

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND BIODIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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A jointly convened UNESCO and UNEP
high-level Roundtable held on
3 September 2002 in Johannesburg
during the World Summit on Sustainable Development



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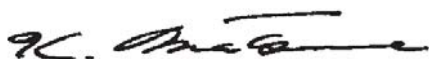
FOREWORD

On 3 September 2002, the high-level Roundtable on “Cultural Diversity and Biodiversity for Sustainable Development”, jointly organized by UNESCO and UNEP, took place in Johannesburg during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Chaired by H.E. President Jacques Chirac, this prominent interdisciplinary panel underlined the importance of respecting and integrating the diversity of nature and culture as a prerequisite for sustainable development.

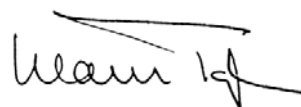
Decisions on concrete measures to safeguard the environment and cultural diversity should be grounded not only upon well-conducted research and reliable evidence but also upon values concerning the kind of world we would like our children to inherit. In the words of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, respect for cultural diversity “widens the range of options open to everyone” and, combined with maintaining biological diversity, is essential to our survival. If we lose diversity, the result will be a seriously reduced quality of life, if not the loss of the very meaning of life itself. If we allow languages and cultures to die, we directly reduce the sum of our knowledge about the environment and the various and many benefits that humankind can derive from it.

Today there is a wider understanding that reduced diversity in its cultural and environmental dimensions poses a threat to global stability and that it makes the world and its inhabitants increasingly vulnerable. It is heartening, therefore, that the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development emphasize that cultural and biological diversity are equally significant and important for sustainable development.

This report contains a compilation of the background documents that provided the Roundtable’s participants with food for thought and reflection. In addition, it presents the statements and speeches made during the Roundtable by the panelists and the heads of both organizations. The publication has been produced for the purpose and with the hope of furthering the dialogue on cultural diversity and biodiversity. We believe that the sustainability of both forms of diversity, which are closely inter-connected, is crucial for the very survival of humankind. Let us never forget that this interdependence is our past, our present and our future.



Koïchiro Matsuura
Director-General
UNESCO



Klaus Toepfer
Executive Director
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I. CULTURAL DIVERSITY and BIODIVERSITY for SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Background documents

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) called for “Respect for Nature” as one of the fundamental values for humanity. The Declaration urges: “Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches provided to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants. The current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants.” The Declaration calls for a new ethic of conservation and environmental stewardship.

Respect for biological diversity implies respect for human diversity. Both elements are fundamental to stability and durable peace on earth. The key to creating forms of development that are sustainable and in harmony with the needs and aspirations of each culture implies to abandon patterns that undermine the lives and perspectives of those cultures. Tolerance and reciprocal respect for cultural distinctiveness are indispensable conditions for increased mutual understanding among the world’s peoples and a recognition of our common humanity.

Cultural diversity—as a source of innovation, creativity and exchange—is the key to a mutually enriching future for humankind. Cultural diversity does not constitute an unchanging deposit that just needs preserving; it is a setting for continuous, unifying dialogue between all expressions of identity. What really needs to be asserted and preserved is acknowledgement of this daily dialogue as a founding principle. There is a reciprocal relationship between diversity and dialogue. The causal link that binds them cannot be severed without jeopardising development’s sustainability. This is the process that forges cultural diversity into a common language that the whole of humanity can speak and understand. Diversity of this kind, defined in this way, leads to the discovery of features that are common to all, since cultures - like individuals - encounter an irreplaceable element of their own humanity in others. Thus, cultural diversity unites individuals, societies and peoples.

Sustainable development requires that the moral vision of human beings be harnessed in as much harmony with local cultural aspirations as possible. Cultural diversity guarantees sustainability because it binds universal developmental goals to plausible and specific moral visions. Biological diversity provides an enabling environment for it.

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF SUSTAINABLE DIVERSITY

Background document by UNESCO

At the dawn of this new millennium, humankind has a historic opportunity, not to say responsibility, to make a case that is stronger than ever for a “culture of sustainability”, because cultural diversity and biodiversity are both values of and for the very long term. By focusing on “sustainable diversity”, we assume that human beings belong to the biological universe while, at the same time, they are the only species on earth that has the privilege of creating diverse forms of culture in time and space. Accordingly, they determine the earth’s whole future. This places a special obligation on them to ensure a proper balance between environmental health (especially biodiversity) and equitable development. Thus, cultural diversity should be regarded as a powerful guarantee of biodiversity.

The perceived separation between biological diversity and cultural diversity obscures the reality that both diversities are mutually reinforcing and mutually dependent. We cannot understand and conserve the natural environment unless we understand the human cultures that shape it. Each culture possesses its own sets of representations, knowledge and practices. Human action with respect to the environment, including management itself, is a social act and an expression of culture.

Development models produced since the 1970s have clearly failed, despite constant revision, to live up to the expectations they raised. The concept of sustainable development, based on a clear understanding of the role of biological and cultural diversity in maintaining ecological systems, cannot be viewed exclusively through an economic prism that puts technological progress to the fore. Globalization tends to create a context conducive to interdependence, often to the detriment of the least developed countries and without consideration for the diversity of cultures. The new challenges arising from globalization are making it increasingly important to redefine the relationship between culture and development or, to be more precise, between cultural diversity, biological diversity and development.

Cultural diversity—as a source of innovation, creativity and exchange—is humanity’s guarantee for a mutually enriching and sustainable future. As such, it ranks alongside biodiversity as a key means of securing the sustainability of every form or expression of development, tangible and intangible. Together, cultural diversity and biological diversity hold the key to ensuring resilience in both social

and ecological systems. The Seville Strategy for biosphere reserves shows the links between biodiversity and cultural diversity through sites which serve to test and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development.

Few people appreciate, however, the degree to which biological and cultural diversity are interconnected. Such an understanding extends well beyond the mere acknowledgment that people perceive and act upon nature in distinctive ways. There is a mutual dependency between biological diversity and culture. On the one hand, innumerable cultural practices depend upon specific elements of biodiversity for their continued existence and expression. On the other hand, significant ensembles of biological diversity are developed, maintained and managed by cultural groups, with language and knowledge as the media for their management.

Participation in the construction and creation of biological diversity takes many forms. The astounding diversity of domestic plant and animal varieties developed and conserved by human cultures around the world is one example of this creative force. In tropical agro-ecosystems, farmers commonly harbour scores of domestic plant species in their fields, including a profusion of varieties adapted to diverse environmental conditions and cultural needs. People have also created and continue to maintain cultural landscapes sustaining unique ecological and cultural values. The biologically diverse landscapes created and maintained by aboriginal Australians through their astute use of fire is but one well-documented example. Even the Amazonian rain forest, considered by many as the ultimate expression of pristine wilderness, has been shaped during millennia by the deliberate interventions of indigenous peoples.

What makes it so important for particular cultures and biological diversity to be sustained together? The answer is knowledge. It is through indigenous knowledge, rooted in local language, that a direct articulation is provided between cultural diversity and biological diversity. Cultures hold the knowledge about biological diversity from which it is born and nourished.

Cultural diversity does not constitute an inert reserve of curios in need of preservation alone. It is a site that induces continuously flowing and unifying dialogue open to each and every expression of identity. Acknowledgement of that daily dialogue as a founding principle is what needs to be asserted and preserved. Diversity and dialogue are mutually interrelated. The causal link that binds them cannot be severed without undermining sustainability. Nurturing that interrelationship makes a common language of cultural diversity that the whole

of humanity can speak and understand. Diversity defined in this way illuminates the elements of otherness that exist in the self, since cultures and human beings alike each encounter an irreplaceable part of their own humanity in others.

Cultural diversity, far from being divisive, unites individuals, societies and peoples, enabling them to share in a fund made up of the heritage of bygone ages, the experience of the present and the promise of the future. This shared fund, with all parties being both contributors and beneficiaries, is what underpins the sustainability of development for all.

This is all the more time as globalization raises new questions and challenges: much more than an economic, it is also a cultural, technical and environmental phenomenon. Globalization poses the risk of an increased homogenization of both cultural and biological diversity. Political and legal measures need to be defined and implemented at the national and international levels so as to improve efforts to promote expression of the plurality of cultures, as well as to struggle against the loss of biological diversity.

Common actions for safeguarding both forms of diversity have to be undertaken, through a comprehensive approach based on the understanding that cultural and biological phenomena should not be dissociated, as is too often the case.

The Roundtable will set out to establish a new protocol designed to ensure that cultural diversity becomes a priority issue to be taken into account, on an equal footing to biodiversity, in all discussions relating to sustainable development. Previously, the notion of sustainable development embraced economic, environmental and social parameters, yet largely ignored those pertaining to cultural issues. A change in the strategy is clearly a must if the promotion of cultural diversity is to be restored to a central, rather than peripheral, place in the debate. This will mean having to identify the most effective means of fostering synergy between national priorities and the opportunities made possible by globalization.

The Roundtable could seek to achieve this aim by contemplating a variety of strategies geared to define key global policies, ranging from the institutional field to that of communication, with a view to fostering constructive dialogue at the national and international levels between the various partners from the world of politics, the public and private sectors and civil society.

UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) underscores the need for a stronger dialogue between cultural diversity and development. In this way, UNESCO could help foster such a dialogue because cultural diversity is, by definition, an enduring and central feature of its mandate, which is to ensure the preservation and "promotion of the fruitful diversity of cultures.



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DIVERSITY IN NATURE AND CULTURE

Background document by UNEP

In the history of Earth, the law of nature has led animals, plants and other forms of life to evolve into diversified species adapting themselves to unique environments and to become its integral part to form the ecosystems. Biological diversity represents this dynamic process spanning hundreds of millions of years, and has been the key to survival, sustainability and prosperity of those species and the ecosystems in which they flourish.

Human society has evolved in a process of adapting itself to such a diversified natural environment. Nature and natural resources have been the foundation of defining peoples' life, their society and civilizations. Various forms of cultures and institutions in human society - political, religious, social or economic – have been built upon services provided by a unique natural environment and natural resources arising from biological diversity.

Cultural diversity mirrors biological diversity. It is the concern of many people that biodiversity must be appreciated in terms of human diversity, since different cultures and people from different walks of life perceive and apprehend biodiversity in different ways due to their distinct heritage and experiences.

Diversity in humanity and diversity in nature are inseparable. They are assets of peoples and our planet for prosperity for present and future generations. These are essential for achieving sustainable development. However, they are now in imminent danger owing to present-day human activities.

As pointed out in the third Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-3), the most important driving forces of an unprecedented rate of change in global biodiversity are land conversion, climate change, pollution, unsustainable harvesting of natural resources and the introduction of alien species. The ultimate causes of biodiversity loss are human population growth together with unsustainable patterns of consumption, increasing production of waste and pollutants, urban development, international conflicts, and continuing inequities in the distribution of wealth and resources.

“Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity”, a UNEP report published in 1999, supplementing the Global Biodiversity Assessment, has alerted that human cultural diversity is also threatened on an unprecedented scale. Languages are

considered one of the major indicators of cultural diversity representing intellectual heritages and frameworks for each society's unique understanding of life. Yet, among the estimated 5,000-7,000 languages spoken today, nearly 2,500 languages are in immediate danger of extinction. The causes of loss of biodiversity are also major causes of depletion of the foundations of peoples' lives and their distinct cultures.

The Malmö Ministerial Declaration (2000) stressed that success in combating environmental degradation is dependent on the full participation of all actors in society, an aware and educated population, respect for ethical and spiritual values and cultural diversity, and the protection of indigenous knowledge. It is essential to understand and act upon the interlinkages between cultural diversity and biological diversity with a view to achieving sustainable development.

In human history we have repeatedly observed how dominant powers have been spreading their languages, cultures or commodities to wider areas in other countries, regions and continents, thus influencing the ways in which people lived and society was governed. The globalization of today is different due to its velocity and intensity supported by technological advancements in communications, transport, trade and various other dimensions of our age. Ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people is the central challenge we face today. Globalization must be made fully inclusive and equitable. To achieve this, broad and sustained efforts are essential to create a shared future based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, as emphasized in the Millennium Declaration.

The problems we face today range from polluting poverty that drives a third of humanity to ravage environmental resources in a desperate search for livelihood to the pollution of the atmosphere that destroys forests and lakes - floods the world's coastlands, drastically alters agriculture, generates loss of biodiversity and adversely affects cultural diversity. Collapsing systems for the commodity exports of developing countries, protectionism in trade, unequal access to technology are all part of the existing desperate problems. Some of the social and economic repercussions of environmental deterioration affecting the poor include unsafe water and poor sanitation causing diseases and death of millions of people and children in developing countries, health-threatening levels of pollution in urban environment and damage from natural disasters. The loss of healthy environmental systems and biological diversity is the ultimate cause.

It is estimated that 40 per cent of the global economy is based on biological products and processes. Some of the least developed countries and areas hold the majority of the world's biodiversity with rich and diversified cultures, which are essential for the sustenance of humankind. The poor and the most vulnerable in such societies are often the immediate beneficiaries of biological diversity. Endeavours to eradicate poverty should have a focus on protecting biological bases to support life of the poor and provide them with opportunities for improving their welfare, while preserving their cultural identity and diversity as an integral aspect.

There are 350 million indigenous people in the world, living in over 70 countries. Of the 6,000 estimated cultures in the world, 4,500 are indigenous. Many of them live in areas of high biological diversity. Over the course of their history, indigenous peoples have developed lifestyles and cultures which are intricately tied to nature. Their value and belief systems have evolved to enable them to respect and live in harmony with nature, conserving the diversity of life upon which they depend. The species-diverse environments in which indigenous peoples live have shaped their productive activities and spiritual values. Indigenous peoples have utilized and conserved the vast diversity of genes, species and ecosystems since the dawn of time.

The way of life of most indigenous peoples depends on biological diversity. Cultural and religious beliefs and traditional spiritual values often serve to prevent overexploitation of resources and sustain the systems in which indigenous societies live for their own benefit and that of future generations. The concept of the sustainable use of biological diversity, one of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, is inherent in the value systems of indigenous and traditional societies.

To change the current unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, it is important that all the values and services contributing to the sustainability and welfare of peoples and the planet are accounted for, including aspects of cultural and biological diversity.

As a first step, there should be the recognition that most of the problems of loss of biological diversity, weakening of cultural diversity and the poverty phenomenon, which have been dealt with separately, are in fact closely connected and relevant to sustainable development and therefore require a holistic and more comprehensive approach for action at all levels. Specific strategies should therefore be identified and concrete actions agreed upon. Consideration might

be given to a process of policy dialogue, followed by the development and eventual implementation of policy frameworks, action plans and legal instruments.

We also need to identify, and put into practice, ways and means to promote a new ethic of conservation and environmental stewardship, as emphasized in the UN Millennium Declaration. Promotion of the relevant existing instruments, such as the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the Earth Charter, might be useful to initiate the process of a new ethic.



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DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

by Arjun Appadurai

PREAMBLE

Sustainable development requires that the moral vision of human beings be harnessed in as much harmony with local cultural aspirations as possible. Cultural diversity guarantees sustainability because it binds universal developmental goals to plausible and specific moral visions. Biodiversity, in the long run, also relies on the maximum diversity of such moral visions, since, by definition, biodiversity requires the proliferation and protection of many ecological regimes and environmental balances. Human beings are the key movers in such balances, and if their diversity is gradually reduced, so is the archive of moral visions linking moral and material well-being. Thus cultural diversity is a powerful guarantee of biodiversity. Together, these two kinds of diversity are the best counterpoint to the ideological and technological uniformity that might result if market-driven globalization is allowed to run its own course.

DIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Cultural diversity is more than the fact of cultural difference. It is a value which recognizes that differences in human societies are parts of systems and relationships. Cultural diversity is the value through which differences are mutually related and reciprocally supportive. Furthermore, cultural diversity is a value which expresses and implies other, even more fundamental values. These fundamental values are those of creativity, dignity and community. UNESCO places a non-negotiable value upon cultural diversity because of its intimate link to this entire constellation of values. And without these values, no vision of development can be sustainable, since it will not rest on the moral commitment of the actors and subjects of development, who belong to particular cultural communities.

ELEMENTS OF A NEW FRAMEWORK

There is a broad recognition today of the mutuality between biodiversity and cultural diversity. But this intuitive understanding has not been spelled out as a systematic framework for relating these two forms of diversity in a broader vision of sustainable development. To build such a framework requires that we address the following fundamental issues, each of which leads to some key questions:

I. **POVERTY AND DIVERSITY:** Since human beings belong to the biological universe but are often in a position to determine its future, they have a special obligation to assure that a proper balance is maintained between environmental health (especially biodiversity) and equitable development. In the era where markets and their logic seem to dominate global relationships, environmental concerns, market concerns and development concerns seem to be in constant tension with each other. In many parts of the world, there is a growing gap between environmental values, which are seen as middle-class or even elite values, and the needs of the world's poor for shelter, food and employment. For example, the efforts in India's West Coast to preserve a carefully regulated environmental zone along the coast is being contested by groups of urban poor who are desperate for spaces in which to construct secure housing.

- Can the globalization of markets be respected while insisting on other equities, such as those of poverty-reduction and environmental safety?

II. **DIVERSE VISIONS OF DEVELOPMENT:** Cultural diversity is the critical link between the intangible and the tangible dimensions of development. Tangible development can be measured in terms of human health, economic capabilities, commodity flows and physical guarantees of security and productivity. Intangible development consists of the spirit of participation, the enthusiasm of empowerment, the joys of recognition and the pleasures of aspiration. Although these intangible measures of development may seem obvious, overlooking them has often created massive failures in the worldwide effort to develop poorer economies and transfer life-sustaining technologies.

Cultural diversity provides the key link between these two crucial dimensions of development, themselves fundamentally indivisible, by guaranteeing the survival of multiple visions of the good life, and of a large range of concrete ties between material and moral visions of well-being. Many development projects have failed because they have failed to make a persuasive link between these dimensions, or have tried to impose a single vision of human betterment and material well-being. Being an open archive of visions of the good life, and also a natural source of motivation and commitment, cultural diversity is more than ornamental. It is a renewable resource for linking cultural values and material well-being.

- What national and global policies can assure the renewability of cultural diversity as a resource for sustainable development?

III. MARKETS VERSUS COSMOLOGIES? The main arguments for the importance of bio-diversity are grounded in the reality that the earth does not have an infinite capacity for being abused and that the global commons depend on the preservation and nurture of biodiversity, at all environmental scales. Though many long-term factors have contributed to the environmental degradation of the planet and the atmosphere, the historical trend towards more powerful extractive technologies, more effective world-wide market integration, and more profit-oriented forms of market organization has generally sacrificed long-term productivity and equity for short-term gains for specific populations.

There is also a tendency for some cultures and societies to emerge as winners in the long-term history of technological change, and for others to become weak or marginal. The indigenous populations of many parts of the world have been shown to be brilliant trustees of the biodiversity of their own environments. Indigenous populations have also developed complex cosmologies in which the interdependence of man and nature have been fundamental values and balance and harmony have been stressed over growth and innovation.

- Can indigenous populations be encouraged to enter the global market place on terms which do not require them to sacrifice their inherently eco-friendly cosmologies?

IV. DIVERSITY FOR THE LONG RUN: The era of globalization poses common challenges to biodiversity and to cultural diversity, as well as to the special relationship between them. The growing autonomy of market processes (in combination with high-impact technologies) produces unforeseen risks to biodiversity and environmental safety. At the same time, globalization in its culturally most marketized forms threatens to erode and diminish more localized and historically vulnerable cultural forms, both within and across societies.

In the period since the birth of UNESCO, and especially since the rapid growth of global markets, cross-border economic flows and deep technological interdependence (which we sometimes call globalization), we have also come to see that cultural diversity is fundamentally connected to questions of law, ethics and freedom. The forces of global consumerism make it difficult for many societies to maintain their cultural dignity, as products, slogans and images of glamour, wealth and modernity flood in from outside sources. Global financial markets place heavy pressure on national governments to sacrifice national cultural priorities in favour of global competitive trends. And as tourism becomes a vital source of income for many poorer countries, many living cultures are being forced

to redesign themselves as Disneyland for the entertainment of visitors instead of exploring their own forms of cultural creativity. Finally, as migrants, refugees and other strangers come to be viewed as threats to economic stability, there is a growing tendency to demonize cultural minorities and to substitute ethnic purity for cultural diversity, often violently.

This shrinkage of the space for cultural creativity, dignity and innovation has dangerous implications for biodiversity as well. In both cases, a blind and monotheistic attachment to market principles tends to marginalize long-term values. Cultural diversity and biodiversity are both values of and for the long run. And cultural diversity guarantees the maximum range of visions of the good life within which relationships to nature can also be varied, specific, local and self-sustaining.

- What are the basic principles of a world-wide protocol for sustainable development in which long-run values (which inherently support diversity, both cultural and biological) are likely to determine short-term developmental goals rather than vice versa?



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KEY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

As distributed in advance to the participants in preparation for the panel discussions.

1. Aggravation of poverty and loss of biodiversity and cultural impoverishment are interrelated.

- How can we alleviate poverty while promoting both biological diversity and cultural diversity?
- How can cultural diversity become an active resource in the struggle against poverty?

2. Is globalization a threat to or an opportunity for promoting cultural and biological diversity for sustainable development?

- Does globalization enhance or diminish the chances for a flourishing cultural diversity and its corollary, the dialogue among cultures and civilizations?
- What political and legal measures need to be taken at the national and international levels so as to improve efforts to promote cultural diversity and to protect biodiversity?

3. Unsustainable consumption and production patterns are causing loss of biodiversity and cultural diversity.

- How can we make consumption and production patterns consistent with the promotion of cultural and biological diversity?
- How can we promote cultural diversity and biodiversity without having recourse to unsustainable production and consumption patterns?

4. There is a growing awareness of the need to pay attention to threats, which may be posed by globalization to cultural diversity and traditional knowledge, in particular those of indigenous and local communities.

- Which measures should be taken to protect traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities in the face of globalization?
- How can indigenous populations be encouraged to enter the global market without sacrificing their traditional eco-friendly sustainable lifestyles and value systems?

5. There is sometimes a perception that cultural intolerance and the violations of human rights is a result of promoting cultural diversity.

- Which measures should be taken to promote cultural diversity so as to reinforce peace and secure the respect of human rights?
- Which measures should be taken to encourage genuine cultural diversity while discouraging all forms of cultural intolerance, repression or homogenization?

6. Is there a need for an internationally agreed framework, such as a code of ethics or conduct, a declaration, a plan of action or legal instruments, for promoting cultural and biological diversity for sustainable development?

II. ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATIONS

1. Opening remarks by Koïchiro MATSUURA

Director-General of UNESCO

Mr. President of the French Republic,
Mr. President of the Republic of Mozambique,
Mr. Executive Director of UNEP and Dear Colleague,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Johannesburg Summit constitutes a major challenge for humanity because it acknowledges the interdependence of many critical factors in the evolution of our planet. And this is a great step forward. The interconnections between the economic, ecological and social spheres are in this way recognized and give us grounds for believing that a sustainable, viable and equitable development is possible.



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