



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

4 April 2019

Excellency,

Further to my letter dated 15 February 2019, I have the honour to enclose herewith a preliminary concept note for the High-level Event on “Culture and Sustainable Development”, to be held in partnership with UNESCO on Tuesday, 21 May 2019, pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 72/229 of 20 December 2017. A draft programme will be circulated in due course.

For further information, your office may contact my Senior Advisor Ms. Hana Alhashimi (hana.ahashimi@un.org), and focal points from UNESCO: Mr. Jamal Ben Abdallah (j.benabdallah@unesco.org) and Ms. Hélène Morales (h.morales@unesco.org).

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "M. ESPINOSA", written in a stylized, cursive script.

Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés

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



High-level Event on Culture and Sustainable Development

on the occasion of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

21 May 2019 – 10:00am – 1:00pm and 3:00pm – 6:00pm

Trusteeship Council Chamber

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Background

The transformative power of culture for social inclusion, resilience and sustainable development is increasingly recognized as a key enabler for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marked a major turning point in global efforts to address development challenges and opportunities, as the local authorities and communities take an increasingly important role in this global momentum alongside international and national actors and other relevant stakeholders. Culture is also an essential component of human development, representing a source of identity, innovation and creativity for all, it provides sustainable solutions to local and global challenges.

In accordance with General Assembly Resolution 72/229 on “Culture and Sustainable Development”, the President of the General Assembly will convene a one-day high-level thematic debate on this important topic, in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The debate will focus on the contribution of culture to the achievement of the sustainable development goals from the national, regional and international perspectives, building on national experiences, existing policies and frameworks and cooperation. The debate will also mark two important United Nations milestones, which acknowledge the importance of cultural diversity and recognize the critical contribution of indigenous cultures to sustainable development. In this context, the debate on 21 May 2019 will also mark the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (21 May) and the International Year of Indigenous Languages (2019).

Objectives

1. Highlight the connection between culture and biological diversity with particular relation to local solutions to climate change and environmental challenges;
2. Provide perspectives about the instrumental role of culture in providing opportunities for decent work, poverty reduction, social resilience, gender equality and other aspects of the Sustainable Development Agenda; and
3. Illustrate how culture, artistic education, and creative industries contribute to the realisation of development targets in providing innovative solutions in urban and rural, national and local contexts.

Draft Programme

10:00 am-10:45 am	Opening Segment <u>Speakers:</u> (tbc) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- President of the General Assembly- UNESCO Director General- Special Guest- Creative performance
11:00 am – 1:00 pm	Roundtable: Cultural diversity as the common heritage of humanity
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Break
3:00 pm - 4:15 pm	Panel I: Culture and education: the foundations of sustainability
4:15 pm-5:30 pm	Panel II: Culture as a lever of change, innovation, empowerment and equality
5:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Closing Segment <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO- President of the General Assembly

Roundtable - Cultural Diversity as the common heritage of humanity

This roundtable discussion will discuss the power of culture and cultural heritage in mobilizing people and communities around sustainable development. It will address issues such as the importance of safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, the role of traditional knowledge and skills to foster environmental sustainability, resilience to climate-related disasters and the impact of cultural heritage on sustaining identity and peace-building. The guiding questions for the roundtable will be as follows:

- In what ways does culture and cultural heritage engage people and communities towards sustainable development?
- What are today's main challenges for the preservation, safeguarding and conservation of cultural and natural heritage?
- In what ways does indigenous knowledge inform the cultural diversity and biological diversity nexus, and what is the impact on the preservation of ecosystems?

Panel I - Culture and Education: the foundations of sustainability

This panel will focus on the culture and education nexus. Education is a key to social change, and a catalyst for achieving most of the SDGs when curricula are adapted to local environments. When mainstreamed in education, culture builds confidence and encourages dialogue; it equips youth to engage in a multicultural society, helps them to achieve better educational results, and leads them to acquire a broader and more diverse range of skills and competences. Culture is also a powerful agent fostering non-formal education and lifelong learning. The guiding questions for the panel are as follows:

- In what ways does culture interplay with education?
- How do culture and arts education foster social equality and inclusion?
- How does culture-empowered education enhance economic opportunities?

Panel II - Culture as a lever of innovation, empowerment and equality

The panel will discuss ways in which culture helps eradicating both the social and economic aspects of poverty, increasing the impact on local development by adapting to local realities and needs. It will also illustrate examples of cultural innovation, diversifying and expanding the economy. The discussion will also highlight ways in which culture provides economic opportunities, helping achieving women's empowerment and furthermore transforming public spaces into places of dialogue, reducing inequalities and fostering social inclusion.

- In what concrete ways does culture contribute to poverty reduction?
- Does culture have an impact on innovation? In what ways?
- How does culture inform societal change? How might we build a culture of sustainable development for present and future generations?

Participants:

The High-level Meeting will include Government Representatives and Policymakers (including local-level representatives); Civil Society Organisations; Entrepreneurs and Innovators; Artists; Academia; and Youth Representatives.