep has taught at National Institute of Design and National Institute of Fashion Technology and developed the 4Ps Model for the craft sector—Product, Production, Pricing, and Promotion & Packaging—empowering hundreds of artisans and communities. Through WCC-APR, he continues to bridge policy, branding, and grassroots engagement to position craft as a driver of cultural and economic transformation.



Ms. Carol Robertson Lopez (USA)

President, World Crafts Council – North America Region

Chair-Emeritus of Sister Cities International, having previously served four terms on its Board, including two years as Chair. She is Chair of the Santa Fe Sister Cities Committee and the Bukhara/Santa Fe Sister City, and a past president of the International Women's Forum–New Mexico and American Women for International Understanding. A founding board member of the Santa Fe International Folk-Art Market, she has long championed cultural diplomacy.

Carol served two terms on the Santa Fe City Council, six years as Mayor Pro Tempore, chaired key committees, and secured funding for the Southside Library. She also served as State President of the New Mexico Municipal League and chaired the International Council for the National League of Cities. Her public service includes senior administrative roles across New Mexico state government, earning the Governor's Award for Outstanding New Mexico Women.

She is Honorary Consul for Uzbekistan, an Honorary Citizen of Bukhara and Icheon, and was named a People's Friendship Ambassador in China in 2025. She currently serves as President of the World Crafts Council–North America Region.



Dr. Sonika Soni Khar (India)

Design Educator

Working as an associate professor at Symbiosis Institute of design and has over 24 years of experience in design education, professional practice, and research. Her areas of expertise include design processes, zero-waste pattern making, experimental draping, visible mending, and material manipulation. Her work bridges theoretical inquiry into design pedagogies with their practical application in fashion and textile product development, with a strong emphasis on craft and traditional techniques.

She has served as a member of the organizing committees for IFFTI 2022, GFC 2024, and NCPHH 2025. Her professional practice includes costume design for the Oscar-nominated foreign language film *Paheli*. She is the author of *Dharohar* and a co-founder of the brand *Beyni-Boi*. Her garment *Ganga: To Earth from Heaven* was selected as one of four finalists from India at the *World of WearableArt*, Wellington, New Zealand (2018).



Ms. Ikromi Nigina Nemon (Tajikistan)

Cultural Practitioner & Craft-sector Professional

Ikromi Nigina is committed to the preservation, revitalisation, and contemporary positioning of traditional crafts. With a background rooted in heritage practice and community engagement, she works at the intersection of artisanship, cultural identity, and sustainable livelihoods. Her experience spans collaboration with artisan communities, development of craft-based initiatives, and engagement with institutions and platforms that support craft transmission and market access.

Nigina's work emphasises the role of crafts as living knowledge systems—carrying history, skills, and social meaning—while also recognising their potential within modern creative economies. She is particularly focused on women-led craft practices, intergenerational transmission of skills, and ethical approaches to craft promotion that respect community ownership and cultural integrity.

Through her practice and advocacy, Ikromi Nigina contributes to broader conversations on how traditional crafts can remain relevant, resilient, and economically viable, while continuing to serve as anchors of cultural identity and community cohesion.



Dr. Darlie O. Koshy

Strategic Advisor, World Crafts Council - AISBL

With a PhD in Management (IIT Delhi) and Faculty Fellowship in Fashion Marketing from FIT, NY has held leadership positions in Handloom- Fashion Industries and Professorship of Academic Institutions like NIFT(Delhi), NID (Ahmedabad) IAM- ATDC (Delhi) etc. As the Director of National Institute of Design and Founding Chairman of NDBI for a decade he had steered India's very First National Design Policy (2007) which proved transformational.

Recipient of several International - National Awards (Star of Italian Solidarity of Govt of Italy, 'Il Ponte Award for Design for Development, Manchester TI Holden Medal, Outstanding Alumni of IITD et al). Dr Koshy is a noted author for eight books including Effective Export Marketing, Indian Design Edge, RUNway to Skilled India and All By Design etc.

Since 2023 he has been the Strategic Advisor of WCC-AISBL and Steering group member and his current research area revolves around the CREATIVE ECONOMY



Shaikha Fouz Fahad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)

Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief, Khaleejesque

Founder of Khaleejesque, an award-winning media platform documenting and analyzing the Arab Gulf's creative industries since 2009, and of Khaleejesque Consultancy, which delivers strategy and research for the region's creative economy. Committed to expanding opportunities for youth, creatives, and entrepreneurs, she has led Kuwait's first creative economy strategy in partnership with the National Council of Culture, Arts, and Letters and developed a strategic and investment plan for Oman's creative and cultural industries.

Her work spans research and advisory projects with government bodies and nonprofit foundations across Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. In 2019, she received the British Council Alumni Award for Entrepreneurship and was shortlisted for the Global Alumni Awards. A frequent speaker and academic contributor, she has presented at the World Conference on Creative Economy 2024 in Uzbekistan and the Creative Women Forum 2024 in Riyadh. She holds a BBA from the American University of Kuwait and an MA in Cultural and Creative Industries from King's College, London, and is a Fellow of the Middle East Leadership Initiative and member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.



Mr. Marcus Höpperger (WIPO)

Senior Director Department for Trademarks, Industrial Designs and Geographical Indications, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

He leads policy formulation and strategic direction for trademarks, industrial designs, and geographical indications, provides legislative advice to WIPO Member States, and oversees the administration of the Lisbon System for the international registration of geographical indications and appellations of origin. His department also implements wide-ranging cooperation projects with Member States.

Since joining WIPO, Mr. Höpperger has held several senior roles in international intellectual property law, including Director of the Madrid System for the International Registration of Marks. In his current role, he serves as Secretary to WIPO's Standing Committee on the Law of Trademarks, Industrial Designs and Geographical Indications. He has played a key role in major multilateral negotiations, including diplomatic conferences leading to landmark international treaties on trademarks, geographical indications, and industrial design law.



Ms. Lubna Saif Abbas (Kuwait)

Cultural Practitioner & Craft-sector Professional

Representing the Yadawi Collective (Yadawi.org), Lubna Saif Abbas brings a practice rooted in glass, design, and contemporary and traditional fine craft. Her work bridges traditional techniques—spanning glassmaking beadwork, textiles, and clay—with fresh, market-aware perspectives that speak to today's creative landscape.

A lifelong fascination with material culture began at age six during travels through Cherokee reservations in the United States, later shaped by formal studies in Graphic Design (Bachelor of Arts and Sciences) and Art History at the American University in Washington, D.C. Parallel to a 15-year career in Marketing Communications.

Lubna deepened her studio practice, developing a distinctive language in glass. Her piece "Fossil Paths" was a finalist in the Bead Museum's First International Juried Competition, reflecting her interest in memory, pattern, and place. Lubna's initiatives extend across the region's cultural scene: co-founder of TypeCal, the first regional symposium dedicated to calligraphy and typography; founder of Elamakin 1746, advocating for cultural and green urban spaces; and co-founder of the Yadawi Collective, a platform that champions artisans through exhibitions and collaborations.



Dr. Jawaher Al Bader (Kuwait)

Artist, Architect, and Art Education Expert

With over two decades of faculty experience at Kuwait University, she holds a Ph.D. in Art Education, an MFA from Pratt Institute, and dual degrees (BArch/BFA) from RISD, her practice bridges the gap between academic discipline and the rhythmic, daily act of creation.

As the co-founder and visionary behind TIBA'A (www.tcpckw.com), she has spearheaded a regional movement to reclaim printmaking as a vital, popular craft. She views the medium as a modern continuation of the Fertile Crescent's legacy—a region historically rich in ancient craft and communal innovation. For Dr. Al Bader, printmaking is a deeply tactile process that restores the vital connection between our bodies and our craft. Through her communal space, Art Studio Kuwait, she fosters an environment where the "human mark" serves as a catalyst for connection, using the art of the print to bridge disciplines and bring us closer to our shared human experience.



Ms. Mashael Al Ali (UAE)

Head, House of Artisans, Abu Dhabi

She is a cultural and creative industries professional dedicated to preserving and advancing traditional crafts and design innovation in the United Arab Emirates. As Head of the House of Artisans at the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, she oversees strategic initiatives that preserve, develop, and promote Emirati crafts by connecting traditional artisans with contemporary designers, institutions, and markets. Her work bridges cultural preservation with modern creative practice, ensuring that crafts remain both authentic and economically sustainable within evolving cultural and commercial landscapes.

Mashael brings extensive experience across architecture, design management, and creative entrepreneurship, enabling her to develop integrated programs that strengthen artisan capacity, foster market access, and support youth and artisan-led enterprises. Through her role, she cultivates cross-sector partnerships and sustainable creative ecosystems that link heritage, design, and business development, contributing to positioning Abu Dhabi as a regional hub for culture-driven innovation, where traditional crafts are recognized not only as living heritage, but also as drivers of social impact, economic opportunity, and long-term cultural resilience.



Dr. Pick Keobandith (Belgium)

Art and Cultural Diplomacy Expert

Has over 30 years' experience in the global art industry. Holding a PhD in History of Art, she combines deep scholarly insight with hands-on market expertise.

In 2016, she founded Inspiring Culture, an international platform dedicated to fostering dialogue, collaboration and exchange through art. Specialising in contemporary and modern art, Dr. Pick Keobandith works as an art dealer, curator, consultant and strategist across diverse markets. She directs a worldwide team overseeing exhibitions and cultural initiatives that connect artists, museums, curators, and institutions across continents.

She is also editor of the art magazine Target Global, a publication committed to building bridges between Asia and the rest of the world through art and culture while shaping conversations around creativity, heritage, and diplomacy. Since 2025, Dr. Pick Keobandith is advisor to the President of World Craft Council International.



Dr. Yalda Mahootchian Asl (Turkiye)

Multidisciplinary Strategist

Specialises in project development, business launch, and the creation of innovative cultural platforms. She serves as the Founder and President of the ICTI (International Culture, Tourism and Investment) Association in Türkiye and is the official representative of the World Crafts Council (WCC) in the country. With extensive international experience, Yalda designs sustainable models that integrate culture, creativity, and modern business practices.

Her work focuses on developing cultural ecosystems, supporting artisans, and revitalizing heritage by transforming traditional values into meaningful elements of contemporary life. Through strategic planning, project leadership, and cross-sector collaboration, she connects artists, institutions, and global creative networks to build long-term opportunities.

Her mission is to strengthen cultural diplomacy, encourage creative entrepreneurship, and enable communities to benefit from their cultural assets. With a holistic approach and a strong commitment to cultural innovation, she continues to lead impactful projects that promote sustainability, artistic exchange, and international cooperation.



Prof. Somesh Singh

Steering Committee Member, World Crafts Council - AISBL

Co-Founder of Craft Village and a leading fashion and craft educator in India. An alumnus of National Institute of Fashion Technology (Gandhinagar), he is former Director and Board Member of the Institute of Apparel Management (AEPC–Ministry of Textiles, Govt of India) and previously headed Apparel Design at National Institute of Design. To strengthen innovation culture, he pursued Innovation & Design studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Prof. Singh has served on national committees for creative and apparel education under AICTE and the Ministry of Textiles. His professional work includes designing Gujarat Police uniforms and contributing to specialized apparel for the Indian Army. Widely covered by international and Indian media, his recent decade of work has focused on empowering artisans and SMEs through innovation, training, and promotion. He founded 4P Labs, India Craft Week, and the International Craft Awards, helping position Craft Village as a global craft institution, recognized in 2021 as a National Entity by the World Crafts Council.



Mr. Otunba Segun Runsewe (Nigeria)

President World Crafts Council – Africa Region

He is one of Nigeria's most influential leaders in the arts, culture, and tourism sector, with over three decades of transformative public service. Widely regarded as a national cultural icon, he has devoted his career to using arts and culture as instruments of unity, identity, and socio-economic development in a diverse, post-conflict nation.

A trained marketing and management professional, Runsewe has held senior leadership roles across media, public relations, tourism promotion, and cultural institutions. As former Director-General of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, he repositioned Nigeria on the global tourism map through innovative branding and strong international engagement.

Since 2017, as Director-General of the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), he has revitalised national cultural platforms such as NAFEST, expanded skills and employment programmes for youth and women, and championed culture as a driver of peace, inclusion, and economic growth.



Mr. Vikas Verma (Canada)

Designer

A multidisciplinary designer whose work bridges indigenous craft traditions with contemporary design. At Mihyar, a pioneering Saudi brand, he played a key role in redefining cultural menswear by introducing structured design systems, refined fits, and sizing standards while preserving artisanal detailing and fabric innovation. His practice extends to handcrafted footwear and accessories, developed in collaboration with master artisans across India, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

Deeply rooted in craft practice, Vikas has worked with rural and urban artisan clusters, engaging in hand-weaving, embroidery, leatherwork, and natural dyeing. He is co-founder of Craft Alliance Canada, a platform dedicated to promoting indigenous crafts and empowering artisan communities. His work has been showcased internationally, including at the World of Wearable Art in New Zealand and the Makuhari Grand Prix in Japan.

A graduate of NIFT, India, and a former faculty member at NIFT and Manipal University Dubai, Vikas mentors emerging designers in craft-led innovation. Based in British Columbia, he continues to integrate design strategy, craftsmanship, and entrepreneurship to make traditional art forms relevant and sustainable globally.



Dr. Alberto Eugenio de Betolaza Lombardo (Uruguay)

Vice-President, WCC-Latin America Region

An architect and academic, holding a PhD in Architecture from the Higher Technical School of Architecture of Madrid (2015) and a degree in Architecture from the University of the Republic (Uruguay). His career brings together academic teaching, public policy and the strategic development of the craft sector in Latin America. For more than two decades, he served as a full professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the Republic, teaching Architectural Design and History of Architecture.

From 1999 to 2021, he was the Head of the Handicrafts Department at Uruguay's Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining, where he led sectoral analyses, strategic plans for the sustainable development of crafts, as well as programs focused on competitiveness and initiatives linking design, production, and market access.

Internationally, he served as President of the World Crafts Council – Latin America from 2010 to 2018 and currently he holds the position of Vice – President, being recognized as an important figure in advancing crafts policies and sustainable cultural development across the region.

Panel 4



Ms. Luseane Meafoou (New Zealand)

Senior Advisor, Ministry for Pacific Peoples

She is Senior Advisor in the Partnerships and Commissioning team at the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, where she is dedicated to supporting and serving Pacific communities across Aotearoa (New Zealand). A proud Tongan woman born and raised in New Zealand, she is deeply grounded in Pacific values and committed to strengthening cultural identity, language, and community wellbeing.

In her five years with the Ministry, Luseane has played a key role in the Pacific Language Weeks Series (PLWS), contributing to the programme's transition into the Partnerships and Commissioning operating model. She supports the design, delivery, and management of community led initiatives, leads funding workshops across all 12 Pacific languages, and oversees more than 90 contracts with strong accountability and regional engagement. Her work champions innovative language initiatives, including programmes that use arts, crafts, and creative practice as meaningful pathways to language learning and revitalisation. Luseane holds a Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, and Social Policy from Victoria University of Wellington.





Rasul Samadov (Qatar)

Programme Specialist for Culture

Located at the UNESCO Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen based in Doha with more than 16 years of experience working in the field of culture and heritage at the international level. Rasul specializes in creativity, tangible and intangible cultural heritage and has worked for 11 years within the Secretariat of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, at UNESCO HQ.



Jawida Mansour (Qatar)

Cultural Heritage & Urban Development Expert

She has over a decade of experience in heritage conservation, community-based programming, and interdisciplinary project management. She currently serves as a Culture Programme Associate at the UNESCO Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen based in Doha. Jawida holds Master of Science in Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies from KU Leuven and an MA in Heritage Management from the University of Kent.





Prof. Randa Rizk (Egypt)

Academic Professor & Researcher

Her work spans education, culture, social responsibility, and heritage preservation. She serves as Head of Educational Media at Cairo University and Advisor to the President of Egypt and is Secretary General of the Arab Council for Social Responsibility. A specialist in gender sociology and political media, she holds two PhDs and multiple postgraduate qualifications across cultural studies and social sciences.

Prof. Rizk is the Founder of the Beit Rizk Foundation for Heritage Crafts, championing the revival of traditional crafts and the economic empowerment of families through fair trade and community-based initiatives. She has represented Egypt in UNESCO-linked activities and international social development programmes, and has contributed extensively to literacy, women's empowerment, and poverty reduction strategies across the Arab region. Her work integrates heritage safeguarding with sustainable development, positioning crafts as tools of social inclusion, economic resilience, and cultural identity.



Ms. Tayma Abu Hakema (Jordan)

Architect and Cultural Practitioner

With extensive experience across the creative industries and heritage sectors in the Arab region, she has worked at the intersection of design, cultural programming, and heritage safeguarding, including as Exhibitions Lead for Amman Design Week and as UNESCO Local Coordinator in Kuwait with UNESCO GCC–Yemen, contributing to initiatives on crafts, creative economy, and modern heritage. Her work bridges community-based cultural practice with policy and institutional frameworks.





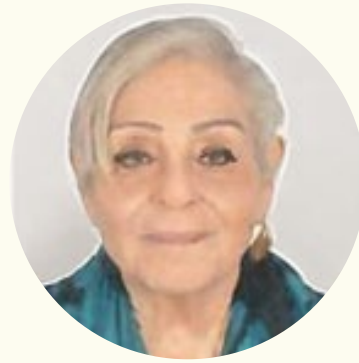
Ms. Barbara Velasco (Chile)

President, World Crafts Council – Latin America Region

Is a cultural policy specialist, anthropologist, and academic with over 17 years of experience shaping public policy for the craft sector across Latin America. She holds a master's degree in communication and teaches Heritage Management at university level, with research focused on cultural policy, living heritage, and sustainable development. An international conference speaker, she regularly contributes to high-level forums and policy dialogues on crafts, cultural governance, and the creative economy.

Barbara has led the formulation of national public policies for the Chilean craft sector and advised regional governance frameworks through international missions and technical consultancies. She has held senior leadership roles within the World Crafts Council Latin America, including Honorary President, and has contributed to global WCC programmes such as Craft Cities, policy consultations, and evaluation committees.

She is Director of Future by Hand, an international platform advancing sustainable craft ecosystems, knowledge transmission, and policy-informed approaches to contemporary craft, grounded in the understanding of crafts as living heritage with cultural, social, and economic value.



Ms. Shahira Mehrez (Egypt)

Collector, Promotor and Researcher of Traditional Architecture, Arts and Crafts

Initially an Art Historian, from the 1980s onwards Shahira Mehrez toured Egypt, documenting and collecting traditional crafts and lecturing, at home and abroad about Egypt's endangered heritage. Her collections of costumes, jewelry and traditional crafts are the most comprehensive in the country. She is currently publishing a four-volume work entitled: Costumes of Egypt, the Lost legacies. The first volume, Dresses of the Nile Valley and its Oases was launched in October 2023, in Cairo. The second volume: Costumes of the Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Peoples of Egypt, is currently under publication. To date she is the manager of El Arish Needle Work, a project reviving the Bedouin embroidery of Northern Sinai.

A one-time member of the board of Trustees of the Museum of Islamic Art, she is also concerned with the safeguarding of endangered historical monuments and is on the board of the Egyptian Heritage Rescue Foundation (EHRF).



Ms. Heidi Christ (Switzerland)

Global Head of MADE51, UNHCR

Has led MADE51, the UN Refugee Agency's initiative connecting refugee craftsmanship with global markets, since developing the concept in 2017. As global lead of MADE51, a UNHCR brand, she has focused on positioning refugee craft within global value chains and the creative economy. She brings over 20 years of experience across the United Nations, NGOs and the private sector, advancing economic opportunities for refugee and displaced women, including through heritage and craftsmanship.

Currently based at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva, Heidi has lived and worked in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Thailand and Lebanon. In addition to her work with UNHCR, she founded WomenCraft Social Enterprise in Tanzania in 2007 and has worked with the Lutheran World Federation, the International Rescue Committee and the World Food Programme, building practical, field-based experience in craft and livelihoods programming, following earlier experience as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Romania focused on small business development.



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Dr. Xu Niansha (China)

President, China Arts and Crafts Association

Chairman of CMIF (China Machinery Industry Federation), Dr. Xu received a Ph.D. in Economics from Peking University and a Ph.D. in Commercial and Civil Law from China University of Politics and Law. Research Fellow at Yale University's J.P. Morgan Project, Visiting professors at Peking University, University of International Business and Economics, China University of Political Science and Law, and Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics.

Dr. XU Niansha is member of the 12th and 13th CPPCC (National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) and its Foreign Affairs Committee. He also holds posts as the Outside Director of Air China Limited and China FAW Group Co., Limited, Chairman of ICC (International Chamber of Commerce) China Commission on Corporate Responsibility and Anti-corruption, the Co-Chair of the Taskforce, and International Advocacy Caucus at the B20 from 2020 to 2025, the Vice President of CNLIC (China National Light Industry Council), and the President of China Arts and Crafts Association (CA&CA). Dr. Xu was the Executive member of ICC and the Senior Vice President of WCC-APR (World Crafts Council-Asia Pacific Region).

Dr. XU served as the Chairman of China Ocean Aviation Group Limited, Vice Chairman of China National Machinery Inc., the Chairman of China Poly Group Corporation, and the Outside Director of COFCO.



Mr. Sahel Alhiyari (Jordan)

Architect and Artist

Founder of the Office of Sahel Alhiyari for Architecture he studied architecture and fine arts at the Rhode Island School of Design, completed a Master of Architecture in Urban Design at Harvard University, and pursued post-graduate work at the University of Venice, where he also taught.

His work spans a wide range of design disciplines, from urban and architectural design to interiors, furniture, installations, and exhibitions. Rooted in the logic of making, his practice bridges architectural design, material research, and existing craft traditions, treating materiality, technique, and context as integral to the design process. Rather than fixed references, traditions and conventions are understood as conditions open to reinterpretation and reinvention.

Sahel has taught and lectured internationally, exhibited widely, and is the recipient of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative, the Great Arab Minds Award, and the King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein Order for Distinction.



Mr. Abhishek Kumar (India)

Digital Leader & Craftpreneur

A Business Management and Marketing professional, he began his career with Barclays Bank before transitioning to the digital sector with Yahoo India, marking a strategic shift toward technology-driven media and communications. With over 14 years of professional experience, he is accredited by Google, Facebook, and Yahoo, and has led large-scale, multi-vertical digital campaigns across international markets.

He has managed multi-million-dollar global campaigns for renowned brands including Microsoft and LG, collaborating with cross-functional teams across geographies to deliver high-impact, measurable outcomes.

An entrepreneur by vision, he founded and successfully scaled a Google-certified digital media marketing company, operating with a multi-million-dollar Google credit line. In recent years, he has emerged as a craftpreneur, channeling his digital expertise toward building a sustainable ecosystem for the preservation, promotion, and global integration of traditional crafts, bridging cultural heritage with contemporary digital platforms



Mr. Nik Faiz Nik M Amin (Malaysia)

Ethical Business / Social Entrepreneur

Since 2007, Faiz has led Gahara Sdn Bhd, managing all business divisions with a deep passion for textiles and batik, guided by a vision to position craft as a sustainable livelihood for his community. His label, Ruzzgahara—internationally launched at Who's Next Paris in 2013—has been featured in British Vogue, British Tatler, and TLC's Passage to Malaysia, weaving rare artisanal skills into timeless collections produced at its own atelier, Rumah Gahara, while reviving ancient batik techniques through sustainable and ethical practices. In 2013, he co-founded iMAGE International Connection Sdn Bhd, facilitating creative collaborations between Malaysia and the United States. Faiz is the founding President of the Malaysian Craft Council (MCC), a UNESCO-accredited NGO and National Entity of the World Craft Council, appointed to the UNESCO Evaluation Body for 2026–2029, where he also serves as Honorary Jury for the International Craft Award. He is a TED speaker in 2022, a member of Malaysia's National Cultural Council, an advisory board member to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (2025–2027), and holds degrees from IIUM and UTM.



Ms. Harita Kapur (New Zealand)

Academic, Researcher, & Design Professional

Over 31 years of experience dedicated to sustainable, regenerative, and socially responsible creative systems. Her work integrates critical thinking, innovation, and leadership to advance design as a catalyst for positive change for people and planet. Through teaching, research, and partnership-building, she has developed strong academic and research collaborations that bridge theory and practice.

As an academic, Harita has advanced ecological and cultural sustainability perspectives, challenging conventional design paradigms through systems thinking that foregrounds environmental integrity, social accountability, and cultural context. Her research-informed, Earth-centred curriculum design connects sustainability with applied practice, fostering values-based learning and a deeper understanding of design's environmental impact.

As Founder and Director of Artisans Cottage, she has championed meaningful collaboration between designers and craft communities, enabling innovation, skill development, and economic sustainability within the craft sector. Her expertise includes ecological design thinking, curriculum development, research partnerships, strategic planning, and sustainability-led systems design.



Dr. Sonika Soni Khar (India)

Design Educator

Working as an associate professor at Symbiosis Institute of design and has over 24 years of experience in design education, professional practice, and research. Her areas of expertise include design processes, zero-waste pattern making, experimental draping, visible mending, and material manipulation. Her work bridges theoretical inquiry into design pedagogies with their practical application in fashion and textile product development, with a strong emphasis on craft and traditional techniques.

She has served as a member of the organizing committees for IFFTI 2022, GFC 2024, and NCPHH 2025. Her professional practice includes costume design for the Oscar-nominated foreign language film *Paheli*. She is the author of *Dharohar* and a co-founder of the brand *Beyni-Boi*. Her garment *Ganga: To Earth from Heaven* was selected as one of four finalists from India at the World of WearableArt, Wellington, New Zealand (2018).



Ms. Maha Ghanim Al Sulaiti (Qatar)

Director, M7

Under her leadership, M7 has opened as Qatar's dynamic hub for innovation and entrepreneurship in fashion and design. For more than 15 years, Al Sulaiti has been involved in developing incubation programs for enterprises of varying sizes across industries, managed and supported startups, overseen event management, and led organizational fundraising efforts.

Al Sulaiti formerly worked at Qatar Development Bank and Enterprise Qatar where she created a fashion advancement program for potential designers to enhance their skills and knowledge of the fashion industry. She also held roles at Reach Out to Asia and the Qatar Financial Centre Regulatory Authority. Al Sulaiti earned a bachelor's degree in business studies and a master's in Innovation Management from Central Saint Martins, University of Arts London.



Prof. Somesh Singh

Steering Committee Member, World Crafts Council - AISBL

Co-Founder of Craft Village and a leading fashion and craft educator in India. An alumnus of National Institute of Fashion Technology (Gandhinagar), he is former Director and Board Member of the Institute of Apparel Management (AEPC–Ministry of Textiles, Govt of India) and previously headed Apparel Design at National Institute of Design. To strengthen innovation culture, he pursued Innovation & Design studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Prof. Singh has served on national committees for creative and apparel education under AICTE and the Ministry of Textiles. His professional work includes designing Gujarat Police uniforms and contributing to specialized apparel for the Indian Army. Widely covered by international and Indian media, his recent decade of work has focused on empowering artisans and SMEs through innovation, training, and promotion. He founded 4P Labs, India Craft Week, and the International Craft Awards, helping position Craft Village as a global craft institution, recognized in 2021 as a National Entity by the World Crafts Council.



Ms. Nafanua Lafitaga Mafaufau-Peters (New Zealand)

Samoan Cultural Leader and Senior Advisor

Dedicated to preserving and promoting Pacific languages, heritage, and traditional artistry. Holding the esteemed matai (chief) titles, Nafanuatele and Momoemaaitu, she embodies the values of service and leadership within her community. As Chief Advisor, Partnerships at the Ministry for Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand, she has led major initiatives including the Delivering for Pacific Communities Strategy and the Pacific Languages Strategy and represented New Zealand at UNESCO's International Decade of Indigenous Languages launch in Paris. With over two decades of experience in education and language revitalisation, Nafanuatele has developed innovative resources such as the bilingual "O le aiga Sāmoa" series and champions programs that strengthen identity, cultural expression, and craft traditions across the Pacific. Her work aligns strongly with the World Crafts Council's mission to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and promote craft as a living tradition.



Ms. Rocío Blázquez Peredo (Mexico)

Art Historian

Is an art historian specializing in museums and folk art and serves as Coordinator of Folk Art at Fomento Cultural Banamex, Mexico's leading private cultural foundation. A graduate of Universidad Iberoamericana, she has dedicated over 22 years to researching, curating, and promoting Mexican and Ibero-American folk art.

From 2002 to 2019, she managed the largest contemporary collection of Mexican and Ibero-American folk art, organizing more than 100 traveling exhibitions across Mexico, the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. She has contributed to landmark publications including *Grandes Maestros del Arte Popular Mexicano* and regional volumes on Oaxaca and Yucatán.

Since 2020, Rocío has coordinated the national Program in Support of the Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art, overseeing collections, exhibitions, craft fairs, awards, and extensive fieldwork with artisan communities. She has served as a jury member for major national and state folk art awards since 2015 and actively collaborates with public and private institutions to strengthen dissemination, market access, and workshop development for master artisans.



Ms. Salma Al Qatawneh (Jordan) Interior Architect and Product Designer

Her work centres on craftsmanship, material culture, and design as a form of documentation. Her approach is concurrent—she understands traditional craft as an ongoing practice that continues to evolve through making, use, and collaboration.

She currently serves as Country Representative for Jordan at Turquoise Mountain, following several years leading creative direction, design, production, and commercial strategy across the Levant. Salma works closely with artisans and multidisciplinary teams on local and international projects, bringing the region's craft traditions to regional and global platforms.

Through design-led collaboration, her practice focuses on sustaining traditional crafts as living, usable, and economically viable practices, ensuring that inherited knowledge continues to carry meaning and relevance in the present.

Panel 9



Mr. Yerik Nurlanuly Begaliyev (Kazakhstan)

Chief Specialist — Creative Industries
Development, Almaty Tourism Department

Is a creative industries professional specializing in city-level cultural development and policy implementation in Almaty, Kazakhstan. As Chief Specialist for Creative Industries Development at the Almaty Tourism Department, he leads initiatives that support cultural entrepreneurship, strengthen creative ecosystems, and position Almaty as a regional hub for innovation-driven growth.

His work bridges public administration and the creative sector, coordinating partnerships among government agencies, cultural institutions, and community stakeholders to deliver sustainable cultural programmes. Previously, he contributed to strategic planning and sector development at the Almaty Department of Entrepreneurship and Investments, providing analytical and operational support for emerging creative projects.

Educated in management at the Kazakh-British Technical University Business School, Yerik brings expertise in project management, policy support, and data-informed decision-making. Fluent in Kazakh and Russian and proficient in English, he promotes cross-cultural collaboration across Central Asia's evolving creative economy.



The Organisers



The World Crafts Council

The World Crafts Council (WCC) is a global non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting, preserving, and advancing traditional crafts and the livelihoods of artisans worldwide. Founded in 1964, the WCC operates as a partner of UNESCO and serves as the leading international body advocating for crafts as vital expressions of cultural identity, creativity, and sustainable development. Through its five regional networks—Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America—the Council connects craft communities, cultural institutions, policymakers, and markets across more than 100 countries.

WCC's initiatives include the World Craft City Programme, international exhibitions, policy dialogues, research, and capacity-building efforts that strengthen artisan skills, market access, and cultural safeguarding. By fostering intercultural exchange and supporting ethical, inclusive creative economies, the Council positions crafts not only as heritage to be preserved but as dynamic drivers of innovation, social cohesion, and economic resilience in a rapidly changing world.



The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL)

The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) is Kuwait's principal governmental body responsible for shaping and implementing national cultural policy. Established in 1973, the Council plays a central role in preserving Kuwait's heritage while fostering contemporary artistic and literary expression. NCCAL oversees a wide range of institutions, including museums, theatres, cultural centers, and archaeological sites, and manages major cultural initiatives such as festivals, exhibitions, publications, and international exchanges.

Committed to safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage, the Council supports research, documentation, and restoration projects, while also promoting modern arts, literature, and creative industries. It serves as Kuwait's key interface with regional and international cultural organizations, including UNESCO, advancing cultural diplomacy and intercultural dialogue. Through educational programmes, grants, and public events, NCCAL seeks to nurture creativity, strengthen national identity, and position culture as a driver of social development, knowledge production, and sustainable cultural tourism in Kuwait.



Al Sadu House

Al Sadu House is a leading cultural institution in Kuwait dedicated to preserving and promoting the traditional Bedouin art of Al-Sadu weaving. Established in 1980 by the Al Sadu Weaving Cooperative Society, it serves as both a museum and a living workshop where artisans continue to practice and transmit this heritage craft. Al-Sadu weaving—recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding—uses hand-spun wool and natural dyes to create geometric textiles historically used for tents, furnishings, and ceremonial objects.

Located in a restored historic building in Kuwait City, Al Sadu House hosts exhibitions, demonstrations, educational programmes, and training workshops that engage both local communities and international visitors. The institution also supports research, documentation, and contemporary design collaborations to ensure the craft's continued relevance. By linking heritage preservation with cultural education, tourism, and creative innovation, Al Sadu House plays a vital role in safeguarding Bedouin identity while contributing to Kuwait's broader cultural landscape.

ANNEXURE

Diamond Jubilee Delhi Declaration 2024

FIRST WORLD CRAFTS FORUM
NEW DELHI & SRINAGAR, INDIA
NOV 2024

WORLD
FORUM
Connecting the World, Shaping

A black and white photograph of Mr. Saad al-Qaddumi, President of WCC AISBL, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, a dark tie, and glasses. He is looking down at a document on the podium. A microphone is visible in front of him. The background shows a patterned wall and some foliage.

Shaping a New Global Crafts Ecosystem

The First World Crafts Forum, held from November 22–28, 2024, at the National Crafts Museum, New Delhi and Srinagar from November, witnessed remarkable global participation, attracting over 5000 visitors and 100+ national craftsperson, 24 international craftsperson/s, 80+ speakers and delegates from more than 20 Countries.

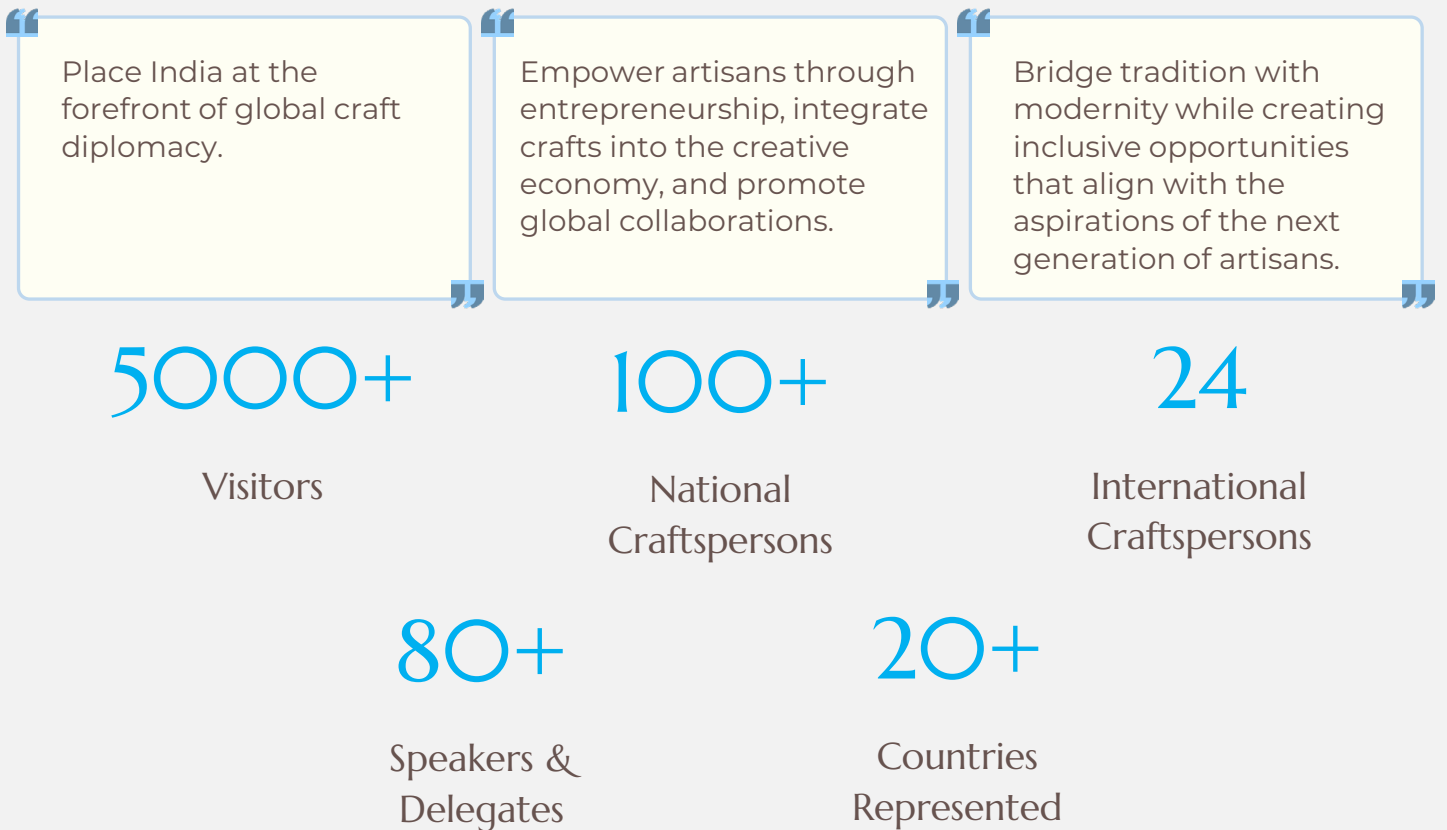
***"Crafts Connecting the World,
Shaping the Future"***

Mr. Saad al-Qaddumi
President of WCC AISBL

Overview of the First World Crafts Forum 2024

The Forum commemorated the **60th Anniversary (Diamond Jubilee)** of the World Crafts Council AISBL (WCC AISBL)—whose founding members included **Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay**—served as a platform to celebrate India's rich craft and cultural heritage. This historic event drew inspiration from the iconic Festivals of India held overseas in the 1980s and sought to place India at the forefront of global craft diplomacy. The Forum focused on fostering innovation, preservation, and policy frameworks to revitalize the craft sector and position India as a global leader over the next decade.

The World Crafts Forum 2024 showcased a dynamic blend of discussions, exhibitions, and masterclasses, engaging participants in meaningful conversations on the future of crafts. The event delved into pressing issues such as sustainability, global networks, and innovations for the craft sector. Sessions explored ways to empower artisans through entrepreneurship, integrate crafts into the creative economy, and promote global collaborations. The Forum culminated with the adoption of the **WCC Diamond Jubilee Delhi Declaration**, establishing a shared vision to advance the global craft ecosystem.



This first edition of the Forum also served as an intellectual hub, fostering critical discourse on the future of crafts by addressing key craft economic indicators and developing a strategic framework to ensure economic sustenance. The Forum brought together a global think tank from 20+ countries to assess the diminishing craft heritage that is approaching a critical phase, emphasizing the urgency of new policies and initiatives to safeguard and rejuvenate the sector.

This collaborative effort highlighted the potential for innovation and policy reforms to lead the craft sector into its next evolutionary phase, empowering artisan communities and ensuring continuity through sustainable practices. The Forum underscored the need to bridge tradition with modernity while creating inclusive opportunities that align with the aspirations of the next generation of artisans.

I. Value of Crafts for the Future

The Value of Craft report was the visionary initiative by my late mother Dr. Ghada Hijjawi-Qaddumi and supported by GHQ and WCC AISBL continued under the leadership of Dr. Kevin Murry with a group of Editors since 2018 and the Report has been released at the World Crafts Forum. And the recommendations from the report have been incorporated with this Declaration.

To preserve this legacy, support for artisans, craft education, and contemporary market integration are essential for ensuring their relevance and inspirational value for generations to come. The Declaration has laid out many recommendations:

Recognition

Craft persons need to be recognized as keepers of a knowledge integral to humanity.

Government Enablement

Governments and public administrations need to enable the development, upgradation and empowerment of the craftspeople.

Institutional Investment

Knowledge and cultural institutions have to invest in research, innovation and promotion of the craft-based industries.

Education Access

All persons should have access to Crafts as part of their education, with "learning to know, learning to do and learning to learn approach."

Quality & Sustainability

Craft knowledge, skill and objects need to be evaluated for their quality sustainability, including reuse, recyclability and upcyclability.

Craft Therapy

Craft therapy should be available as a healing option for trauma recovery and depression.

Community Hubs

Local governments may be encouraged to set up Craft Center Hubs and itinerant markets where community can gather and work together.

Disaster Recovery

Craft development needs to be included as part of disaster recovery programs in geographies affected by climate crisis and environmental degradation.

- The Value of Craft Report's findings suggest investment in new opportunities for crafts as a part of a **Care Economy** as identified by the World Economic Forum — thus becomes a call to action for the stakeholders for the development of new business models integrating "Crafts' added values" and enabling artisans to survive economically in the context of high-volume mass production.

II. World Craft Cities: Sustainable Global Supply Chain

The World Craft Cities attempt to **promote resilient, eco-conscious communities that nurture cultural heritage and advance balanced sustainable development.**

The Declaration emphasizes **sustainable practices that uphold environmental respect, economic stability, and heritage preservation**, recognizing the cultural and economic, social values of crafts, particularly in underdeveloped geographies.



Renewable Resources

Craft Cities be advised to prioritize renewable resources, reduce adverse environmental impact, and ensure traceability.



Fair Trade Practices

The craft cities shall promote fair trade practices to ensure equitable compensation and market access for artisans, complemented by educational efforts to emphasize the cultural significance of handmade crafts and the preservation of cultural heritage.



Research & Innovation

Research and innovation focus on adapting traditional methods to modern sustainability through 'recycling', 'upcycling', and 'mindful consumption'.



Responsible Advocacy

Craft Cities need to embrace advocacy for responsible production and mindful consumption, fostering social equity, sustainable practices, and economic resilience.





III. Creating and Sustaining Demand for Crafts

Ethical Sourcing & Ecology

Guiding principles of creating sustainable demand for crafts shall include ethical sourcing, use of local materials, low-energy methods, and waste reduction to address ecological imbalance, especially in underdeveloped areas.

Upskilling Artisans

Upskilling artisans through training in sustainable practices, digital literacy, and business skills ensures adaptability and improved income potential.

Economic Relief

Economic relief measures, such as tax incentives, fair-trade pricing, and a transparent craft rating system, aims to support artisans, build consumer trust, and promote responsible global sourcing.

Umbrella Branding

A shared umbrella branding for Craft Cities and GI tagged product clusters enhances global recognition, market access, and leisure and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Entertainment (MICE) tourism.

Urban Transformation

Transforming Urban Slums and Craft clusters through sustainable infrastructure development and community support exemplify the vision for uplifting disadvantaged artisans and degraded habitats.



IV. The Seal of Authenticity of Crafts

By collaborating with craft cities, institutes, and artisans, the Declaration outlines a cohesive framework, to build a respectable and economically viable '**Global Craft Ecosystem**' that upholds ethical standards and cultural cohesiveness.

The seal celebrates iconic crafts, as part of a global heritage blending tradition with contemporary design, emphasizing the role of craftsmanship in bridging cultures, social chasms and sustaining economic upliftment while expanding opportunities for livelihood and entrepreneurship.



Global Craft Network

The Declaration envisages a global craft network strengthened by a Seal of Authenticity of Crafts connecting artisans with ultimate consumers and fostering and nurturing compassionate commerce.



Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement is enhanced through digital storytelling, linking buyers to the embedded cultural and material stories behind craft items for building trust and brand loyalty.



Revitalizing Craft Markets

By revitalizing craft markets, establishing cultural linkages and promoting grass roots literacy and education, the Declaration promotes and strengthens the skill base and craftsmanship for generations.

V. Fostering Innovation: Advancing the Craft Ecosystem through Professional Education and Applied Research

Professional Competency

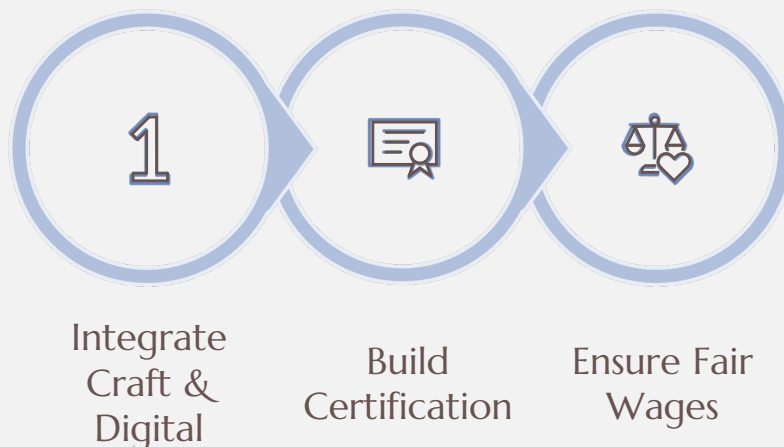
The Declaration aims to integrate craft with Innovation-driven digital economy by redefining advanced craftsmanship as Professional competency building with certification akin to other leading careers and professions.

Innovation & Sustainability

Innovation and sustainability are prioritized, encouraging artisans to adopt eco-friendly techniques, collaborate with research centers, and balance traditional methods with technology advancements.

Artisan Empowerment

The Declaration supports artisans with direct market access, certification, and supportive policies ensuring fair and equitable wages and economic and social inclusion and empowerment.



This pathway ensures that craftsmanship is elevated to a recognized profession, with artisans equipped to thrive in a modern, innovation-driven economy while preserving the integrity of their heritage skills.

VI. Leveraging Crafts for a Sustainable Future and Building the Creative Economy

- ❑ The WCC Diamond Jubilee Declaration purports to **build resilience and anti-fragility** by empowering communities with adaptable skills, leveraging local materials, and learnability, fostering self-reliance to navigate disruptions and uncertainties.

❑ Economic Growth through Tourism & Digital Tools

Crafts drive economic growth through Leisure and MICE tourism, exports, and by digital and AI tools, expanding market reach and providing artisans with e-commerce training and platforms to engage global audiences and help them to reach target consumers through 'Business to Business (B2B)' and 'Direct to Consumer (D2C)' market access.

❑ Collaboration with Creative Industries

Collaboration between artisans and creative industries like traditional cultural expressions, performing arts, audiovisuals, new media, creative services, design, publishing and printed media, visual arts and cultural sites, in order to move towards an innovation-driven Creative Economy.

"Crafts Connecting the World, Shaping the Future" — WCC AISBL Diamond Jubilee Delhi Declaration, First World Crafts Forum, New Delhi, November 2024



Looking Ahead: Crafts Connecting the World, Shaping the Future

The First World Crafts Forum 2024 underscored the need to **bridge tradition with modernity** while creating inclusive opportunities that align with the aspirations of the next generation of artisans. This collaborative effort highlighted the potential for innovation and policy reforms to lead the craft sector into its next evolutionary phase, empowering artisan communities and ensuring continuity through sustainable practices.

"The Forum brought together a global think tank from 20+ countries to assess the diminishing craft heritage that is approaching a critical phase, emphasizing the urgency of new policies and initiatives to safeguard and rejuvenate the sector."

01

Empower Artisans

Recognize craftspersons as professionals; provide certification, fair wages, and direct market access.

02

Sustain Heritage

Invest in research, education, and innovation to preserve and evolve craft traditions for future generations.

03

Build Global Networks

Strengthen the global craft ecosystem through the Seal of Authenticity, Craft Cities, and compassionate commerce.

04

Drive Creative Economy

Leverage digital tools, MICE tourism, B2B and D2C platforms, and cross-industry collaboration for an innovation-driven future.

