

## **Phase II: Opening Message – The importance of culture for promoting sustainable development and achieving the MDGs**

Dear colleagues, partners and friends,

We warmly welcome you to Phase II of the e-discussion **“Building the future we want with science, technology and innovation (STI) and culture”**, which will take place to between **5 and 19 March**, moderated jointly by UNDP, through the MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-Fund) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as part of the 2013 Annual Ministerial Review process. The second part of the E-discussion will be focused on culture and development.

The international community has agreed that the development approach followed so far, despite the progress made, has exposed its limits. As the UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki Moon stated recently, “we cannot continue to burn and consume our way to prosperity” while poverty and inequalities continue to increase. It has become apparent that “business as usual” is not an option and that a transformative change is required, placing more emphasis on the humanistic dimension of development and on a wider notion of wellbeing beyond GDP. Many are suggesting that a stronger consideration for culture and of local context in development policies and programmes could be one of the key components of the ‘future we want for all’. Culture, here, is understood both as a sector, including the arts, tangible and intangible heritage and the creative industries broadly defined, and in its larger anthropological notion of ‘vision of the world’.

Indeed, experience has shown that activities associated to the culture sector can deliver a range of concrete benefits to communities in social, economic and environmental terms, thus driving sustainable development. At the same time, the failure of many well-intentioned projects has shown how a context and culture-sensitive approach to development initiatives is a critical enabler of sustainable development. As Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen put it, “cultural matters are integral parts of the lives we lead. If development can be seen as enhancement of our living standards, then efforts geared to development can hardly ignore the world of culture”.

For various reasons, including the lack of a clear framework supported by statistics as well as a persisting belief that cultural diversity might be a hindrance to the respect of fundamental human rights and the improvement of governance, culture was not included in the MDGs established in 2000. As a result, a globally agreed and shared recognition that all development strategies and programmes at global, regional and local levels, should integrate culture within its goals, indicators and targets is still missing. This has meant that the potential of culture to contribute to sustainable development has remained largely untapped in many regions of the world, particularly in developing countries, where it could make the most difference.

The debates leading to the post-2015 development agenda, including this e-discussion, provide a unique opportunity to address this gap and articulate the ways in which the contribution of culture to sustainable development could be defined and measures over the next decades. The results of this discussion will be summarized and brought to the attention of the States which are members of ECOSOC, as well as to wider audiences throughout the various forums leading to 2015.

The discussions are organized around four major topics:

1. How does culture drive and enable sustainable development? How can we increase awareness with regard to the transversal role of culture? How does culture contribute in addressing current and emerging sustainable development challenges; such as eradication of poverty, gender mainstreaming, environmental sustainability, urbanisation, health, education? How does the valorization of culture (through policy, legislation, economy, society, etc.) act as an enabler for development? Apart from the Ministry of Culture, how do you engage with other ministries such as finance, health, education, environment, urban planning and employment, for instance, in mainstreaming culture in their own capacity and increase their policy implementation effectiveness?
2. In which ways do cultural and creative industries contribute to an inclusive economic development? Which approaches have worked in creative industries? Which are the value drivers of creative industries? In what ways have creative industries promoted sustainable tourism and social development? How can copyright systems support the creative sector? Which best practices indicate the creative sector's positive social impact?
3. How does heritage (natural and cultural) contribute to sustainable development? What is the role of local communities, and how can indigenous peoples contribute to sustainable development? How can we design and drive equitable and sustainable tourism through local communities' participation and how can they benefit? How has culture and indigenous people's considerations been integrated into national policy, legislation and local development plans?
4. How does culture of peace promote sustainable development? Social stability and culture of peace is viewed as a necessary condition/prerequisite for achieving the MDGs and transitioning to sustainable development. In post-conflict settings and fragile states, what has been the role of culture in rebuilding trust in societies? Are there any particular good practices that can accommodate this end?

The e-discussions will be moderated by Guiomar Alonso Cano (UNESCO, Dakar Office), Giovanni Boccardi (UNESCO World Heritage Centre) and Sara Ferrer Olivella (MDG Achievement Fund), with the assistance of Giovanni Boccardi from World Heritage Center (UNESCO).

We wish you all a dynamic participation and fruitful discussion.

Kind regards,

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