

Hanna: Culture critical to global development agenda

Thematic Debate on Culture and Sustainable Development in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

United Nations Headquarters, New York

May 5, 2014

“Please permit me to express, on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, our heartfelt sympathy for and solidarity with, the people of Nigeria and particularly the families of the over 200 girls who were abducted by militants two weeks ago.

We are all gathered here today as members of the global community. By our collective expressions of concern and support, we can expand and energise the movement for the safe return of the girls to their families.

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, ‘Chance has never yet satisfied the hope of a suffering people’ -- those are the wise words of Jamaica’s first national hero, the Right Excellent Marcus Garvey. His words, simple yet profound, amplify the necessity for all of us, as leaders, to actively recognise that our people are the fibre which constitute the fabric of our societies and their needs must form the nucleus of our development agenda. Our priorities must not be accidental or coincidental, but we must take control of the development agenda and implement policies and programmes that will address the critical needs of all humanity.

I stand here today, to confidently affirm that the vision for Jamaica’s post-2015 development is expressly inspired by the dreams and aspirations of our people.

Jamaica’s size belies the power and reach of its culture. For *Rolling Stones Magazine* to publish an entire edition on the life of our Reggae King and Icon, Bob Marley - over 30 years after his death, hailing him as the “first major rock artist to come out of a third world country” – is simply amazing.

We are indeed, truly humbled that our culture continues to transcend language, colour, class and borders. For us, the cultural and creative industries give us a solid global competitive advantage and we are committed to utilising it for the prosperity of our people.

Mr. President, our deliberate commitment to getting this done was demonstrated in the recently established National Cultural and Creative Industries Commission led by our Most Honourable Prime Minister. The Commission, which is comprised of Ministers of Government, Cultural and Creative Industry experts and practitioners has been tasked with ensuring that Jamaica positions itself to leverage the significant economic and development opportunities emerging in the global marketplace.

Jamaica will also be exploring ways to develop a framework/mechanism for streamlining the definition, classification, certification and registration of cultural practitioners and organisations. This will facilitate them in the realisation of economic gain as they pursue their talents.

Our cultural acumen and talent did not happen by accident or by chance. Over many years, thousands of children, youth and adults have benefited from our National Festival of the Arts training programme, a true example of culture's contribution to poverty alleviation and development. The programme offers unlimited access to creative development and exposure through our early childhood education programmes all the way up to high school. It is the vehicle through which many Jamaicans have been propelled to global recognition in music, dance, theatre, art, and culinary forms.

Our Culture Card Programme is also effectively addressing the need for Vulnerable Groups to have access to a variety of cultural and creative programmes by allowing them free access to museums, heritage sites and national cultural events. Ordinarily they would be restricted by their socio-economic realities.

Mr. President, culture is also a critical component of how we are approaching sustainable urban and rural Development. The Jamaica Social Investment Fund has given Support to the Maroon and Rastafari communities to advance programmes which observe the preservation of their natural environment along with the heritage of the community towards economic viability. Several projects have already been developed and in March of this year, a working village showcasing the "Rasta livity", which is, the philosophy, religion and lifestyle of Rastafarians was opened.

Your Excellencies, centuries ago, Jamaicans were leading a cultural revolution which remains relevant to the world today. At a time when slavery was legal and women were seen as inferior to men, our national heroine Nanny led her people, the Maroons, in a fight against oppression from the heights of the Blue and John Crow Mountain. It was in this space, that she -- one of history's important female military leaders --conquered the British, 100 years before Full Freedom. We have submitted the Blue and John Crow Mountains as a nomination to become a world heritage site and we ask for your support.

Undoubtedly, there is a natural mystic about my home, a special force that not only exists within the creative imagination of all Jamaican people but within the land itself. It is a force that is rooted in history - a history that connects so many peoples of the world. It is the force that is critical to any development plan.

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, perhaps it is the force Garvey alluded to by offering that 'The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you into eternity'. With those words hastening our steps and fuelling our energy, Jamaica intends to honour the wise counsel of Garvey and the lyrical content of Marley as we boldly move to claim our share of the global creative economy.

Jamaica is supportive of culture being fully embedded in the post-2015 agenda so that its potential and other countries around the world can contribute to sustainable development and can be maximised.

Mr. President, in a world of confusing and conflicting voices, I really ask myself ‘Why must we need to convince the world that culture must be a priority?’ The truth is that Marley’s voice will continue to proclaim hope and positivity. And people around the world, decade after decade, will be reminded that culture really exists to fuel all humanity.

This must inspire all of us with determination, rebellion, love and faith.

Thank You.”