



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

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

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of Ministerial plenary session of the Meeting of the
Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe (CoMoCoSEE)**

Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia, 9 April 2013

Excellency Mr Uroš Grilc, Minister of Culture of Slovenia,

Excellency Ms Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner,

Director-General of the Council of Europe Directorate for Democracy, Ms Snezana Samardzic-Markovic

Excellencies Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to attend, for the first time, the Meeting of the *Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe*.

I would like to commend the Slovenian presidency for choosing “Art education” as the main focus of this year’s meeting.

At UNESCO, we see art education is a key to openness – to foster mutual understanding through a more perfect knowledge of each other’s cultures.

Art education is a powerful way to develop human potential, to enhance a culture of innovation, a culture of creativity.

Art education also provides very concrete skills, to respond to the needs of the new global creative economy and its job market: with creative citizens, designers, urban planners and intellectuals.

This vision lies at the heart of UNESCO’s mandate, to promote the free flow of ideas, the circulation of artists, and to make the most of culture for human development and social inclusion.

UNESCO is determined to share its experience in capacity-building here.

We have strong guiding principles, the Seoul Agenda adopted in 2010, at the International Conference Organized by UNESCO in Korea.

We have a common action plan for the development of quality arts education -- we can accelerate its implementation.

To achieve this, we need schools, museums and teachers. And above all, we need to work together.

We gather here, Ladies and gentlemen, a few months after the *8th Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe* held in Sofia last October.

This Conference called for closer coordination between the region's various ministerial platforms for cultural cooperation -- through the establishment of a new, unified ministerial platform on culture and development in South-East Europe, with UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

This is an important step forward for greater coherence, building on the respective roles and results of previous platforms -- namely the Ministerial Conferences on Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe, launched in 2004, and the Council of Ministers of Culture, initiated in 2005.

I am pleased the draft declaration for this meeting marks a new step in this direction -- UNESCO stands ready to assist in developing an integrated strategy and action plan for the future platform.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2013 will be pivotal for the culture and development agenda, featuring a series of high-level events:

- the Hangzhou International Congress in China next month,
- the *Thematic Debate on Culture for Sustainable Development* of the President of the UN General Assembly in June;

– the *World Culture in Development Forum* in Indonesia next November.

Later this year, UNESCO and UNDP will launch the third edition of the *United Nations Creative Economy Report*, to help shape the post-2015 agenda.

We must seize this opportunity to place culture, innovation and creativity at the heart of public policy.

It is a special honour to voice this message here, in Slovenia, where intellectuals and artists play such a great role, and where culture is celebrated throughout the country every year on Preseren day (February 8), when people converge on France Preseren's monument in Ljubjana to show the power of culture for belonging and confidence.

We share the conviction that sustainable development cannot be built solely through economic and political agreements – it will flourish only in sustainable and inclusive societies.

Culture stands at the heart of this vision.

We have started this movement in South East Europe.

Together with UNESCO, this region has launched *Cultural Corridors* and the initiative on *Culture – a Bridge for Development*.

Yesterday, I opened a new regional travelling exhibition, *Imagining the Balkans*, that will tour Serbia and Romania in the coming months, bringing history museums of the region together for the first time to compare national narratives.

I see the emphasis given in the new, unified ministerial platform on the nexus between culture and development as a major step forward.

This will reinforce our efforts to mobilize the power of culture -- I mean not only cultural heritage, but also creative industries, cultural diversity, the arts, for social inclusion and development.

UNESCO has long advocated for this broad vision of culture, to strengthen capacities, to harness the power of culture as a driver of economic growth and job creation.

This message has never been so relevant.

This vibrant region can be a lighthouse of cultural development, if we join forces to make the most of its vast cultural wealth.

In this spirit, I wish you fruitful deliberations.