

# **High-Level Thematic of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

## **CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

**New York, 12 June 2013**

### **President's Summary**

#### **Introduction**

Convened at the initiative of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Thematic Debate entitled “Culture and Development” was held on 12 June 2013 at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. The one-day thematic debate was comprised of an opening segment, keynote and special guests addresses, a high-level morning segment, followed by two afternoon panel discussions.

Anchored in the current discussions on the future international development agenda, at both international and national level, the thematic debate sought to foster dynamic and in-depth exchanges on the role of culture for development, highlight key experiences of Member States, and provide a platform to discuss ways to further use culture as a resource for achieving development goals.

#### **Opening Segment**

The thematic debate was opened by the President of the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić, followed by the statement of H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, and the keynote speech of Mrs. Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, a video message from H.E. Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland and the remarks, as special guests, of Ms. Helen Clark, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator, and H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations.

While Member States were urged to make the post-2015 development agenda their utmost priority, reference was made to a number of milestones on the culture and development agenda over the past recent years, including the two consecutive UN General Assembly Resolutions on Culture and Development adopted in 2010 and 2011, the conclusions of Rio+20 and the report of the UN Task Team to the Secretary-General, Realizing the Future We Want for All.

Indeed, the two Resolutions on Culture and Development request a more visible and effective integration and mainstreaming of culture in development policies and strategies at all levels. The Rio conclusions emphasized the importance of promoting the world's diversity, acknowledging that “people are at the center of sustainable development,” to which “all cultures and civilizations can contribute.” In addition, the UN System Task Team convened

by the Secretary-General concluded that all “communities and individuals must be able to practice their own culture and enjoy that of others free from fear. This will include, inter alia, respect for cultural diversity, safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, fostering cultural institutions, strengthening cultural and creative institutions, and promoting cultural tourism.”

The past decade of working towards the Millennium Development Goals has demonstrated that culture must be woven fully into development strategies. Lessons learnt from efforts to realize the Goals taught that there is no one-size-fits-all formula for development and that culture must be an overarching principle for all development interventions.

Full ownership of development strategies demand the full integration of culture, having in mind that culture and heritage cannot be used to divide, sow conflict or perpetuate injustice. Societies should be built on inclusion, understanding and mutual respect.

Although culture as a concept was not part of the Millennium Development Goals framework, development projects in the field of culture have contributed to achieving the Goals: Culture is an economic factor which generates incomes and jobs, thereby contributing to poverty eradication (MDG 1); culturally-adapted curricula content allow for improved quality education and citizenship building (MDG 2); culture-oriented activities such as craft entrepreneurs are a source of gender empowerment (MDG 3); socio-cultural approaches to health lead to cost-effective and more efficient health policies (MDG 4, 5, 6); cultural and traditional know-how are inexhaustible resources for sustainable environment and livelihoods (MDG 7).

The experience of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) with 18 UN interagency programmes implemented between 2008 and 2013 by some 15 UN agencies have showcased the role of culture as an enabler of sustainability. The programmes had an impact in terms of social inclusion and economic development through cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism, tangible and intangible heritage, and inclusive policies and ethnic minority development.

### **High-level segment**

During the high-level segment 14 Ministers and other senior officials delivered speeches on the role of culture for development from the perspectives of their respective countries: H. E. Dr. Dipu Moni, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Mário Lúcio Sousa, Minister of Culture of Cape Verde, H.E. Ms. Lisa Hanna, Minister for Youth and Culture of Jamaica, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Amine Sbihi, Minister of Culture of Morocco, H.E. Mr. Alassane Djimba Soumanou, Minister for Secondary Education, Technical and Vocational Training, Youth Integration of Benin, H.E. Dr. Frank Anthony, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, H.E. Dr. Lincoln Douglas, Minister of the Arts and Multiculturalism of Trinidad and Tobago, H.E. Mr. Paul Mashatile, Minister of Arts and Culture of South Africa, H.E. Ms. Ana Magdalena Granadino, Secretary of Culture of the Presidency of El Salvador, H.E. Ms. Graciela Bartolizzi, Minister of Culture of Paraguay, Mr. Felipe M. De Leon Jr., Chairman of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts of Philippines, H.E. Mr. Americo Cordula, Secretary of Cultural Policies, Ministry of Culture of Brazil, Ms. Itziar Taboada, General Director of Cultural and Scientific Cooperation (AECID), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, and Ms. Mónica Guariglio, Director of National Cultural Policy and International Cooperation of the Ministry of Culture of Argentina.

Participants in the high-level segment discussed the unlimited potential of cultural activities and products to boost economic growth, notably in developing and middle-income countries, while also being a key factor for social cohesion and human development at large, as well as an essential force for sustainability in development.

It was highlighted that despite the economic and financial crisis, culture stands as a strong and viable economic sector, generating incomes and jobs, and contributing to poverty alleviation in a number of countries, and a growing portion of GDP in emerging economies. Cultural heritage and creative industries are indeed vehicles for job creation, economic growth and the building of sustainable livelihoods. The global economic crisis has accelerated the rise of culture in development policies. In that regard, it was acknowledged that culture should be brought to the fore of international priorities because investing in culture and creative industries is an effective way to revitalize economies. Economic benefits flow from dynamic cultural sectors in the form of jobs and sustainable growth generated by such activities as tourism, the screen industry, performing and visual arts, new media and branding design.

In addition, it was stressed that the development goes beyond economic growth and that culture should be understood beyond its economic role. At a time of important change, as the globalization process is transforming societies and making them more diverse and interconnected, the strong linkage between culture and development is all the more relevant. Culture is a vital aspect of human development as it provides peoples and communities with a strong sense of identity and belonging. As such, through cultural heritage and cultural and creative industries, culture is a source of cohesion for societies. Culture is essential for quality education and transmission of values, for instance cultural institutions such as museums bear an educational function. Culture in all its different forms is an invaluable resource to facilitate learning from the past, adapt and respond creatively in the present and anticipate the future.

Throughout the debate, many participants emphasized that development anchored in culture achieves enduring solutions and creates meaningful possibilities for global peace and security. Culture can contribute to healing divisions among people of various races, religions and ethnic groups. Development strategies and policies need to build on the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural identity as a defining feature of many countries, taking into account that, for a truly sustainable development, the full ownership of communities is needed.

Participants provided evidence from their own countries to showcase the impact of culture on economic growth, social inclusion, equality and sustainable development. For instance, it was noted that culture was one of the five pillars of development in Cape Verde; culture was integrated into various national programmes in Morocco, the Government of South Africa had approved the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance for ratification by Parliament, that would strengthen efforts for African unity and solidarity; El Salvador's "Long Live Culture" programme had enabled more than 100,000 people to enjoy cultural-heritage areas that had previously been closed to the public and lacked a budget; to increase access to culture for low-income Brazilians, the Brazilian Government was planning to begin a programme called "Vale Cultura"; the Government of Argentina had created the National Equality Plan, which aimed to provide greater public access to cultural goods, cultural information and the arts.

While it was recognized that there is an increasing amount of data and statistics clearly demonstrating the nexus between culture and sustainable development and that efforts to generate evidence and indicators, as well as sharing knowledge have been initiated over the

recent years, it was emphasized that these efforts be expanded and systematized to inform decision-making at global and national levels.

It was also stressed that it was time to change the perception that culture was an exclusive forum reserved for elites. In that regard, a more proactive approach by Governments would help broaden the development agenda.

Participants also made a number of references to the International Conventions adopted by UNESCO in the field of culture<sup>1</sup>, notably related to world heritage, intangible heritage, the diversity of cultural expression and illicit trafficking of cultural property.

### **Panel discussions**

The afternoon session comprised two panel discussions, first entitled “The nexus between culture and development” and the second entitled “What role for culture in the post-2015 framework?”.

The first panel brought together the distinguished group of panellists: Mr. Thomas P. Campbell, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr. Ivan Tasovac, Director of Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, Ms. Miri Ben-Ari, Grammy Award Winning Violinist and Goodwill Ambassador of Music for the United Nations Association of Brazil, Professor Wang Linxu, Artist and Vice President of the Central University for Nationalities in Beijing and Mr. Anthony Tommasini, Chief Music Critic, The New York Times.

The second panel included the participation of Professor Homi K. Bhabha, the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities and the Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard University, Mr. Sergio Raul Arroyo Garcia, Director of the National Institute for Anthropology and History of Mexico, Ms. Amina Mohammed, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning, and Professor Alfons Martinell, Director of the UNESCO Chair on Cultural Policies and Cooperation from Girona University.

The panel discussions, followed by an interactive dialogue, were moderated by Mr. Francesco Bandarin, Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO.

During the exchanges, the representatives of Costa Rica, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Jordan took the floor. Three regional groups delivered in-depth statements to the Assembly: the European Union (EU), the G-77 plus China (Fiji) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC/Cuba). The representative of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) made an informative intervention as well as the International Theatre Institute of the Philippines, the New Future Foundation and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) from the NGO sector.

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<sup>1</sup>The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

The participants in the two afternoon panels drew the Assembly's attention to the following messages:

Participants widely recognized importance of culture as a factor in mutual understanding and dialogue, which embraces the diversity of humanity. Two areas of fundamental importance were highlighted: the preservation and conservation of heritage in all its forms; and the creative force of culture in service to development and the creative economy.

Culture is a constant that strengthens individuals and enhances their capacity to understand and enjoy the cultures of others while ensuring progress. As such, culture is an engine of development, unlimited in space and time.

Social development must be all-inclusive taking into account that culture creates opportunities for empowerment, especially for women and young people.

It was important to discuss how each country could implement a plan on culture and development so as to enhance overall development. It was important to: raise public awareness of cultural diversity as it related to sustainable development; build cultural capacity and markets for cultural goods and services; foster synergies between traditional approaches and modern science and technology; and look at traditional ways of conserving and using resources.

Also, it is necessary to further develop an understanding of cultural development that is not unidirectional; to forge a vision of cultural heritage linked to the production of local knowledge; to see cultural development as a broad process transcending national frontiers; to pay attention to the cultural production of communities living in extreme poverty; and to break down the anachronism of a system based on the provision of aid, and instead empowering the base of cultural production.

The post-2015 framework will certainly carry forward many unfinished mandates from the Millennium Development Goals. So far, it is clear that there is a call not to leave culture behind and not to view it as an "add-on". Going forward, development must be truly people-centred, and must integrate local and traditional skills instead of marginalizing them.

The last nine months have been a period of intense outreach to contribute to the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. It was recalled that the agenda must address five transformational shifts: the diversity of constituents should not be seen as a burden but as richness; there should be a paradigm shift from the poverty agenda to a balance between people and planet; there should be an economic transformation from depending exclusively on official development assistance (ODA) to forging additional partnerships; Government agendas must move past struggles over basic rights and peace-building; and champions must be clear on how to embed culture in the next development agenda.

Culture has direct and indirect, tangible and intangible impacts on the Millennium Development Goals. There are several aspects to consider: people have the right to participate in culture and to benefit from cultural practices; culture should be understood as going beyond its role as a sector, but also as a social system that produces well-being; culture influences other areas of people's lives, including health, food, water and security; culture can help meet the post-2015 development agenda.

## **Key messages:**

The key messages from the debate can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ **Ensuring respect for cultural rights to promote inclusive social development**  
Access to and ownership of heritage is becoming increasingly central for communities, who call for more participatory governance and an enhanced access to culture while seeking to insert their voice in cultural decision-making and to ensure that they are the primary beneficiaries of their heritage. Fostering access to cultural goods and services, free participation in cultural life, and freedom of artistic expression are critical to forging inclusive and equitable societies. Having the means to create and the access to diverse cultural expressions are fundamental to give a voice to the excluded and promote dialogue, mutual respect and a culture of peace. The reduction of inequalities is essential to a vision of socially inclusive, sustainable development.
- ✓ **Building on culture for poverty reduction and inclusive economic development**  
Culture, as knowledge capital and as a resource, provides for the needs of individuals and communities and reduces poverty. The culture sector enhances job opportunities and income, targeting in particular women and youth. Heritage has proven its worth as a source of income generation and job creation, including at the community level. Environmental and cultural heritage protection need to be balanced with equitable economic development. In addition, the creative economy is a growing sector generating substantial revenues and creating jobs in many parts of the world. Cultural and creative industries, which encompass primarily crafts, design, publishing, cinema and music, represent one of the most rapidly expanding sectors in the global economy.
- ✓ **Building on culture to promote environmental sustainability**  
The sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage is key to environmental sustainability. Traditional systems of environmental protection and resource management can contribute to enhancing the sustainability of fragile ecosystems and the preservation of biodiversity, while preventing competition and conflict over access to natural and cultural resources. Moreover, unsustainable urbanization is a global challenge with negative consequences for local production and consumption patterns. Urban renewal through creativity can lead to a more balanced urbanization and sustainable management of resources. It is important to support shared public spaces in cities where artistic creativity, cultural productions and cultural practices stimulate collective engagement in creative processes, foster social engagement and encourage equality in diversity.
- ✓ **Mobilizing culture to foster mutual understanding, peace and reconciliation**  
In the context of globalization, dialogue among cultures and the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity can forge more inclusive, stable and resilient societies. Heritage, as a source of identity, is a capital for empowering communities to participate fully in social and cultural life and provides solutions for conflict prevention and reconciliation. Promoting creativity as a vehicle for peace, security and reconciliation should focus on dialogue and exchange, on the acceptance of difference and the richness it can offer, which is a source of empowerment for individuals and communities.