



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 19 April 2013

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to inform you that I will convene, in cooperation with UNESCO, a High-Level Thematic Debate on “**Culture and Development**”. This event will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Wednesday, 12 June 2013.

At a time when governments around the world are rethinking strategies for development and seeking to identify renewed social energies and economic recovery, I believe that it is timely to exchange views on the role and impact of culture on development. The debate will focus on experiences at the national and international levels that draw on culture, and in particular on cultural heritage and creativity, in addressing such pressing issues as tackling poverty, social inequalities, unemployment, peace-building and resilience.

The debate thus will aim to provide a platform to discuss ways to build on culture to foster sustainable development in the light of the discussion on the Post-2015 development agenda.

This one day interactive debate will include an opening segment, keynote addresses, a high-level morning segment, an afternoon panel discussion followed by closing remarks.

Member States are invited to be represented at the highest possible level.

I am pleased to share with you the attached concept paper.

A detailed program of the debate will be circulated in due time.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Wuk Jeremić

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York

THEMATIC DEBATE  
67<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**“Culture and Development”**

New York, 12 June 2013

**Concept Note**

The President of the 67th session of the General Assembly, in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), will convene a thematic debate on culture as both an enabler and driver for development.

**1. Background**

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Globalization has been radically transforming the world we live in. In this context, the challenge is to ensure that such processes of change are a positive force for all peoples, today and tomorrow, and that societies are able to adapt to a rapidly changing world. This requires new approaches to such entrenched trends as exclusion, marginalization, inequality, conflicts over scarce assets, as well as the unsustainable use of natural resources.

The Outcome Document of the 2010 MDG Summit emphasized the importance of culture for development and its contribution to the achievement of the MDGs. These messages were reiterated in two consecutive Culture and Development UNGA Resolutions<sup>1</sup> in 2010 and 2012, which called for the mainstreaming of culture into development policies and strategies, and underscored culture’s intrinsic contribution to sustainable development.

In June 2012, the report of the UN Task Team to the Secretary-General, *Realizing the Future We Want for All*, underscored the need for the UN Post-2015 Agenda to: “*promote equitable change that ensures people’s ability to choose their value systems in peace, thereby allowing for full participation and empowerment. Communities and individuals must be able to create and practice their own culture and enjoy that of others free from fear. This will require, inter alia, respect for cultural diversity, safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, fostering cultural institutions, strengthening cultural and creative industries, and promoting cultural tourism.*” (paragraph 71)

The growing recognition of the culture and development nexus is reflected in the Outcome document of Rio+20. In addition, the theme of the 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review will be “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.”

**2. Aims and objectives**

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The thematic debate will provide a platform to discuss ways to further use the potential of culture for fostering sustainable development and contributing to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This will feed into the discussions on the Post-2015 global development agenda by highlighting emerging issues at the global and national levels.

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<sup>1</sup>UN General Assembly (November 2010), Resolution A/RES/65/L.50 on Culture and Development; and UN General Assembly (March 2012), Resolution A/RES/66/208 on Culture and Development

The interactive debate will focus on efforts by Member States and the international community to draw on culture in addressing such pressing issues as poverty, discrimination, unemployment, as well as to showcase success stories in these areas of development. The debate will also build on ongoing initiatives and further consolidate achievements by proposing directions to be taken into consideration within the UN Development Agenda, ahead of and beyond 2015. In this context, the inter-agency experience of the MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) will be presented, in particular the knowledge, success stories and lessons learnt generated by the MDG-F Culture and Development Joint Programmes, which benefitted over 8 million people worldwide for a total budget of US\$ 96 million.

Following the debate, a summary note will be prepared and circulated as an official document of the UN General Assembly.

### **3. Main themes of the debate**

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In this context, the debate will focus on the role of culture for sustainable development in the context of the four following dimensions highlighted in the report of the UN Task Team to the Secretary-General in view of the Post-2015 discussions: (i) Inclusive Social Development, (ii) Inclusive Economic Development, (iii) Environmental Sustainable Development, (iv) Peace and Security, and address the following questions:

- Why is culture not a luxury in the development process?
- How does culture contribute to broadening the development debate?
- Why is culture essential for efficient and effective sustainable development?
- How is the international community mobilized on culture and development?
- How should culture be integrated as a key element in the Post-2015 Agenda?

The experience of the 18 MDG-F Culture and Development programmes, jointly implemented in recent years by some 12 UN agencies alongside national counterparts, will help illustrate the role of culture, notably in generating enabling environments for improved living conditions, along with the fostering of social inclusion, supporting women's empowerment and gender equality, addressing health and environment concerns as well as challenges in the areas of education and human security.

The thematic debate, in particular its panel discussion segment, will also address key areas of action in the field of heritage and creativity, which are at the heart of the culture and development nexus.

In this context, the discussion on heritage and creativity may address the following questions:

- How can heritage and creativity contribute to sustainable development in all its dimensions?
- What is the role of heritage and creativity for empowering communities and ensuring inclusive development?
- How can heritage and the creative economy contribute to sustainable economic growth?
- How can heritage and creativity contribute to sustainable management of resources and a more balanced urbanization?
- In what ways are heritage and creativity vehicles for peace and reconciliation?

#### **4. Participants**

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The participants will include representatives of UN Member and Observer States, UN System, civil society and academia.

#### **5. Format**

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This one day interactive debate will include an opening segment, keynote addresses, a high-level morning segment, an afternoon panel discussion followed by closing remarks.

A detailed program of the debate will be circulated in due time.

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