

EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Commission
to South Africa

Speech by Mr. Gerry Mc Govern, Minister Counsellor, Delegation of the European Commission to South Africa

**on the occasion of
the EUNIC symposium on “Economic and Power Relations between the North and
the South: The Impact of Cultural Exchange and Cooperation” preceding the
World Summit for Arts and Culture, Johannesburg
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**Madam Chief Director,
Laurent Clavel, President of EUNIC SA,
Representatives of Government & Non-State Actors,
Aloisia Woergetter, Programme Director,
Members of the media,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- Let me start by thanking Eunic for your kind invitation to address this important forum. And I am sure that you will all join me in congratulating South Africa on hosting the World Festival of Arts and Culture. This honour and responsibility that has been bestowed on you says a lot about South Africa, and the European Commission and the European Union are extremely pleased to be associated with this landmark event.
- Since my arrival as Head of Development at the EC Delegation to South Africa some three years ago I have often been asked what the European Union was doing in South Africa – what do we hope to achieve with development assistance and what is our motive in supporting a middle income country like South Africa.
- I can tell you that the answer for me has always been clear and unambiguous – the bottom line is that we are committed to assist South Africa in its fight against poverty. By addressing poverty and social cohesion, it is our desire to see a stable and peaceful South Africa. Without a stable and peaceful South Africa, the whole of the African continent will be at risk – and as a near neighbour, yes, Europe’s own stability would be at risk as well.
- It is not surprising therefore that as South Africa’s largest trading partner, foreign investor, and source of development assistance, the EU has embarked on a so called Strategic Partnership with SA. (Mogobagoba Dialogue – Real Yellowwood Tree, national tree of South Africa – A tree in traditional African culture symbolises a place where people engage in dialogue and resolve common problems). It is through this new Partnership that we are engaging in a range of dialogues and cooperation activities going beyond development in the traditional sense to space and science, to migration and climate change to name but a few. And we aim to

have a free trade area between us in the not too distant future. But the relationship cannot be nurtured by economics alone – relations between our peoples and increased mutual understanding are vital ingredients to that end. The revised Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (signed in Kleinmond at the EU-SA Summit, 11 Sept 2009) reflect this reality particularly in its references to Cultural Dialogue and Cooperation.

- The issue of development and culture is a fascinating and complex one and certainly crucial regardless of the viewpoint one adopts. The relationship between culture and development depends on the definition: Development is often associated with being better off in the future than in the present. The definitions and measurement of development are however important and contentious. In economics, development is measured in terms of goods that can be purchased or the 'standard of living'. Based on this concept, development is measured according to the accumulation of material assets. Another alternative concept could however measure development in terms of "quality of life". (Nobel Prize winner, Indian economist, Amartya Sen). <Inspiration: Sen (Indian), UNESCO, Serageldin WB (Egyptian)>.
- For Sen, development is linked with improving the quality of life and with extending peoples' freedoms. He goes on to argue that millions of people are caged as a consequence of economic and social misery, "cultural authoritarianism", as well as by unfair and abusive politics and politicians. Freedom, Sen argues, is not only the goal of social and economic development but it is also the most functional way of ameliorating general welfare. The argument is that values, institutions, development, and freedom are all closely interrelated. Like Sen, I appreciate the claim that people themselves must have responsibility for their own development and change of the world in which they live, however this also means that people must engage the structural constraints in order to change them. Forty years ago, UNESCO further declared that education, information and cultural progress act as necessary tools by which economic and social development should be shaped. Ismail Serageldin (1992 – World Bank Vice President)¹ argues that development needs to focus on two forms of change: "promotion of cultural identity and empowerment of the people".
- Turning now to a definition of Culture: The Oxford dictionary speaks of "the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively – a refined understanding of this" The term *culture* is used in a myriad of ways. It is a notion, if you like, but it has gained so much importance that it seems almost tangible. Yet in the world of today it becomes difficult to even conceptualise or to understand where one culture begins and the other ends. Brightman (2006)² claims that the term culture is of little use and is a mere word replaceable with others like habitus and hegemony. A definition that I like (Lionel Trilling, 1965) incorporates the notion of "a people's art and thought".

¹ Serageldin in Culture and Development in Africa: *Proceedings of an International Conference* held at the World Bank. Washington, page 19. (1992)

² Brightman, *Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification*. (2006).

- And so, in the end, if development is about freedom, empowerment and engagement – and culture is about peoples' intellectual achievement and thought, then one can easily arrive at a conceptual model that joins the two.
- But even if development were only about output and disposable income, then culture and arts would still be important. It is my belief that it is an understatement to say that it took many years until culture obtained the recognition, and a permanent place in human development models. For too long, culture remained a matter of incomprehension, suspicion, clichés and sometimes even prejudice. Even worse, it has been looked at as a superfluous luxury and pastime of the happy few, an opinion that I do not share.
- Today, Culture is considered a common good of humanity. Its role is fundamental in both the identity and stability of societies; it is, so to speak, the cement for social cohesion. Culture is also the sphere in which society expresses its relationship to the outside world.
- If it is true that there would be no development without mankind, it is equally true that there would be no development without mankind being rooted in cultural identities: Development is a path and each country has its own. Thus, development has to be supported by cultural identity, the way of life, of thoughts and dreams.
- In this sense, culture plays a key role in the construction of the State and identity of the nation. The importance of cultural identities in international politics becomes obvious in the news. Be it in a positive way such as the enlargement of the European Union, be it in a negative way in the shape of armed conflicts generated by mutual incomprehension between peoples.
- But perhaps the most important function of culture is its power to give people a sense of 'participation'. In this sense, cultural products become an expression of peoples' identity and community. Today, a singer or a movie star is more likely to help us come together as a community. In this context I would like to mention Lucky Dube. There have been many socially committed artists, but few had his impact: A wave of emotion swept Africa and the world in October 2007 when the news spread that Lucky Dube had been tragically killed. Why did so many people feel touched personally by his death? Because artists and entertainers articulate the most complex messages in simple words or drawings. (NB: incl. hip hop, rap, and graffiti). They inspire us through talking directly to our hearts.
- In this sense, cultural events, festivals, concerts and expositions are more than encounters and pastimes, allowing people to express their wealth and beauty, but most of all to become known or achieve renown. Culture is a powerful antidote to indifference and incomprehension that are often sources of instability and conflict.
- By nature, any artistic act is an act of self expression and liberation, trying to touch the other as a sign of openness. In this sense, a cultural act is an act of affection, the opposite of indifference. Cultural creation that seeks to design or express a vision in order to touch mankind, is a commitment, it takes a stand, be it of a political or a sociological nature.

- But the power of culture goes way beyond political or sociological aspects; the role of culture is also fundamental concerning economic development. Cultural industries have a significant potential effect on employment, wealth creation in both developed countries and developing countries, all the while remaining a vector of creativity that extends to other sectors. Example: Newtown in Johannesburg and its contribution to economic and social development of the city and South Africa.
- Some countries made the choice to develop culture and the success proved them right. In European countries, creative industries contribute on average between 2-3% to the GDP and employment. In Brazil, the percentage is even 6%. I do not have overall data for South Africa, but I have read that the cinema sector in this country is worth over five billion Rands and employs 30,000 people.

Culture and European/International Development Policy

- Convinced of its power and relevance, Culture was included as an integral part of the cooperation strategy between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) and the European Community through the **Cotonou Agreement** (2000 and revised in 2005).
- In 2005, the **UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions** was adopted establishing for the first time a cultural pillar in global governance.
- At the same time, the **European Consensus for Development 2006** identified culture as integral part of EU development policy and within the framework of achieving the MDGs refers to the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations.
- Based on the objective of implementing the European Consensus and the UNESCO Convention, the European Commission launched a **European Agenda for Culture** in 2007. The Agenda proposes the systematic integration of the cultural dimension in all public policies, projects and programmes concerning external relations and development with the objective of rendering culture a vital element of international relations.
- Finally, the **Conclusions of the Council of the European Union in November 2008** on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the Union and its Member States strengthened again the role of culture in foreign relations and cooperation programs.
- In financial terms, the **10th European Development Fund** provides 30 million EUR (Rand 300 million) of funding for a **new EU-ACP Cultural Fund**. This Fund will aim to support primarily the (local) distribution of ACP cultural goods and works of art and secondly its production and promotion, thus encouraging the emergence of local and regional markets and industries.
- Beyond the ACP framework, other new instruments within the programming framework for 2007-2013 enable the Commission to better mobilise funding for culture in **EU external assistance**.

- The **Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)** includes, in its Thematic Programme "[Investing in People](#)", provisions on culture, that foresee support for promoting intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and respect for other cultures, for international cooperation between cultural industries, for support for the social, cultural and spiritual values of indigenous peoples and minorities and for culture as a promising economic sector for development and growth. An amount of 50 million EUR (Rand 500 million) is earmarked for the period 2007-2013.
- Now more specifically to SA: Other support includes national and regional cultural programmes under the management of EC Delegations around the world, targeting particularly civil society. In this context I would like to mention the upcoming call for proposals in the field of culture and youth empowerment with an envelope of just over Rand 30 Million, to be launched in November 2009 and implemented in South Africa.
- The overall objective of the Youth Empowerment initiative, which was devised with the Department of Arts and Culture, is to include youth as drivers in social and economic development in South Africa. The specific objective is to improve their life skills through culture and arts with the particular aim of engaging disadvantaged youth and including them in organising community life and open the way for youth to make a positive contribution to local development. The duration of the funding for individual projects will be up to three years. Cross-cutting issues including youth participation, MDGs, good governance, HIV/AIDS, crime and violence prevention, gender, environment, collaboration with non-state actors, and capacity building, will also be addressed through this programme.
- More can be done, not just in South Africa but internationally, much more can be done to transform Culture and Creativity into vectors for development. Let's hope that the World Summit will provide a new impetus in this direction both for South Africa and the region.
- But, and I can never repeat it enough, the primary responsibility lies within you, the players in the countries concerned. It is up to you to create a social contract that unites and mobilises your population around a vision of development and an action programme. It is up to you, decision makers and professionals active in the field of culture, to define the space of culture in your vision and in your societal model, in your national strategies.
- Today, we find ourselves in the midst of an economic crisis that embraces the entire globe. This crisis risks resurrecting old reflexes of egotism, nationalism, protectionism and even xenophobia. Ladies and gentlemen, it is up to all of us to give here today, and tomorrow, a different message to the world.

Thank you for your attention.