Turkey welcomes the opportunity to host UNESCO’s International Jazz Day on 29-30 April, 2013, in Istanbul. This will be the first celebration to be held outside of the United Nations Headquarters. On this occasion, we shall celebrate jazz music not only as a global language of human soul, but also that of more inclusive societies, mutually enhancing civilisations, and UNESCO ideals.

Jazz music fascinated the two sons of Mehmet Münir Ertegün, the second Turkish Ambassador of the Republican era to the United States of America. Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegün brothers co-founded the legendary Atlantic Records together with Herb Abramson in 1947. Arif Mardin, another legendary music producer from Turkey, served along with them in the company. These three Turkish-American jazz connoisseurs and pioneers, all born and bred in Istanbul, left an outstanding musical legacy of true global reach, spanning from the United States to Egypt and the rest of Africa via Turkey.

Inspired by the lives and achievements of the Ertegün brothers and Arif Mardin, jazz music has flourished in Istanbul. This has paved the way for the Istanbul Jazz Festival, organized every year since 1994 by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts. Hence the special place of Istanbul on the global jazz map for the last twenty years.

It is our pleasure to host the "International Jazz Day" which will raise awareness in the international community of the virtues of jazz as an educational tool, and a force for peace, unity, dialogue and enhanced cooperation among people.