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Organisation
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Alfredo Pérez de Armiñán,
Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the International Conference on**

**“Culture and development: towards a more strategic approach to cultural
policies in the EU’s external relations”**

**“UNESCO’s Role in promoting Culture for Sustainable Development in the
Post-2015 agenda”**

Echternach (Luxembourg), 3 September 2015

Excellency Ms Maggy Nagel, Minister of Culture of Luxembourg,

Honourable Mr Yves Wengler, Mayor of Echternach,

Excellency Mr Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture,
Youth and Sports,

Excellency Ms Silvia Costa, Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education of
the European Parliament,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and an honour to join you today in Echternach.

At the outset, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the European Union and the Luxembourg authorities for organizing this international conference and inviting me to speak to you on a topic of great importance: namely, “The role of culture for sustainable development in the Post-2015 Development Agenda”.

Among the priorities shared by the European Union and UNESCO is the commitment to actively promote culture in the international agenda. This is demonstrated by the EU’s longstanding support of UNESCO’s Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. May I remind you that in 2006 the European Union took the bold step of becoming one of the first Parties to this unique international legal instrument. The EU’s commitment has been reaffirmed by the ambitious European Agenda for Culture. I would like to take

this opportunity to commend the Luxembourg Presidency for giving high priority to culture for development and for its current efforts to further reinforce the EU position in this regard.

Indeed, we consider the EU a foremost partner in our global efforts to safeguard heritage and promote culture diversity. One joint success story is the UNESCO/EU Expert Facility Project, which was born from the common determination of both organizations to respond to the growing requests from developing countries for support in building their human and institutional capacities and strengthening their systems of governance for culture. During the high-level conference devoted to this innovative project in Brussels last June, I had the opportunity to engage with our distinguished colleagues in charge of EU policy for development and cooperation to discuss the promising results of this partnership and future joint activities. I would also like to express our gratitude to the European Union for its invaluable support UNESCO work on the ground in Mali for the reconstruction of destroyed mausoleums, the rehabilitation and conservation of mosques and ancient manuscripts. I am pleased that a presentation on the conservation of the Timbuktu manuscripts will be made at tomorrow morning's session.

And now I would like to turn to the topic at hand: culture and development.

As we approach the final stage of the process of elaborating the UN post-2015 development agenda, it is encouraging to note that much progress has been made at both the international and local levels. Thanks to our common efforts at the global and national levels, the international community is increasingly aware of the need to integrate culture in the agenda. This is confirmed by a series of in-depth international debates and evidenced by a large number of declarations, UN resolutions, high-level conferences and reports.

UNESCO is firmly convinced that "Culture is who we are". And that "No society can flourish without culture; no development is sustainable without it."

We believe that Culture can contribute to forging a development model that responds to current concerns, addresses future challenges, and strengthens the

participation of national, regional and local authorities in defining and implementing programmes and strategies that promote transformational change.

Culture is important for social inclusion and poverty eradication, for sustainable economic growth and job creation, for economic resilience and sustainable use of resources as well as sustainable tourism.

Culture is essential for quality education, sustainable urban development and greater environmental sustainability through local and traditional knowledge, as well as gender equality.

Indeed, culture is a powerful resource for poverty eradication. World Bank experts predict that culture will help meet the ambitious goal to reduce the number of people living on less than US\$ 1.25 US\$ per day to 3 per cent by 2030.

According to the *2013 Special Edition Creative Economy Report* co-published by UNESCO and UNDP, cultural and creative industries constitute one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing sectors of the world economy, contributing to sustainable economic growth, income generation and the creation of stable jobs. In addition, cultural and creative industries offer countries the opportunity to diversify, expand and strengthen national economies, thereby contributing to the reduction of social inequalities.

At the same time, culture is a source of wealth in ways that do not have price tags. Culture helps to promote social cohesion and youth engagement, and it is a wellspring for social resilience. These benefits may be hard to quantify, but their impact is immeasurable, and they are essential for all societies today.

This is also why UNESCO is so committed to safeguarding and protecting cultural heritage, especially in situations of conflict. This heritage does not only provide for revenue and employment for local communities – more fundamentally, it is a source of identity and a force for social cohesion and reconciliation. In this regard, I wish to thank the European Union for its providing much-needed financial support to UNESCO ongoing efforts to protect cultural heritage in Syria.

UNESCO's position is clear. We are living in a new age of limits -- in terms of the resources of the planet and material assets. In this context, we must make far more of the single most powerful and renewable energy there is – that of innovation.

Culture is essential here. It is a driver of development, as demonstrated by the worldwide growth of the cultural sector, creative industries, tourism, and the arts and crafts. It is also an enabler of sustainable development -- the context in which development policies can move forward, through local ownership, with greater efficiency and impact. The power of culture for development lies precisely in its sustainability at the local level.

Experts estimate that by 2030, 70 per cent of the world's population will live in cities. This poses a number of challenges, particularly the need to establish a sustainable management system for urban planning and development.

Cultural heritage, historic cities and museums represent a strategic resource for local development in a time of rapid urban transformation, since the regeneration of historic centres, the sustainable redevelopment of urban areas and public spaces and the participation of local communities in the protection, management and enjoyment of heritage result in an improvement of the living conditions of the population and the preservation of the social fabric. Cultural institutions, such as museums can be used as civic spaces for dialogue and social inclusion, helping to foster social cohesion. Likewise, cultural and creative industries are essential to ensuring that cities develop a rich and vibrant cultural life, attract investment and promote cohesion between its communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have now reached the last stages of the complex process of elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. In the final draft of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, culture is most clearly integrated within the framework of several goals linked to key issues such as sustainable cities, education, the environment, economic growth and sustainable consumption and production patterns, and food security. Should these references be maintained in the final version, it will be the first time that culture will be integrated in an international development agenda. At a

time when the world's decision-makers wish to put people at the centre of sustainable development, this would represent a great step forward for humanity.

In this regard, I would like to highlight that UNESCO has begun work on a Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development, which will reflect UNESCO's experience in this field, together with numerous partners across the world. This report, which is scheduled to be published in fall 2016, will be yet another opportunity to showcase the evidence that culture is a key sustainable resource for inclusive economic, social and environmental development.

The process of the elaboration of the Post-2015 Development Agenda is a work in progress, and UNESCO counts on the support of all partners and stakeholders to give due consideration to the role of culture in the final development agenda - for economic development, for inclusive social development, for environmental development, for peace and reconciliation. It is thus more than timely to put forward the intrinsic added value of culture for sustainable development.

UNESCO stands committed to continue its efforts to foster the emergence of creative, open and vibrant democratic societies, as a condition for individual creativity, identity, expression and freedom. To this end, we look forward to pursuing our fruitful collaboration with the European Union.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you for your attention.