The Power of Culture in Sustainable Development

Culture in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda
Hangzhou International Congress, PRC

Plenary Session
Wed, May 15

Prof. Wiendu Nuryanti, Ph.D.
Vice Minister of Education and Culture for Cultural Affairs
Republic of Indonesia
Your Excellencies,
Honoured delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you this morning here in Hangzhou. I would like to thank the President of Indonesia, H.E. Dr. H. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono for asking me to represent him at this important UNESCO Congress.

As well, I congratulate the UNESCO organizers and our Chinese hosts for their effective organization and warm hospitality.

1. Overview

Over the recent decades, development has come to be viewed by policymakers in many countries not simply as a generator of employment and revenue. It is also a key strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of both built and living cultures. Development is a potent force that already is intimately intertwined with cultural issues throughout the world. And its most dramatic impacts have been felt in the developing countries.

The relationship between culture and development is simultaneously a *symbiotic* and a *contradictory* one as culture always appears in a context of social values.

Change in the world’s cultures and national economies has become increasingly more accelerated. This is due to the significant growth of borderless travel, a 24/7 instant news cycle, inexpensive global communications, and social media. These complex changes bring challenges along with significant opportunities. They have raised concerns about safeguarding the world’s cultural diversity in the face of this unprecedented globalization.

The UN General Assembly (2011) has called for a more visible and effective integration and mainstreaming of culture into development policies and strategies at all levels. Development can be a powerful tool to help sustain culture but it needs great care and sensitivity in planning, development, and management to be socially as well as economically viable.
This is a paradigm shift from the persistent deficit model of culture in development. It is a move to an empowering approach where creativity, knowledge, culture and technology are drivers of job creation, innovation and social inclusion.

Culture in all its dimensions is a fundamental component of sustainable development. Culture through tangible and intangible heritage, creative industries and various forms of artistic expressions as well as philosophy, tradition, attitude and behavior, is a powerful contributor to economic development, social stability and environmental protection.

2. The Experiences Of Indonesia

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In Indonesia, we agree with the UNESCO background paper’s view that “…investing in the dynamic cultural and creative sectors can help to revitalize local economies in areas that are rich in cultural heritage and the creative industries”.

In our cities we are trying to cope with change by ensuring continuity from the past into the present. We seek to employ well known conservation principles such as adaptive re-use, rehabilitation, restoration, gentrification, and reconstruction. We believe that these should guide urban development and encourage preservation and rehabilitation of cultural infrastructure and institutions.

These include: old cities, heritage sites, cultural landscapes, universities, museums, cultural centres, cinemas, theatres, craft villages, and other key cultural institutions that are significant generators of employment and revenues.

Cultural industries are a powerful global economic engine generating jobs and income that in 2007 accounted for more than 3.4% of global GDP or approximately 1.6 trillion US dollars. In Indonesia, it has been estimated to be even more – at 10% of our GDP when calculating both direct and indirect impacts. Among cultural industries, the cultural-related tourism sector alone is estimated to generate about 40% of global tourism revenue (UNWTO, 2007).
Heritage, and notably UNESCO World Heritage sites in many countries, become anchor attractions that produce significant increases in visitor numbers. This of course generates more revenue in the creation of thousands of small- and medium-size enterprises supporting directly and indirectly the products and services needed by visitors. These include the sale of local crafts, music and cultural products generating significant employment for artisans and artistic communities found throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

In summary, we do not see change and continuity as two opposite poles between which we must choose, rather we see them as a seamless continuum that connects past, present and future.

3. Culture And Development Policy Implications
   (Case Study: Indonesia)

Dear Friends:

The Common Statement on the Outcome of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) calls for innovative and entrepreneurial ways of moving forward. We have learned from the successes and failures related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are all beginning to look ahead at the post-2015 era of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The vital role of culture in the development of Indonesia is enshrined in the founding 1945 Constitution of the Indonesian Republic. A key article reads as follows: “Negara memajukan kebudayaan nasional Indonesia di tengah peradaban dunia dengan menjamin kebebasan masyarakat dalam memelihara dan mengembangkan nilai-nilai budayanya:

In English: “The State shall advance the national culture of Indonesia in the midst of world civilization, by guaranteeing the rights of the people in maintaining and developing their cultural values”.

In this era of overwhelming globalization, it is essential for us to ask what elements in each national culture should be protected for the present and future generations. My view of the relationship between national cultures and the forces of change is as follows: These cultures are not a solid, static block of objects, practices and beliefs that can only be degraded by development, modernity or international tourism.
I would argue instead that culture is something that is constantly changing, constantly being reconstructed and recreated. This is in response to ever-evolving new circumstances, cross-culturally as well as across generations.

In developing countries, the relationships between development and the local cultures involves more than just employment and income issues. They include questions of land ownership; competition between old and new traditions; control of the pace and scope of economic development; management issues; and, in some cases, may mean the relocation of communities that have lived in a place from time immemorial.

*Ladies and Gentlemen:*

May I briefly cite as an example of Indonesia’s management of the Borobudur temple in Central Java which as you know is a UNESCO World Heritage site. In order to enhance the sustainability of the Borobudur site, Indonesia has tried to develop sustainable culture-based tourism. This involves community involvement both at the Borobudur and in the cultural corridors linked to the site.

I would remind this Congress that the Borobudur dates back to 900 AD, that it is the largest Buddhist temple in the world, that it is located in the middle of Muslim villages. It attracts almost five million visitors a year, with domestic tourists making up 90% of the total.

The notable fact about this is that the overwhelming majority of the visitors to this Buddhist monument are Muslims. Because as you are aware, Indonesia with its more than 230 million people has the largest Muslim population in the world.

How can we explain this religious tolerance and respect?

In my view, one important factor is the high public awareness of how important Borobudur is to creating employment and income for the region. Experts have estimated that more than 1 million jobs have been created directly and indirectly due to the impact of this heritage site.

We can see from this example that culture can help break through religious divisions when merged with development into one strong positive force. Thus, the integration between culture and sustainable development has the power to unite rather than to divide.

Allow me to share with you some of the planning lessons we have learned in order to manage the cultural corridors linked to Borobudur. Our central aim has been empowerment of the local population to maximize benefits and to alleviate
poverty levels. We hope that some of these key success factors may be relevant to sustainable development related to culture in other parts of the world.

These factors include:

1. Making direct links between communities and poverty alleviation;
2. Promoting entrepreneurship, especially among women;
3. Utilizing economies of scale in creating cultural corridors rather than focusing on individual communities;
4. Recognizing the importance of capacity building of local people for interpretation, as well as for supplying goods and services;
5. Monitoring carrying capacity to minimize negative impacts;
6. Integrating the region into the global (tourism) system;
7. Establishing an institutional framework that brings together all stakeholders to plan and manage development.

4. Invitation To The World Culture In Development Forum In Bali

*Ladies and Gentlemen:*

Indonesia has long participated in sharing its views on culture and development at the highest international level.

Most recently, Indonesia’s President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono hosted the *UN High Level Panel Meeting on the Post-2015 Millennium Development Goals* in Bali, on 28th March 2013. President Yudhoyono is a Co-Chair along with distinguished Co-Chairs Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and UK Prime Minister David Cameron.

These Bali talks on the global agenda beyond 2015 concluded with an “ambitious yet achievable” framework ready to be submitted to the UN Secretary-General. The panel, based upon a framework that resulted from the international Rio+20 conference on the environment, agreed to renew a global partnership.

The goals of this partnership include: “… (to enable) a transformative, people-centered and planet-sensitive development agenda that was realized through the equal partnership of all stakeholders.”

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*
In closing, I take pleasure in informing you that the President of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Dr. H. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, cordially invites all participants at this UNESCO International Congress in Hangzhou, along with local, national, regional and international participants from around the world to come together at the inaugural World Culture in Development Forum (or WCF), to be held in Bali from November 24-27 this year.

The Forum will be a seminal event led by a South-South and South-North engagement with deep philosophical, humanistic and holistic keynote and plenary sessions; workshops and seminars; debates and round-tables. Demonstration projects featuring case studies and best practices focusing on gender mainstreaming, intergenerational equity and interfaith dialogue will play a prominent role in all the sessions.

We all realize that there remains much to be done to ensure that culture in all its dimensions is integrated more forcefully in development to ensure that it is sustainable.

We are all committed to the proposition that culture must become an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the post-2015 Development Agenda. This International Congress being convened in Hangzhou is one of the important steps being taken to ensure that this worthy goal is met.

Thank you all for your kind attention, and I look forward to welcoming you this November in Bali.
Contact details:

Prof. Wiendu Nuryanti, Ph.D.
Vice Minister of Education and Culture for Cultural Affairs
Ministry of Education and Culture
Building A, 2nd Floor,
Jl. Jenderal Sudirman, Senayan
Jakarta 10270, Indonesia

Office Tel: +62 21 5785 1992
Cell/ mobile: +62 85 643 004 485
Email: Wiendu@gmail.com
Cc: sekretariat.wamenkebudayaan@gmail.com