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I am very pleased to present a new issue of Culture and Development. It is really a special issue, not only because of the quality of its content, but above all because of its timely publication. This is a crucial year in our efforts to guarantee that culture, as a means for the transmission of knowledge, an output resulting from such knowledge, a social cohesion element, and a manifestation of identities, is recognized as an essential pillar for human and economic development.

As described in the first article of this publication, Francesco Bandarin, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture, anticipates that in 2013 a number of meetings held worldwide will deal with why and how cultural policies should be incorporated into the new Sustainable Development Goals, which will replace the Millennium Development Goals and be adopted by the international community in 2015. Here, in our region, the highest authorities in the field of culture already highlighted, during a joint meeting of the 19th Forum of Ministers of Culture and Officials responsible for Cultural Policies and the 1st Meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the importance of culture in economic growth, poverty eradication, and sustainable development.

This issue of Culture and Development is a contribution to those international debates as it presents current thinking and practices on the potential of culture in development. This is the case of the contributions by Marta Suplicy, Minister of Culture of Brazil; Abelardo Moreno, Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba and Coordinator of CELAC Pro Tempore Chair, and Myrna Cunningham, former President and current member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Also, this number presents the results that have been obtained so far in the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicator Suite, which, once finalized, will provide a very useful tool to measure the impact of culture on economic growth and human well-being. Likewise, it contains regional

experiences regarding copyright, identity and social participation, cultural industries, heritage and education, knowledge societies, and on the use of cultural resources for local development.

In addition, the work done by the centres under the auspices of UNESCO CERLALC (Regional Centre for Book Promotion in Latin America and the Caribbean) and CRESPIAL (Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Latin America), whose decision-making bodies have recognized the significant role culture plays in the development of the Region, is presented.

Likewise, the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the International Film and Television School in San Antonio de Los Baños have so far this year produced two videos regarding the contribution of culture to development. One deals with local realities in the Cuba town of Gibara, including the potential role of culture in social and economic growth. The other one focuses on the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, using imaginary characters developed by a young Cuban designer. Such characters are also used to illustrate this issue.

This is, no doubt, a very opportune number of our periodical as a contribution to the global debate on the role of culture in development. We hope it will also help readers to better understand realities in the region, where culture already is, without exception, the backbone of our rich diversity and the basis of our well-being.