



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

7 March 2014

Excellency,

Paragraph 20 of General Assembly Resolution 68/223 requests the President of the General Assembly to hold a one-day special thematic debate "...to give due consideration to the role of **culture and sustainable development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda...**" I am therefore pleased to inform that the aforementioned thematic debate will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on **Monday, 5 May 2014**, in cooperation with UNESCO.

Resolution 68/223 represents an important milestone as it explicitly recognizes the direct link between culture and the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – while confirming that culture is both an enabler and driver of sustainable development. It also acknowledges the contribution of culture to peace, inclusion and reconciliation, and encourages Member States and other relevant stakeholders to give due consideration to culture and sustainable development in the elaboration of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The special thematic debate will consist of an opening and a high-level segment in the morning, followed by one interactive, multi-stakeholder panel discussion and a brief closing segment in the afternoon, during which a chair's summary of the debate will be presented.

As stated in the Resolution, Member States are invited to participate at the highest political level possible.

Attached is a copy of the Background Note for the debate which is also available on my website at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/events/> under the "Calendar" tab. A detailed Programme will be circulated in due course.

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

John W. Ashe

To all Permanent Representatives  
And Permanent Observers  
To the United Nations  
New York

5 May 2014

## **Culture and Sustainable Development**

In December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Resolution on Culture and Sustainable Development A/RES/68/223 which "requests the President of the General Assembly to hold a one-day special thematic debate at the highest political level possible, within existing resources, by the end of 2014, to give due consideration to the role of culture and sustainable development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, and to present a chair's summary of the debate".

The Resolution of the UN General Assembly represents an important milestone as it explicitly recognizes the direct link between culture and the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), while confirming that culture is both an enabler and driver of sustainable development. The Resolution encourages Member States and all other relevant stakeholders to give due consideration to culture and sustainable development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

**Special Thematic Debate of the United Nations General Assembly**  
**“Culture and sustainable development in the post 2015 development agenda”**

**5 May 2014**

**Trusteeship Council, United Nations Headquarters, New York**

**Background**

In December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **Resolution on Culture and Sustainable Development A/RES/68/223** which *“requests the President of the General Assembly to hold a one-day special thematic debate at the highest political level possible, within existing resources, by the end of 2014, to give due consideration to the role of culture and sustainable development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, and to present a chair’s summary of the debate”*.

This resolution builds on two previous resolutions, adopted in 2010 (A/RES/65/166) and 2011 (A/RES/66/208) respectively, and represents an important breakthrough for culture in the development agenda and the linkages with the three pillars of sustainable development. It also acknowledges that culture contributes to **inclusive economic development**, as cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism and cultural infrastructure are sources of income generation and job creation, including at the community level, thus improving living conditions and fostering community-based economic growth, and contribute to empowering individuals.

Culture also contributes to **inclusive social development for all**, including local communities and indigenous peoples, with respect for cultural diversity, safeguarding of the cultural and natural heritage, fostering of cultural institutions and strengthening of cultural and creative industries; it also contributes to **environmental sustainability**, since the protection of cultural and biological diversity and the natural heritage is crucial to sustainable development, while supporting traditional systems of environmental protection and resource management can contribute to the increased sustainability of fragile ecosystems and the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, reducing land degradation and mitigating the effects of climate change. The UN General Assembly further acknowledges that culture contributes to **peace and security**, as a valuable resource for empowering communities to participate fully in social and cultural life, facilitating inclusive governance and dialogue at the national, regional and international levels and contributing to conflict prevention and resolution, as well as to reconciliation and recovery.

Beyond these milestone statements, the UN General Assembly encourages all Member States and other relevant stakeholders to give due consideration to culture and sustainable development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

The consensus reached by Member States builds on a number of key milestones which have taken place in 2013 and that have rallied increasing support within the international community. In May 2013, the Hangzhou International Congress (China) gathered some 500 experts and adopted the Hangzhou Declaration, which recommends that culture be included as part of the post-2015 UN development agenda, to be based on heritage, diversity, creativity and the transmission of knowledge. In June 2013, the UN General Assembly Thematic Debate on “Culture and Development” held at UN Headquarters (New York) benefitted from interventions Member States, who stressed the role of culture in achieving development goals. In July 2013, the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review was dedicated to “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals” (Geneva) reiterated the same message. In parallel, the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals dealt with culture during its 4th meeting in June 2013, while Member States proposed to establish a Group of Friends on Culture and Development that was launched in September 2013.

### **Objective**

Building upon the deliberations undertaken by Member States and experts in the above-mentioned fora, the Special Thematic Debate will provide a platform for participants to discuss the role of culture for sustainable development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, by addressing key issues such as:

- 1) What measures should be taken in order to maximize the contribution of culture to **poverty eradication** while effectively addressing its human, social and economic dimensions?
- 2) How should the role of cultural heritage and the cultural and creative industries be leveraged to contribute to poverty reduction and eradication, quality education, the environment, sustainable urbanization, and inclusive and peaceful societies?
- 3) What concrete means of implementation must be put in place to promote culture as an important factor for enriching **quality education for all** and future generations as well as for achieving **gender equality and women empowerment**?
- 4) How should the interrelationship between culture and **the environment** be enhanced to foster sustainable management practices?
- 5) Which measures and mechanisms should be undertaken by governments, the UN and other stakeholders to safeguard the cultural resources in view of a **sustainable urbanization** and for sustainable cities?
- 6) How can the UN better support **effective governance and institutions** through culture? How does the strengthening of cultural infrastructures and capacity-building in the field of culture impact positively on national development? How to capture/assess this?
- 7) How to best mobilize culture in building **social cohesion, peace and reconciliation**?
- 8) Which kind of multi-stakeholder **partnerships** should be put in place or enhanced to strengthen the contribution of culture to development?

### **Format and Outcome**

The one-day special thematic debate will take place on 5 May 2014, at the UN headquarters in New York, and is being held in cooperation with UNESCO. It will consist of an opening and high-level segment in the morning, followed in the afternoon by one interactive, multi-stakeholder panel discussion and a brief closing segment. A President's summary will be presented as an outcome of the event.

### **Participants**

The thematic debate will include participation of Member States at the highest possible level, Observers, UN Agencies and representatives of civil society, private sector, and other relevant stakeholders. Permanent Missions are invited to express to the President of the UN General Assembly their interest in co-chairing the interactive panel discussion.

Additional details of this special thematic debate, including its programme, will be communicated at a later stage.



**United Nations General Assembly  
Special Thematic Debate**

**CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

**PROGRAMME**

**5 May 2014, New York  
Trusteeship Council Chamber**

The event will be broadcast live. Link available at <http://webtv.un.org/>

**CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

**DRAFT PROGRAMME**

**5 May 2014, New York  
Trusteeship Council Chamber**

10:00 - 10:20	<p><b><u>Opening remarks:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari</b>, Acting President of the United Nations General Assembly</li> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson</b>, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General</li> </ul>
10:20 - 11:00	<p><b><u>Keynote addresses:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>H.E. Ms. Irina Bokova</b>, Director-General of UNESCO</li> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Taleb Rifai</b>, Secretary General of UNWTO</li> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Hao Ping</b>, President of the UNESCO General Conference and Vice-Minister of Education of the People’s Republic of China</li> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Mohamed Sameh Amr</b>, Chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board</li> <li>• <b>The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean</b>, Former Governor General of Canada and UNESCO Special Envoy for Haiti</li> </ul>
11:00 - 13:00	<p><b><u>High-Level Segment</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ H.E. Mr. YUN Byung-se, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the <b>Republic of Korea</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Dr Patricia Balbuena, Vice Minister for Intercultural Affairs of <b>Peru</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Mr. Ömer Çelik, Minister of Culture and Tourism of <b>Turkey</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Mr Hoang Tuan Anh, Minister for Culture, Sports and Tourism of <b>Vietnam</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Ms. Rose-Anne Auguste, Minister for Human Rights and the Fight against Extreme Poverty, <b>Haiti</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Ms. Ramatoulaye Diallo N’Diaye, Minister of Culture of <b>Mali</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Mr. Mohamed Amine Sbihi, Minister for Culture of Kingdom of <b>Morocco</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Ms. Lisa Hanna, Minister for Youth and Culture of <b>Jamaica</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Ms. Mirela Kumbaro, Minister of Culture of <b>Albania</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Ms. Mabel Causarano, Minister of Culture of <b>Paraguay</b></li> </ul>
13:00 - 15:00	Break
15:00 - 16:15	<b><u>High-Level Segment (continuation)</u></b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ H.E. Maurice Kouakou Bandama, Minister for Culture and the Francophonie of <b>Côte d’Ivoire</b></li> <li>❖ H. Hon. Minister Dr. Daniel Johnson, Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture of <b>The Bahamas</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Mr. Ivan Tasovac, Minister of Culture and Information of the <b>Republic of Serbia</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Ms. Vatma Vall Mint Soueina, Minister of Culture and Sports of the <b>Islamic Republic of Mauritania</b></li> <li>❖ Dr. the Honourable H. Lincoln Douglas, Minister of the Arts and Multiculturalism of <b>Trinidad and Tobago</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Mario Lucio de Sousa, Minister of Culture of <b>Cape Verde</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Mr. Américo Córdula, Secretary of Cultural Policies, Ministry of Culture of <b>Brazil</b></li> <li>❖ H.E. Dr. Mónica Guariglio, National Director for Cultural Policies and International Cooperation of <b>Argentina</b></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Interventions of Representatives of Member States</u></b></p>
16:15 – 17:45	<p><b><u>Thematic Interactive Panel Discussion</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Topic:</u> The power of culture for poverty eradication and sustainable development</b></p> <p><b><u>Moderator:</u> H.E. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations, and chair of the Group of Friends for Culture and Development</b></p> <p><b><u>Panelists:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms. Farida Shaheed</b>, UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights</li> <li>• <b>Ms. Marianne Fay</b>, Sustainable Development Network Chief Economist and Focal Point on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, World Bank</li> <li>• <b>Ms. Trudie Styler</b>, Actress and producer</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Felipe Savadogo</b>, Permanent Representative of Organisation internationale de la Francophonie to the UN</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Charles Vallerand</b>, General Secretary of the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Video Message:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Joan Clos</b>, Executive Director of UN Habitat</li> </ul>
17:45 – 18:00	<p><b><u>Closing remarks</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>H.E. Ms. Irina Bokova</b>, Director-General of UNESCO</li> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari</b>, Acting President of the United Nations General Assembly</li> </ul>



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**United Nations General Assembly  
Special Thematic Debate**

**CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**  
(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 5 May 2014)

**Summary**

As mandated by the United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution A/RES/68/223 of December 2013, the Special Thematic Debate on “**Culture and Sustainable Development in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**” was convened by H.E. Mr. John Ashe, President of the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Debate was held on 5 May 2014 at the UN Headquarters, New York, and comprised an opening segment, keynote addresses, a high-level segment followed by a panel discussion. 18 Government Ministers and high-level representatives of Member States, a number of Permanent Representatives of Member States to the United Nations, the G-77 plus China and the European Union, as well as the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of UNESCO, the Executive Director of the UN World Tourism Organization, the President of the General Conference and the Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO, highlighted the paramount importance of integrating culture in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and made recommendations aiming at feeding the elaboration process of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The high-level segment was complemented by a panel discussion with the contribution of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat and the participation of distinguished high-level representatives of the World Bank, the Organization internationale de la francophonie, civil society and the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights, who highlighted the power of culture for poverty eradication, quality education, human rights, gender equality, sustainable environmental management and more liveable and attractive cities.

***“Culture must be integrated in the post 2015 agenda, as a driver and as an enabler of sustainable development”, stated the Director-General of UNESCO***

Key messages of the Debate can be summarized as follows:

***Culture enables and drives sustainable development***

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1. The debate underscored that culture, in its manifold expressions ranging from cultural heritage to cultural and creative industries, from sustainable tourism to cultural infrastructure, drives and enables the social, environmental and economic pillars of sustainable development. Participants concurred that culture is a thread that binds together the social fabric of our societies and that it can be a crucial factor for reconstruction and reconciliation in the aftermath of conflicts.
2. While the international community is now looking for effective strategies to foster transformative change, building on the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development clearly calls for ownership. This is where culture can help, to foster participation, to craft a more balanced and meaningful development model *for the people, by*

the people, widening development pathways, fighting poverty, combatting inequalities and promoting human rights.

3. **Regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, participants highlighted that culture should be included as a cross-cutting enabler and driver of sustainable development.

### ***Culture is key to Poverty Eradication***

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4. Culture is not a luxury but a powerful resource for poverty eradication and, according to the World Bank, helps meet the ambitious goals to reduce the percentage of people living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day to 3% by 2030, and to foster income growth for the bottom 40% of the population in every country by creating jobs.
5. The **creative economy** not only is of strategic importance, but is also an infinite resource for achieving sustainable development, as highlighted at country level and by the 2013 Special Edition jointly published by UNESCO and UNDP. A number of participants, including the Group of Friends on Culture and Development, a coalition of some 30 countries from all regions, emphasized the need for the future sustainable development goals (SDGs) to reflect amongst their targets the importance of **cultural and creative industries** for promoting inclusive and sustained economic growth and decent jobs for all. Cultural and creative industries permit the diversification and strengthening of economies and promote innovation, in particular through micro, small and medium sized enterprises, while generating income and employment.
6. Culture as a knowledge capital and as a resource provides for the needs of the individuals and communities and reduces poverty. Cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable tourism, culture-led urban revitalization and cultural infrastructure, can serve as strategic tools for income generation, and for creating jobs and new market opportunities.
7. With one billion travellers moving around the globe in 2012 alone, the nexus between **tourism and culture** offers an immense opportunity to contribute to inclusive economic growth, social development and stability. The responsible use of cultural assets for tourism creates new employment opportunities and generates income for local communities. Furthermore cultural tourism can drive the economy by allowing destinations to create resources to become more competitive, raise their international profiles, and create linkages to other local activities such as arts and handicrafts. Cultural tourism can also enhance dialogue and mutual understanding. It is thus essential to safeguard cultural heritage with the view to benefiting communities in the short and long term.
8. **Regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, a number of participants, including the Group of Friends on Culture and Development, concurred that the role of cultural heritage, the cultural and creative industries, cultural tourism and sustainable lifestyles should be integrated in the framework of dedicated targets under objectives related to inclusive and sustained economic growth, decent jobs for all, poverty eradication, sustainable consumption and production.

### ***Culture is key to Quality Education***

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9. The importance of culture as a resource for facing the multiple challenges facing societies around the world and the foundation for building a more harmonious and sustainable future was underlined. Participants observed that the ways in which people learn, acquire and transmit knowledge are closely linked to their geographical, historical and linguistic backgrounds; and that educational curricula that take the local context into account are most likely to be effective in providing quality education and cohesive societies.

10. When mainstreamed within educational strategies, cultural initiatives that recognize diversity within a human rights-based approach play an important role in building confidence and mutual understanding among multicultural communities. It is thus key to raise awareness of diverse cultural identities, while facilitating improved formal and informal educational processes through culture, with the view to foster a truly sustainable development.
11. Linking culture to education furthermore provides options for ensuring access to all to quality education and thereby reducing inequalities.
12. **Regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, in the area of education and life-long learning, participants including the G-77 plus China and the Group of Friends on Culture and Development, highlighted the need to raise awareness on culture's contribution to sustainable development – through its integration as relevant knowledge in education curricula, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, and the importance of arts education; culture could feature in the framework of relevant targets under an objective related to quality education.

### ***Culture is key to sustainable environmental management***

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13. Building on Rio+20, participants highlighted that **local and indigenous knowledge** and management practices provide valuable insights and tools for ensuring environmental and agricultural sustainability, food security, for preventing ecological challenges and loss of biodiversity, and for disaster risk reduction and mitigating the effects of climate change. For this reason, and in order to protect and restore ecosystems and halt all biodiversity loss, the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples should be promoted and their participation in the decision-making should be enhanced.
14. Culture can thus substantially contribute to environmental sustainability. From food to medicine, from national symbols to traditional celebrations, many cultural practices are intrinsically linked with **biodiversity** and the cyclical rhythms of nature. As the international community seeks to restore a balanced relationship between humankind and the environment, it can draw on the knowledge, skills and experience from the many cultures that embrace and cultivate harmony with nature.
15. In many countries, cultural values are closely related to the environment, which need to be taken into account before engaging in any dialogue. The integration of cultural aspects in environmental development enables an inclusive approach to the communities attached to the territories. In addition, cultural identities and local knowledge and practices offer an alternative view and relationship to nature and the environment.
16. **Regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, participants underlined that the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage, including traditional and indigenous practices, should be integrated in the framework of dedicated targets under objectives related to the environmental sustainability, ecosystems and biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition.

### ***Culture is key to the sustainability of cities***

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17. Culture, notably through **cultural heritage and historic cities**, is a strategic asset for local economic development. With targeted investments and effective partnerships between the public and private sector, it has been shown that these assets can contribute to job creation – notably for the poorest – and economic growth, while doing so in an inclusive manner.

18. **Cultural and creative industries** can contribute to sustainable development in a fast urban transition, allowing for the participation of local communities and environmentally conscious actors in urban planning.
19. In addition, a vibrant urban life can differentiate a city from competing locations, branding it nationally and internationally, thus helping it attract investments. Participants thus agreed that keys to achieve sustainable cities include the enhancing of cultural life and the safeguarding of their urban historic environments in harmony with their natural settings.
20. **Cultural infrastructure**, such as museums and other cultural facilities, should be used as civic spaces for dialogue and social inclusion, helping to reduce violence and foster cohesion. Promoting the regeneration of downtowns and the conservation and adaptive reuse of their cultural heritage assets can improve the liveability and living conditions for poor communities and make cities more competitive at the same time. Culture-led redevelopment of urban areas, and public spaces in particular, should thus be promoted to preserve the social fabric, improve economic returns and increase competitiveness, giving impetus to a diversity of intangible cultural heritage practices as well as other creative expressions, thereby creating sustainable urban spaces.
21. **Regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, many participants highlighted the need to take into account the protection and safeguarding of the world's cultural and natural heritage, while allowing for the regeneration of urban areas and public space, in the framework of a relevant targets under an objective related to sustainable cities.

### ***Culture is key for social cohesion and inclusion***

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22. Culture has a critical role in fostering the **ownership** of individuals and communities in the elaboration of a holistic approach to development. It has a unique potential to generate dialogue, strengthen civil society, ensure effective ownership and empower youth and women in particular, while enabling democratic transition, human rights, social stability as a whole. The respect of **cultural diversity** and the promotion of **intercultural dialogue** favour a wider participation in public life, on the basis of human rights and equality. It is thus crucial to ensure the participation of civil society in the formulation and promotion of cultural policies and to ensure access for all in decision-making processes as well as equal access to cultural resources and the enhancement of opportunities for all to participate and contribute in cultural life.
23. Strengthening the cultural fabric of a community provides the basis for its social and economic development, while cultural dynamism creates an environment that facilitates dialogue and reconciliation between communities in fragile contexts, as well as **social cohesion and inclusion**.
24. The recognition of heritage and promotion and respect of cultural diversity within a human rights based approach are key elements in **reconciliation and peace-building** processes and recreating social links in post-crisis and post-disaster responses, within communities and between communities.
25. The promotion and integration of cultural values in the development of social policies is crucial to ensure the integration of marginalized and vulnerable groups, women, youth, people in rural areas, indigenous communities, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities and to tackle discrimination and inequalities, as well as violence and social exclusion.
26. **Regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda**, participants concurred on the contribution of the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage, the cultural and creative industries and a

culture of peace and non-violence that should feature in the framework of targets under objectives related to social inclusion, equality, peaceful and inclusive societies.

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