



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**STATEMENT BY**

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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
THEMATIC DEBATE**

**ON**

**CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

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**Mr. President,**  
**Mr. Secretary General,**  
**Mme Director General**

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Government of Jamaica at this High Level Thematic Debate on Culture and Development which is both timely and strategic.

Timely, because the international community is faced with a range of complex challenges which will no doubt proliferate and destroy the very fabric of our planet if they are not resolved soon. These include such threats to sustainable development as persistent poverty, ballooning unemployment - particularly among the youth population, -unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, climate change and its attendant effects. Other challenges include increasing violence and tension within and between countries that have raised age-old spectres of intolerance, pervasive exclusion and burgeoning inequality; with potentially serious consequence to global peace and security.

Strategic, because of the growing consensus in the global arena of the integral role of culture in sustainable development and the need to promote strategies and programmes to ensure that culture is mainstreamed in all development platforms including in the post-2015 development agenda.

Excellencies,

I am from a country whose development has been underpinned by a deep-seated understanding of the inextricable relationship between culture and development: Jamaica. In fact, culture is at the heart of 'Brand Jamaica' which is one of the foremost country brands in the global economy. Indeed, such is the strength and renown of Brand Jamaica that UNCTAD stated in their most recent Creative Economy Report that creativity was synonymous with Jamaica.

From our earliest beginnings we negotiated our freedom and the restoration of our original integrity and identity on a platform of resistance that was etched in culture and heritage from our

ancestry; forging throughout a new and consolidated identity of the Jamaican people. Our music became one of the foremost manifestations of that cultural action so that today, when you hear the music of Jamaica, you are not just listening to scintillating rhythm combinations and melodies. Our music, like other elements of our culture, is about mobilization and, in many instances, a call to action. It is sometimes an unapologetic and feisty affirmation that WE know the answer ... a defiance in the face of great opposition as well as an unabashed resolve that no one can and will ever be able to bludgeon us into acquiescence.

Our development project relied heavily on our creative imagination in the promotion of independent paths to development, not only for ourselves but also for the world at various moments of our history. That is why right here in the United Nations, no matter what country you represent, you all know by heart and can all say ... ONE LOVE, ONE HEART, LET'S GET TOGETHER AND FEEL ALRIGHT or EMANCIPATE YOURSELVES FROM MENTAL SLAVERY or GET UP STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHT. This is evidence that culture provides a platform which transcends all boundaries (linguistic, racial, religious, ethnic, geographical, etc.) and unites all peoples in our collective engagement to secure equal rights and justice, peace and security, recognition and acceptance for ordinary men and women of the world. Isn't this what we are trying to achieve through our Millennium Development Goals?

Mr. President,

Our culture has generated social and economic success for our people over time. On its platform our people successfully negotiated, sometimes aggressively, our freedom from colonial oppression and enslavement and placed ourselves on the path to national and global development. For this cause, Jamaica has been proud to lead the charge for a Permanent Memorial to be established here in the United Nations to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade so that their heroic struggle to move from victim-hood to triumph must be constantly memorialized in an organization whose principal mandate is for peace and sustainable prosperity for all.

On the platform of our culture, the disadvantaged, little men and women became big men and big women as they used their heritage and traditions, the foundation of their creative imagination, to

create industries from which they achieved economic success. Jamaica has witnessed many otherwise poor and vulnerable from the so-called under-class move from poverty to wealth using their creativity. Bob Marley was one such individual. Bob Marley's activism came through his lyrics in which we get insights into his life which revealed the haunting declarations of the poor and disenfranchised: "no chains around my feet but I am not free, cold ground was my bed last night and rockstone was my pillow". His story has inspired other little men and women worldwide to aspire to the highest level of personal and collective achievement.

On the basis on this creativity, Jamaicans from every walk of life espoused cultural entrepreneurship and were able to lift themselves from the malaise of economic dysfunction to glimpses of prosperity. I say glimpses because as in many developing societies we have not been able to sustain these abilities or build on their capacities largely through ignorance and by consequence some misguided policies.

At the end of the day, in spite of all our creative imagination and global impact, Jamaica has not been able to reap the full rewards of its cultural prowess. This is largely a consequence of global economic and industrial policies that have not taken into account the role of culture in development. In most cases, culture has been relegated to inferior status in trade discourse and economic prescriptions within the world's banking and financial sectors and ministries of finance. This is in spite of the data that show that culture and creative industries are among the fastest growing sectors in the world, even in the face of a global recession.

For our part, national statistics produced by the Central Bank in 2011 signaled that the third largest contributor to our Balance of Payment Accounts was the culture and creative industries whereas other service sectors such as banking, construction, financial, etc. that were the targets of national and foreign investments, were not only lower but reflected negative indices. It is also significant to recognise that the two sectors that led the way, tourism and remittances, are both sectors which in the case of Jamaica, culture manifests serious inputs.

Mr. President,

In spite of the anomalies, my Ministry will continue to leverage our culture for social and economic advancement for our people. In recognizing these shortcomings, we are creating a better enabling environment for the advancement of culture and the creative sector for economic and social development. For example, we recognize that the youth of Jamaica are exceptionally talented. If the truth be told, many Jamaicans dream of being a star in some area of cultural industry. We have put in place numerous cultural cooperation agreements with a range of partner countries. As a recent example, we have signed a cooperation agreement with our Cuban brothers and sisters to collaborate on a programme that will use our Youth Information Centres across the Island to train cadres of young people in design, construction and marketing of handicrafts and in the techniques of animation. This promotion of cultural entrepreneurship will assist in reducing youth unemployment and provide skills training and development for a wide array of at-risk youth.

Another note of significance is the recognition of the need for Jamaica to provide avenues for the fostering and promotion of the creative imagination, which has been the basis of our success in several spheres of our common life. This will involve community based enterprises in cultural and heritage tourism as we build out some of our heritage properties and sites for economic gain through public private partnership. We are determined to promote our powerful heritage for the empowerment of the communities wherever they are to be found on our island. As such, Jamaica wishes to signal our intention to seek membership of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee as well as to get one of the several heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. We hope that we can count on your support in this endeavour.

Jamaica commends UNESCO for the work it has been doing historically to position culture at the forefront of world social and economic discourse. The promotion of Conventions such as those on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, The Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage, The Underwater Heritage, serves as the vanguard through which cultural action has been assured over the years. The United Nations in this Thematic Debate must signal to the world in every tangible way that the Millennium

Development Goals, and indeed those goals that will be formulated for the post-2015 era, are not achievable without cultural action.

Poverty alleviation of reduction, global peace and security, social and economic advancement as well as the preservation of our natural environment are only possible through development programmes with a human face. Development can only be sustainable if it impacts the people to which it is targeted and its outcomes redound to the benefit of later generations. We affirm, as stated in the Hangzhou Declaration, (*and Jamaica was a part of this historic gathering and declaration*), that culture enables and fosters sustainable development. It embodies human creativity which is the source of innovation and has proven itself as one of the means to resolve inequalities, intolerance and exclusion. Development anchored in culture achieves enduring solutions and creates meaningful possibilities for global peace and security.

Today as the international community seeks to move from confrontation to more harmonious co-existence, including in the struggle for economic survival, Jamaica stands ready to engage with this august body and its cultural agency UNESCO in the promotion of cultural action and cultural industries as the basis for a global economic and social prosperity that is inclusive, meaningful and sustainable.

Let me applaud the United Nations for this High Level Debate and UNESCO for espousing its mandate with such determination and confidence. As we continue this dialogue for global transformation through culture let me leave you with this.... The word is love.