



High-level Event on Culture and Sustainable Development
*on the occasion of the World Day for Cultural Diversity
for Dialogue and Development*



**“Building back better: towards a more resilient and impactful
culture sector, throughout COVID-19 and the Decade of Action”**
21 May 2021, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Background

Culture is an essential component of human development, representing a source of identity, connection, innovation and creativity. Tangible and intangible cultural expressions have the demonstrated ability to drive social inclusion, poverty eradication, responsible environmental stewardship, sustainable economic growth and ownership of development processes. In recognition of culture and creativity’s crucial contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development across its 17 Goals, the United Nations General Assembly designated 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.

At the heart of the creative economy are the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), standing at the crossroad of arts, culture, commerce and technology. CCIs encompass numerous industries including visual and performing arts, music, film, television, radio, publishing, architecture and advertising among others. These sectors are some of the most rapidly growing in the world , contributing to 3% of global GDP and 30 million jobs worldwide. The cultural and creative industries also employ more young people aged 15-29 than any other sector.

The creative economy faces numerous challenges, related to the status of artists and cultural professionals and organisations, that have limited its potentially transformative contributions to sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these pre-existing challenges, with the mobility of artists, market access, intellectual property rights, artistic freedoms and livelihoods, and funding for cultural organisations having been severely affected. New challenges have also emerged, as the CCIs have undergone an accelerated digital transition due to the closure of cultural spaces, and the cancelling of physical performances, caused by the pandemic. Against this backdrop, the Internet has come to the forefront of cultural consumption and production during lockdown periods. Yet the remuneration from online activities has rarely amounted to livelihoods.

The effects of the pandemic have also threatened the safeguarding of cultural heritage sites and practices. Furthermore, those without internet access – amounting to roughly half the global population – have struggled to exercise their right to participate in cultural life. Culture’s relationship with innovative technologies and information and communication technologies (ICTs), and their role in shaping the future of the creative economy throughout COVID-19 and beyond, will therefore depend on global progress on issues such as addressing the digital divide and ICT infrastructure, copyright protection and capacity building for CCIs, securing fair remuneration for digital content, and safeguarding of local and diverse content.

The current global crisis has also brought to light the critical contribution of culture to collective well-being and the shift of societal mindsets towards sustainable consumption and production patterns and living in harmony with nature. This heightened appreciation for the arts and CCIs presents an opportunity to escalate multilateral partnerships and amplify culture’s contributions to sustainable development in the consciousness of both policymakers and the public. The crisis has also stressed the informality of many components of the cultural and creative industries, which has often prevented the design of appropriate measures that benefit their entire creative value chains, impacting strategies to protect these industries and their workers throughout the pandemic. This major fault line urges countries to support the rights and livelihoods of cultural workers in the informal economy.

A renewed focus on promoting the development of the cultural and creative industries globally can unlock culture's transformative potential in accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes through cultivating youth employment and entrepreneurship; transitioning economies to higher productivity and high-value-added sectors by promoting diversification – including locally-based production – technological upgrading, research and innovation, sustainable tourism, performing arts and heritage conservation; as well as life-long learning, cultural diversity, social cohesion, and respect for human rights.

While the pandemic disrupted the culture sector and deepened its pre-existing vulnerabilities, 2021 must serve as an opportunity to lay the foundations for *building back better*. Coordinated actions, strong commitments from states, international actors, private sector and stakeholders, as well as sound cultural policies and escalated investments in culture, are key for the creation of enabling environments for the creative economy and culture at large. The role of artists and cultural professionals and organisations in achieving the 2030 Agenda, as well as the integration of culture and the creative economy into national economic development plans, must be underlined, while the often insufficient social and economic support for cultural practitioners must be simultaneously addressed. Strengthened and strategic engagement of the global cultural and creative sectors in SDG implementation efforts can serve to ensure the full participation of communities and build the broad coalitions for action needed to fulfil our pledge to *leave no one behind*.

Mandate and Objective

In accordance with the General Assembly Resolution 74/230, the President of the General Assembly will convene a one-day high-level event on Culture and Sustainable Development in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This event, which will be held on Friday 21 May 2021, the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, will highlight the resilient and transformative role of culture as an accelerator of SDG implementation, as well as the challenges within the cultural and creative industries and the broader cultural ecosystem that were exposed and exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. Its overall theme shall be **“Building back better: towards a more resilient and impactful culture sector throughout COVID-19 and The Decade of Action”**. It will, inter alia, provide the opportunity for Member States to share experiences on crisis-response measures to support the creative economy during the pandemic; identify implementation gaps and solutions; and call for strengthening strategic cross-sectoral partnerships to unlock the transformative potential of culture in the recovery context and throughout the Decade of Action.

The objectives of the High-level Event on Culture and Sustainable Development are to:

1. Promote the mainstreaming of culture into SDGs implementation plans across the UN system and at national and regional levels, including within COVID-19 recovery strategies, in order to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs social, economic and environmental pillars.
2. Support innovative national policies and best practices in creative economy development, including by identifying bottlenecks to progress and highlighting solutions.

3. Highlight the role played by artists and cultural professionals and organisations in the creative and cultural industries, and consider means to improve their status marked by precarious social and economic conditions, taking into account the impact, opportunities and challenges of the digital environment.
4. Increase the overall support for the creative and cultural industries as drivers of sustainable development, as well as engage artists and cultural professionals as change makers through partnerships and consultations across the UN system.



Provisional Programme
PGA High-level Event on Culture and Sustainable Development
“Building back better: towards a more resilient and impactful
culture sector, throughout COVID-19 and the Decade of Action”
Friday, 21 May 2021 – 10 a.m.-6 p.m.



10:00 am-10:05 am	Musical Performance
10:05 am-10:35 am	Opening Segment
10:35 am –12:00 pm	High-level Plenary Speakers are invited to focus their statements on contributions to the overall vision, goals and targets of accelerating culture’s contributions to the SDGs, ensuring the cultural and creative industries’ equitable adaptations and transformations in COVID-19 recoveries, and mainstreaming culture within the SDGs through partnerships. In this regard, speakers are encouraged to describe national and regional challenges, policy responses and commitments, and announce partnerships, new multi-stakeholder initiatives and development cooperation.
12.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch Break
2:00 pm – 2:10 pm	Multi-stakeholder Spotlight
2:10 pm – 3:10 pm Panel: 45 minutes Q&A: 15 minutes	Panel 1: Achieving Culture’s Transformative Potential to Accelerate the Decade of Action A renewed focus on promoting the development of the cultural and creative industries globally can unlock their transformative potential in accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes through cultivating youth employment and entrepreneurship; transitioning economies to higher productivity and high-value-added sectors by promoting diversification, including locally-based production; technological upgrading; research and innovation; sustainable tourism; performing arts and heritage conservation; as well as life-long learning, cultural diversity, social cohesion, and respect for human rights. This panel will share national experiences and best practices in integrating culture and the creative industries (CCIs) into national sustainable development plans, including via data collection, public consultations and diverse funding mechanisms. Speakers will

	<p>also identify bottlenecks to progress and explore solutions, and, in the context of the International Year of Creative Economy, discuss the crisis-response measures needed to safeguard the creative economy during the pandemic, and factors hindering their effectiveness. Pre-recorded statements from 4 Ministers on the transformative role of culture will provide national perspectives and further enrich the Panel.</p> <p><u>Guiding Questions:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the cultural and creative industries contribute to the SDG's economic, social and environmental pillars? 2. What policy measure can be adopted to protect CCIs throughout the pandemic, in order to better enable them to achieve their transformative potential for the Decade of Action? 3. How can we create robust data systems for culture to better assess CCIs' contributions to economies and the SDGs, and best inform policymakers and implementation strategies? 4. What types of funding schemes can be envisioned to support the creative industries as the driver of sustainable development?
<p>3:10 pm – 3:20 pm</p>	<p>Multi-stakeholder Spotlight</p>
<p>3:20pm - 4:20pm</p> <p>Panel: 45 minutes Q&A: 15 minutes</p>	<p>Panel II: The Status of Artists, Cultural Professionals and Organisations: Equitable Digital Transformation to Support COVID-19 Recovery</p> <p>The creative economy faces numerous challenges, related to the status of artists and cultural professionals and organisations, that have limited its potentially transformative contributions to sustainable development. The social and economic precariousness faced by these groups, exacerbated due to the pandemic, relate to the mobility of artists, market access, intellectual property rights, copyright protection and payment for digital content, ICT infrastructure, capacity building for artists, and safeguarding of local and diverse content.</p> <p>While digital platforms served as a lifeline for artists and cultural professionals in the face of venue closures, the remuneration from online activities have rarely amounted to livelihoods. In this light, this segment will pay particular attention to how new technologies and ICTs impact the status of cultural workers and shape the future of the creative economy. The right to participate in cultural life among the internet-less population is also a mounting concern. Cultural practitioners and organisations, experts in cultural innovation, and creative entrepreneurs will share their experiences and outlook for the future through these subjects. Pre-recorded statements from 4 Ministers will address the Status of the Artist and how to best harness the digital transformation.</p> <p><u>Guiding Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What policy changes relating to the social and economic rights of artists, cultural professionals and organisations can best ensure fair

	<p>renumeration and diverse cultural expressions in the digital environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we leverage the potential of innovation for the sustainable development of the creative economy?
4:20 pm – 4:30 pm	Multi-stakeholder Spotlight
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm Panel: 45 minutes Q&A: 15 minutes	<p>Panel III: Mainstreaming culture into sustainable development through partnerships</p> <p>The current global crisis has brought to light the critical contribution of culture to collective well-being and the shift of societal mindsets towards sustainable consumption and production patterns and living in harmony with nature. This heightened appreciation for the arts and CCIs presents an opportunity to escalate multilateral partnerships and amplify culture’s contributions to sustainable development in the consciousness of both policymakers and the public.</p> <p>While the pandemic disrupted the culture sector and deepened its pre-existing vulnerabilities, 2021 must serve as an opportunity to lay the foundations for <i>building back better</i>. Coordinated actions, strong commitments from the UN system, member states, international actors, private sector and stakeholders, as well as sound cultural policies and escalated investments in culture, are key for the creation of enabling environments for the creative economy and culture at large. Strengthened and strategic engagement of the global cultural and creative sectors in SDG implementation efforts can serve to ensure the full participation of communities and build the broad coalitions for action needed to fulfil our pledge to <i>leave no one behind</i>. Pre-recorded statements from 4 Ministers will introduce diverse national actions to integrate culture into sustainable development agenda</p> <p><u>Guiding Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can culture be mainstreamed into SDG implementation plans across the UN system in favour of social, economic and environmental pillars? • How can global solidarity and partnerships for culture be formed? • What types of national and regional strategies are needed to ensure culture is at the heart of sustainable post-pandemic recovery plans?
5:30 pm – 5:50 pm	High-level Plenary (continued)
5:50 pm – 6:00 pm	Closing Segment