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Creativity and Cultural Heritage through Women's lens, UNESCO's participation at a special event at European Development Days 2018



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On the European Year of Cultural Heritage and under the framework of the European Development days held in Brussels on 5-6 June 2018, UNESCO Assistant Director General for Africa, Edouard Firmin Matoko, participated in this special event where cultural heritage and creativity through women's perspective was discussed.

In the session entitled *Creativity and Cultural Heritage through Women's lens* organized on 6 June by the European Commission jointly with the UNESCO Liaison Office in Brussels and fifteen other organizations, several speakers drew attention on how heritage and creativity are drivers for women's empowerment to activate and transform social change.

During the session, UNESCO ADG Africa, Edouard Matoko, stressed the need for access and participation in cultural life and cultural facilities for all. He also insisted on the key role of education and training as key areas to promote the participation of women. "We need active economies in Africa to keep dreaming, to keep creating art. We need governments to bridge gender gaps to foster the arts". Mr Matoko also underlined the need of transforming Africa through an active contribution of women in arts. "We need better access to cultural facilities, data collection and stronger training for cultural industries", he added.

The Director General for Development and International Cooperation of the European Commission, Stefano Manservigi, highlighted how heritage and creativity can contribute to women empowerment, putting culture and gender as two lenses to interpret and reform societies. "When culture and gender are together, both will reform our society in a sustainable way and both need more support".

Abel Prieto Jimenez, Cuban Minister of Culture, expressed his concern on how cultures of the south are suffering, fighting with to stereotypes. "The legacy of African creativity in Cuba is immeasurable", he added. During his intervention, he mentioned women's key role in Cuba as the main Cuban cultural institutions and artistic programmes are led by women; he also remembered the important partnership with UNESCO on tangible and intangible heritage.

Marie Daulne, singer of the famous Belgian group Zap Mama spoke about her experience on creativity and the arts as a black woman. During her intervention, she described her difficulties to create her own artistic space and face social norms. "The legacy of our artistic work, as intangible heritage, should be transmitted to the young artists to empower its attitude", she said.

During the questions and answers session, an interesting discussion between the audience and the speakers ensued. The Minister of Culture of Burkina Faso, present at the event, took the floor with some examples on how culture empowers African women and its links with heritage and arts: “Woman is the key element for the transmission of tradition”, he stated. In exchanges with an African artist, Mr. Matoko shared his hope that UNESCO and the EU can work together to support young artists express themselves in their own countries.

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