

**Welcome Address at the Africa Dialogue Series 2021**  
**Cultural identity and ownership: reshaping mindsets.**

**New York, 26 May 2021**

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Africa**

[Salutations]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Depending on where you are joining us from, good morning, good afternoon, good evening.

It is my singular honour and pleasure to welcome all of you to the Fourth Edition of the Africa Dialogue Series (ADS 2021).

The Africa Dialogue Series is OSAA's signature event. Besides our traditional partnership with the African Union Commission, this year we had the pleasure to partner with UNESCO. And we have been strongly supported by DGC Africa and ECA.

After the unimaginable disruptions caused by the COVID-19, the Africa Union's theme for 2021 could not be better and more opportune: 'Arts, Culture and Heritage: levers for building the Africa we want'. We all know that in normal situations and within a framework of routines, it is almost impossible to promote changes as deep as those triggered by the Covid 19. Transforming those changes and disruptions into opportunities is extremely difficult.

But we need to seize the opportunities that the COVID-19 crises provide to change our mindset and approach Africa's development with forward-thinking .

It is no longer an option as it happened with past crisis. This time is different.

The AU's theme of the year is a clear appeal to seize the opportunity created by the Covid 19 to promote a paradigm shift by leveraging Africa's strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics. A call for an African cultural renaissance which inculcates the spirit of Pan Africanism, tapping into Africa's deep well of rich heritage and culture to ensure that our destiny is built and owned by us.

The overarching theme of the AU and the ADS is anchored in Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063, as well as embedded in multiple Sustainable Development Goals, such as SDGs 4 and 16, regarding the promotion of a culture of peace and diversity.

This is the rationale behind OSAA's proposal to hold the 2021 Africa Dialogue Series under the theme "Culture and Ownership: reshaping mind sets", with 3 sub-themes:

**Sub-theme 1:** Sustainable peace for development: factoring in history

**Sub-theme 2:** Harnessing Culture and Heritage for economic transformation

**Sub-theme 3:** Human Capital: culture and heritage unleashing the potential.

In an effort to promote a rich debate around Africa's path to development, the Africa Dialogue Series Public Policy Forum will be structured in two parts: technical roundtables around the three subthemes of the ADS and two political sessions around the main theme:

During the past 3 weeks, OSAA brought Africa's vision, culture, voices and artistic demonstrations to the UN New York stage. Through these activities, we promoted a debate about culture, in the understanding that culture goes beyond artistic demonstrations and entails a deep feeling of belonging to a community that it is ready to exercise ownership of its own development. This is the real power that culture has as a trigger of sustainable development. And this is the potential that we aim to mobilize during these three-day discussions.

As the world pursues a sustainable recovery following the Secretary-General's call to "build back better", it's both a global development necessity and moral obligation to ensure that Africa can make use of all its capabilities and resources to ensure that the recovery is sustainable, genuine and inclusive. A recovery that delivers for the most vulnerable and helps reverse the upward trend in poverty levels so the promise of leaving no one behind can be truly realized and fulfilled. But also a recovery that paves the way for Africa to play its rightful role in the global

arena with a new concept of partnership driven by the basic notion that sustainable development requires, as a pre-condition, an African-owned sustainable financing and that, only then, Africa will be in a position to seat at the International Finance Architecture 's table.

This new approach is needed, because Africa continues to be impacted by global divides. Every time that the world has reached a milestone or experienced a major development, it has resulted in a new divide that widens the difference between developing and developed countries. The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines is just a new example, that follows the digital divide, the energy divide, and a long etcetera. This is our opportunity to put an end to a vicious cycle by promoting far-reaching transitions that, based on the spirit of global solidarity, enable a transformation in all areas of development. For example, by approaching the shortage in vaccine production as an opportunity to develop Africa's capacity to produce vaccines through the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa with the support of Africa's partners.

I invite you to use these three day discussions to identify other opportunities to realize Africa's transformative agenda and ensure that no one is left behind.

Welcome to the Africa Dialogue Series 2021.

