

Address by

Damir Dijakovic
UNESCO Multi Sectoral Regional Office for Southern Africa

on the occasion of the

Launch of
SADC Heritage Association

Gaborone, Botswana
23 March 2015

Hon. Minister Vincent Seretse of the Ministry of Trade and Industry
Mr. Jimmy Opelo, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment,
Wildlife and Tourism
Members of the Media,
Workshop participants from the other countries and Invited Guests,
Colleagues (UNIDROIT, INTERPOL, AFRICOM)
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my special privilege to address this meeting on behalf of the Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa, Mr. Hubert Gijzen.

As many of you are already aware, since, the beginning of 2013, a new system of UNESCO field offices has been established. The coverage of SADC countries is thus insured through the regional offices in Nairobi and Harare as well as through the national offices in Dar-es-Salaam, Maputo and Windhoek. The director of our regional office for Southern Africa in Harare, Mr. Hubert Gijzen, serves also as the representative to the SADC secretariat, the mandate that was covered by the former UNESCO Harare cluster office Director.

Indeed, partially with in mind, on 24 September 2010, here in Gaborone, the idea started forming of a creation of a *“forum and cross-border linkages for heritage institutions and organizations to foster the protection, preservation and presentation of the rich and diverse heritage of the region for development and to sustenance of identities among communities”*. At that very day, a group of professionals, all of them present here today, agreed to call it SADC HA.

And what happened since then? Let us look at the bigger picture.

The Outcome Document of the 2010 MDG Summit, published ten years after the Millennium Declaration, emphasized the importance of culture for development and its contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. These crucial messages were reiterated in two consecutive “Culture and Development” UNGA Resolutions in 2010 and 2011, which called for the mainstreaming of culture into development policies and

strategies, and underscored culture's intrinsic contribution to sustainable development.

As we ascertained in the past two decades, development is shaped by culture and local context, which ultimately also determine its outcomes. There is still a prevalent opinion globally that culture should be considered as the fourth fundamental principle of the post-2015 UN development agenda, in equal measure with human rights, equality and sustainability. Even though that the results of the OWG in defining the SDGs did not entirely recognise this fact, the cultural dimension still deserves to be systematically integrated in definitions of sustainable development and well-being, as well as in the conception, measurement and actual practice of development policies and programmes.

In Africa in particular, this fact is well recognised. The celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the AU/OAU in Ethiopia in 2013 culminated with the launching of a new vision, the Agenda 2063, the Africa we want. Rooted in the pan African perspective of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”, the agenda 2063 is a participatory “approach to how the continent should effectively learn from the lessons of the past, build on the progress now underway and strategically exploit all possible opportunities available in the short, medium and long term, so as to ensure positive socioeconomic transformation within the next 50 years”.

Among the seven aspirations of the Agenda, the aspiration number 5, is defined as “an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics”.

Aspiration 5 in particular envisions that by 2063:

- Pan Africanism shall be fully entrenched;
- The African Renaissance will reach its peak, and;
- Our diversity in culture, heritage, languages and religion shall be a cause of strength;

In the same period, coming back to SADCHA, the discussions among involved professionals defined its multifaceted objective that can be summarised in three points; SADCHA is:

1. to build genuine bridges within the civil society, among artists, intellectuals, teachers and creators, with a view to exchanging new ideas and visions;
2. to support regional think tanks, create innovative networks and platforms that span the region;
3. to facilitate dynamic participation of professionals, civil society and political decision makers in urban, economic and social development projects, based on cultural resources.

All this however would not be possible without the crucial role fulfilled by Botswana Government and in particular the National Museums of Botswana, which strongly supported the hosting and functioning of the SADCHA secretariat. This indeed resulted in one of the major regional activities related to the Prevention and Fight against Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property.

In this period we have seen an increased rate of intense preparations for ratification, actual ratifications as well as the domestication of the UNESCO 1970 and UNIDROIT 1995 Conventions, both relative to the Prevention and Fight against Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property.

Allow me to say few words about this, currently, key aspect of SADCHA's activities as well as the topic of the second half of this important event.

The Prevention and Fight against Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property resides in the core of the safeguarding processes of cultural heritage and its development. Cultural goods are not goods like any other. They cannot be perceived only for their scientific or market value. They are carriers of history and indeed of identity. Therefore, the looting and illicit traffic of these properties affect deeply cohesion of individuals and communities to whom they belong.

The Conventions (1970 and UNIDROIT) are the first defence in the battle against the international illicit traffic in cultural property. Art trading states, art importing countries and the art exporting states, by adopting and ratifying relevant conventions promote change of attitude which is a departure point in the fight by various means in particular legislative, educational, administrative, and applied to a wide variety of cultural objects including those which are of importance for archaeology, history, art, literature and science.

With the most recent atrocities committed against humanity including the cultural heritage, UNESCO stands ready to continue a task that is far from completion, by stimulating new projects, training professionals and raising public awareness. The fight against this trafficking is a shared responsibility, and each of us must play our part.

Hence, and beside the SADCHA activities currently revolving around the combat against and prevention of illicit traffic of cultural goods, today we clearly understand the potential of SADCHA of becoming an effective institutional cooperation mechanism, contributing to SADC strategy for economic transformation, through two specific dimensions:

1. leveraging the region's diverse resources for sustainable economic and social development through beneficiation and value addition;
2. recognising that culture, as a driver and as enabler, represents an important resource for economic transformation.

To conclude, dear colleagues, where SADCHA will go, depends entirely on all of us here. Our future, the future of our cultural diversity and proper safeguarding of our heritage is in our hands. Let us insure that it flourish and become a cause of our strength.

Our heritage, our pride.

Thank you.