

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Education, as well as cultural awareness and interaction represent one of the major pillars of sustainable development alongside social cohesion, economic growth and environmental protection. Culture represents the nucleus, a fundamental essence of any society, providing stability, coherence and continuity to human communities and geographic regions, as well as a component enhancing significantly the economic or political influence of a nation. More recently, cultural exchanges represent a successful vector for connection in a multipolar world, a genuine vector of innovation and creativity as well as promoter of the image and identity of a country, hence a fundamental pillar in public diplomacy. In this respect, Cultural Institutes – British Council, Alliance Francaise, Amerika Haus, Cervantes Institute, Goethe Institute, Confucius Institute – represent a visible and effective platform of communication among nations and peoples as well as a soft power instrument of public diplomacy, given their ability to “win hearts and minds”, build trust and carefully considering “the changing nature of power” based on Joseph S. Nye’s definition.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda, a recently issued UNESCO Document on “Education and Culture” highlights that: “Education is a fundamental human right and the bedrock of sustainable development: it contributes to all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic, and environment - and underpins governance, and security of the individual.”

Furthermore, the connection between education and culture provides an opportunity to promote human rights, including cultural rights, global citizenship and respect for cultural diversity. The outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (Rio + 20), “The Future We Want”, includes important references to culture and highlights the significance of cultural diversity endorsed by the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development.

The UNESCO International Congress “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development” (Hangzhou, China, 15-17 May 2013), recommended the inclusion of culture as part of the post-2015 UN development agenda, based on heritage, diversity, creativity and the transmission of knowledge and including clear goals and criteria that relate culture to all dimensions of sustainable development. (The Hangzhou Declaration “Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies”).

To sum up, culture has been widely acknowledged as a sine-qua-non component in designing new policies and strategies for national and international sustainable development.