

Fonds Sud seminar  
(7 December 2009)

State secretary,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to participate in this Seminar convened by Film fra Sør, in cooperation with our Embassy and with the professional assistance of the Norwegian Film Institute, in the facilities of one of our other good partners, Oslo Kino. The presence here today of the secretary of State for development and of representatives of the ministry of culture bears testimony to the strong interest of the initiative.

I would like to thank especially Raoul Peck, the great Haitian director and producer, for accepting to share his experience as former president of the Fonds Sud Commission. I thank also my colleagues from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs for bringing their expertise to this seminar.

The French Embassy in Oslo has cooperated for a few years with Film fra Sør, assisting in bringing films from the South to its Festival. And we have been really impressed by the dynamism, the quality and the success of the Festival. We are therefore extremely happy to take our cooperation to a new stage thanks to this seminar. We strongly believe that sharing experiences leads to mutual enrichment.

It should not come as a surprise that Norway and France cooperate on the promotion of Films from the South, as our two countries are very strong supporters of cultural diversity and, at the same time, major international donors.

In France, we believe it is vital that each country be able to produce, make and see its own pictures, in order to express its own sensitivity, to tell its own stories and project its own view of the world. It is all the more important when globalisation accelerates exchanges but at the same time, unfortunately, tends to standardize cultural production. We think there is an urgent need to counter this tendency to uniformity by promoting cultural diversity. This is why we decided to extend our strong tradition of State support to the cinema industry to the benefit of film-makers from the South.

The idea of a Fund to support the cinematographic production from the South, was launched in 1981 by the then minister of culture, Jack Lang, and supported by the profession. Fonds Sud was established in 1984 by the French Ministry of foreign affairs together with the Ministry of culture with an ambitious objective: to encourage collaboration with directors from the South and promote production of films with a strong cultural identity.

This year, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, Fonds Sud celebrated an unprecedented success : the Fund has already participated in the production of more than 500 projects from 70 countries of Africa, South America, Asia, Eastern Europe. Thanks to the Fund, new talents had their first opportunity to direct and become major international artists, and award-winning films were born.

This success was made possible thanks to the passion and talent of the members of the selection commission and its successive presidents. I would like to mention only 3 of them : Raoul Peck, former Haitian minister of culture, Frédéric Mitterrand, the current French minister of culture, and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, the Chadian director who is the current president.

Thanks to the commitment of the members of the Fonds Sud Commission, relations between French cinema and cinemas of the South have grown stronger over the years. The Fund has participated in one of the greatest missions of cinema, namely open our eyes to the world in which we live, give a universal audience to individual lives, explore and question societies everywhere in the world. The fund has contributed to the emergence of a cinema production in southern countries: because its intervention is conceived as a trigger, other sources of funding are indispensable and local creation is a requirement. The fund has also proven vital in countries where cinema is often synonymous of a freedom which still has to be conquered.

For France, and I believe also for Norway, the defence of the universal human rights and the promotion of cultural diversity are essential priorities.

I would therefore hope that we can continue and develop our cooperation in favour of the films from the South./.