

Closing Remarks: Africa Dialogue Series

H.E Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer Mission to the African Union.

Check against delivery

Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Thank you for time and for your active participation in the 2021 Africa Dialogue Series on the theme; Cultural identity and ownership: reshaping mindsets.....

The Africa Dialogue Series over the month of May has showcased Africa's rich culture which culminated with a three day public policy debate. This initiative presented and highlighted amongst others how our rich African culture can be a driving force for peace, growth and integration particularly when special attention is paid to our shared values of family and respect of elders, community, solidarity, hard work, as well as hospitality, generosity and charity and social cohesion and how this relates to education, folklore, languages, film, music, theatre, and literature, etc.

Our rich history and from one generation to the next, Africans have developed a massive intellectual arsenal of culture norms, all guided by a profound wisdom of cultural values that help individuals and societies to overcome challenges and thrive together.

At a time of a global crisis, where the world is threatened by the combined trials of health, economic, environmental and social challenges, we have faced new realities exposing vulnerabilities and the fragility of existing models and practices to deliver basic human needs. With the unprecedented complexity of today's COVID-19 recovery and sustainable development challenges, it is clear we must be wiser in our approaches and reexamine possibilities for authentic and sustainable solutions by leveraging on our rich cultural norms.

The concept of 'leaving no one behind', particularly those who are most in need, is genuinely integrated into the African social fabric and is constantly applied people's daily practices. Understanding how culture and traditions have helped people in Africa to survive and adapt for generations, before emergence of synthetic models, could be key to developing sustainable policies to mitigate future challenges and fast track our pace towards the realization of 'the Africa we want'.

Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Today, more than ever, it is vital to ensure the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge, where new challenges are emerging due to the combined effect of growing inequalities, escalation of conflicts and surge of poverty. In our increasingly interconnected world, the potential of the cultural component should remain one of the essential sources of intellectual knowledge that needs to be harnessed and tailored towards the development of Africa.

Over the past two days in particular our Policy debates discussions focused on how to unlock the transformative potential of culture for the implementation of the sustainable development goals and build back better particularly after the pandemic. The panels and speakers presented profound reflections and insights on how to address many of the challenges, and introduced in-depth analysis and policy recommendations. We also through very lively interactive discussion with the audience.

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As we are exploring our path to recover from the devastating impact of the pandemic and build back better for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, we are grateful for all contributions that have been made by all speakers, panelists and the audience in order to address the new realities within a cultural context.

I wish to thank all speakers during the high level political debate, the panelists, moderators of session, academia, researches and artists who have enriched the content of 2021 Africa Dialogue Series with their kind presence and invaluable contribution.

I wish also to thank the leadership and working teams from our partners in organizers of this event, the office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Africa Renewal, for their tireless efforts to make this event success.

Permit me to conclude by quoting President Thabo Mbeki's words, by saying: " **I am an African. I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land**".

I thank you all for joining us in this event. *Merci, Shoukran, Obrigada, Gracias, Asante sana.*