

21 May 2014

**Message of H.E. John W. Ashe  
President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly,  
for World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development**

On this World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, I encourage all of us to recognize the importance of cultural diversity, both as a reflection of the richness of humankind, and as essential to the flourishing of countries and communities across the world.

As we approach 2015, the international community is seeking to identify ways to promote inclusive socio-economic development across the world. Development needs to be truly sustainable and should be adapted to local contexts; it should rely on the cultural resources of countries and peoples, while respecting cultural rights.

As highlighted by the United Nations General Assembly, culture enables and drives development and should be mainstreamed in all development programmes. It ought to be recognized as such in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Culture also drives development within a number of sectors including tourism and heritage. Moreover, a respect for cultural diversity is necessary to address both the economic and human rights dimensions of poverty and to promote quality education, sustainable cities and urbanization, sustainable environmental practices, and inclusive societies.

The Special Thematic Debate on Culture and Sustainable Development, which I convened on May 5, as mandated by the General Assembly in its third resolution on this subject, gathered more than 250 participants, all of whom concurred that there can be no sustainable development without cultural diversity. I encourage ongoing efforts by Member States and other stakeholders in this regard and hope these issues will be underscored in the current and forthcoming process of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.