



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

19 June 2019

Excellency,

Further to my letter dated 16 May 2019, I wish to extend my appreciation to all delegations for their participation in the High-level Event on “Culture and Sustainable Development” on 21 May 2019, which was held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/229 of 20 December 2017, in partnership with UNESCO.

I have the honour to enclose herewith a Presidential Summary of the High-level Event, including the rich discussions during the opening, the ministerial roundtable segment, the leaders’ luncheon and the two panels on culture and education as the foundations of sustainability, and culture as a lever of change, innovation, empowerment and equality.

I would like to use this opportunity to encourage delegations to harness the transformative potential of culture for the sustainable development goals.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. F. Espinosa Garcés'.

María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés

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



MAKING
THE UN
RELEVANT
FOR ALL



High-Level Event on

Culture and Sustainable Development



Presidential Summary



High Level Event on Culture and Sustainable Development

Presidential Summary

New York, 21 May 2019

The President of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (PGA), in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 72/229, convened a High-Level Event on “Culture and Sustainable Development”, in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The event took place on 21 May 2019, on the occasion of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, and to mark the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

The Event consisted of a Roundtable, a high-level working luncheon and two interactive panel discussions. Artistic performances also took place throughout the day. Ministers of Culture, other Government representatives, intergovernmental organizations, experts and professionals in the cultural sector participated in the event.

Key messages from the event include the important role of culture in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All speakers emphasized the need to harness culture in each and every development policy, from education to science, health and environment, taking into account the transversal dimension of culture, and underscoring that placing culture at the heart of development is a long-term investment for the future of humanity. The need to incorporate culture in national budgets was also stressed. Participants agreed on the vast potential provided by culture with regards to quality education, innovation and entrepreneurship, notably through the creative economy, as essential to long-term planning for decent work and the future of work.

Participants also highlighted how culture can support climate action, and foster resilience to natural disasters. Member States shared experiences in harnessing culture as part of their national responses to climate change and environmental challenges, and the value of building on traditional and indigenous knowledge for climate and environmental action.

Opening Segment

The PGA underscored the transformative role of culture for Sustainable Development, and opened proceedings by recalling that:

“culture is everything that identifies us, it is what makes us human: our knowledge, our traditions, our beliefs, our principles and values, our artistic expressions, our songs, the words, our ways of seeing the world [...] sustaining and strengthening the identity of the Peoples, their cultures, their diversity, is the best tool to face global challenges.”

The Assistant Director-General for UNESCO, H.E. Mr. Ernesto Ottone Ramírez, highlighted the growing importance of culture in public policy: “We will collectively take ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals only by embedding culture at the core of policy and practice.” He stressed that no development can flourish without culture, and equally there can be no sustainable development without taking culture into account.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Vanuatu, H.E. Hon. Mr. Ralph Regenvanu, and the Secretary General of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, shed light on culture’s transversal role in realizing the sustainable development goals at the local and regional levels, respectively.

Ministerial Roundtable: Cultural Diversity as the Common Heritage of Humanity

The Ministerial Roundtable on “*Cultural diversity as the common heritage of humanity*” brought together Ministers, Vice-Ministers and national Representatives to discuss the role of cultural heritage to advance social and economic development, notably as a lever to foster economic development of communities through sustainable cultural tourism; building social cohesion through heritage appreciation and education; and addressing environmental challenges through the sustainable use of natural resources. While sharing their national experiences on culture’s tangible agency in advancing the sustainable development goals, speakers discussed the importance of culture for the preservation of cultural diversity and its role in forging partnerships and promoting intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and peace.

A graphic recording of the session may be found in Annex B.

Leaders’ Luncheon: The Creative Economy and the Future of Work

The high-level working luncheon focused on “*the Creative Economy and the Future of Work*” addressing today’s opportunities and emerging challenges brought by the development of frontier technologies, including artificial intelligence, in particular their impact of the creative economy, artist’s rights and mobility and digital divides. The discussions focused on advancing SDG 8 to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. Interventions addressed the need to ensure quality education for all in the digital era and the need to enhance technical and vocational education to meet the challenges of new jobs and the upgrading of skills in the labor force. Speakers unanimously underscored that the creative economy is a very powerful engine contributing to world trade, and one that has proven to be resilient to economic shocks. At the same time, there was agreement that the international community should ensure the preservation of the world’s cultural diversity through the diversity of quality contents.

A graphic recording of the Luncheon may be found in Annex C.

Panel 1: Culture and education: the foundations of sustainability

The multistakeholder panel on “*Culture and education: the foundations of sustainability*” focused on the importance of integrating culture in formal and non-formal education systems, the need to

develop educational tools and curricula to achieve greater relevance and quality to equip learners, and instill a stronger appreciation of cultural diversity and greater adaptability to the changing world, including to innovation. Many speakers expressed the pivotal role of educational and cultural institutions, both public and private, formal and non-formal, to stimulate creativity, imagination amongst the youth, and to sensitize them to their identity, traditions and heritage, notably with a view to counter brain drain. Discussions also referred to the role of new technologies and online platforms to facilitate access to culture and arts education.

Panel 2: Culture as a lever of change, innovation, empowerment, and equality

During the second Panel, on “Culture as a lever of change, innovation, empowerment, and equality”, speakers highlighted ways in which culture helps overcome inequalities and fosters participation and self-esteem. The Debate focused specifically on examples showing the benefits of the creative economy to create employment for youth and women. Concrete examples of actions and projects empowering vulnerable peoples were described, such as virtual platforms, free online training and entrepreneurship. Participatory governance initiatives at city-level were referred to building on culture as a means to foster city-engagement. Examples showcasing the contribution of indigenous peoples in managing resources to promote a sustainable economy to the benefit of their communities were also provided.

Closing Segment

Culture, in all its diversity, is the beating heart of development. Culture transcends all Sustainable Development Goals, from SDG 1 on fighting poverty notably through the creative economy, to SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities and SDG4 on quality education, but also SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and SDG 17 on building partnerships for the goals.

The PGA concluded the session by stating that:

“Intercultural dialogue allows us to resist the attempts to homogenize multilingual, multi-ethnic and multi-diverse societies, preserving our world views and the differences that enrich us. In the end, culture is the only thing that links us in an extraordinary way, both in utopia and reality.”

The Debate was broadcast live through the United Nations Web TV links [here](#) and [here](#).

Annex A – High Level Event Programme

10-10:20 am	<i>Pre-opening: Jazz performance by “Sounds of A & R”</i>
10:20 – 11:00 am	<p><u>Opening Segment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the UN General Assembly - H.E. Mr. Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO - H.E. Hon. Mr. Ralph Regenvanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vanuatu - H.E. Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary-General of SEGIB <p><i>Performance by Cicely Tyson Choir, East Orange, New Jersey</i></p>
11:00 am – 1:00 pm	<p><u>Ministerial Roundtable: Cultural diversity as the common heritage of humanity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderator: Ms. Nina-Maria Potts, Director, Feature Story News - H.E. Ms. Olivia Grange, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Jamaica - H.E. Mr. Abdoul Karim Sango, Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism, Burkina Faso - H.E. Ms. María Julia Muñoz, Minister of Education and Culture, Uruguay - H.E. Mr. Raul Pérez Torres, Minister of Culture and Heritage, Ecuador - H.E. Ms. Sheikha Al Mayassa Al-Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, Qatar - H.E. Ms. Kamola Akilova, Vice-Minister of Culture, Uzbekistan
1:00-3:00pm	Leaders’ Luncheon on the Creative Economy and the Future of Work
3:00- 4:15 pm	<p><u>Panel I: Culture and education: the foundations of sustainability</u></p> <p><u>Speakers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderator: Ms. Nina-Maria Potts, Director, Feature Story News - H.E. Mr. Abdoul Karim Sango, Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism, Burkina Faso - H.E. Mr. Abel Prieto, Director, El Centro de Estudios Martianos, Cuba - Mr. Teanau Tuiono, Project Coordinator, Māori Medium Publishing at CORE Education - Ms. Cecilia Guidote-Alvarez, Director, Earthsavers DREAMS, Philippines - Mr. Richard Armstrong, Director, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, USA <p><u>Discussants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E. Mr. Juerg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN - Ms. Tamara Richardson, Founding Director PACE 48, Australia - Mr. Nigel Encalada, Director at Institute for Social and Cultural Research, Belize
4:15-5:30 pm	<p><u>Panel II: Culture as a lever of change, innovation, empowerment, equality</u></p> <p><u>Speakers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderator: Ms. Nina-Maria Potts, Director, Feature Story News - H.E. Mr. Pablo Avelluto, Secretary of Culture, Argentina - H.E. Mr. Felipe Buitrago Restrepo, Presidential Advisor on Economic and Strategic Affairs, Colombia - Mr. Edo Hozic, Founding Director of artistic Project Biennale, Bosnia and Herzegovina - Ms. Tarcila Rivera Zea, Founding President of CHIRAPAQ, Peru - Ms. Kate Arthurs, Director Arts, British Council, United Kingdom <p><u>Discussants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Sergey Chutkov, Director of Bactria Cultural Centre, Tajikistan - Ms. Anan Al Terhi, Project manager at Theatre Day Productions, Canada / Palestine - Ms. Dieynaba Sidibe, Focal Point for DigitELLES programme - Africulturban, Senegal - Ms. Ayoko Judith Mensah, artistic programmer, BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, Belgium
5:30 pm – 6:00 pm	<p><u>Closing Segment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E. Mr. Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO - H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the UN General Assembly

