

The Role of Youth and Culture in Shaping a Peaceful and Sustainable Future



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— **LEE Sunghoon** We had quite a lot of different young people from around the world—in particular, women from places like Africa, South America, and West Asia—taking part in this session. This session holds profound meaning in terms of diversity and equality between the genders. I would like to begin this forum with the hope that it will be an occasion for overcoming cultural, regional and generational differences.

— **Puan MAHARANI** Young people are the future driving force that steers the development of a country's culture. The hallmark of youth is dynamism. Recent advancements in information and communications technology have not only given young people a forum to present their views in public settings, but even allowed them to influence government policies. Just as wide-ranging freedoms of expression have been granted to young people, I truly hope these changes can make a positive contribution to global civilization. But the future for young people does not appear to be entirely rosy. They are faced

with various problems and environment issues, including drug addiction, competition, consumerism, the degradation of culture, human trafficking, and poverty. Competition in the globalization era frequently causes conflict as a result of clashing social, cultural, economic, and political interests. When the social, cultural, economic, and political bases are weak, competition results in failures and divisions for people, groups, and countries. These failures and divisions can have many negative consequences, including frustration, pessimism, radicalization, and crime. This is why all nations need to create social climates where young people can grow and develop their potential.

In terms of young people's development, the role of the state is to manage education and foster young people's capabilities, while giving them opportunities to contribute to national development. In the process, young people can develop into people with a love for humanity, who are generous, understand each other, and acknowledge their differences. Not

only that, but the state also needs to help build young people's capabilities to stand on their own socially and economically. For the sake of a country's cultural development, the culture that carries that country's distinctive characteristics needs to be passed down to the next generation through the youth.

Young people's development has been encouraged through various government policies and programs in Indonesia. The Indonesian government has issued "Smart Indonesia" cards, through which 19 million students have received universal education benefits. In terms of higher education, 30,000 students from low-income homes have been given financial aid, and vocational education has been expanded. With the Nusantara Program, the Indonesian government has formed partnerships with villages to support low-income young people. Indonesia is a multiethnic country consisting of 17,000 islands with 700 ethnic groups and languages. To bolster this kind of cultural diversity, universal education has been provided for all regions according to the "Pancasila" philosophy. Young people are doing positive things in many areas of society. But if those activities fail to generate a common energy for the development of global civilization, it will simply have the effect of reinforcing existing practices. What we need right now is the energy that will allow young people to become major players in the future.

Global civilization has undergone constant waves of revolution, from antiquity through the Middle Ages, the modern era, and in the present-day with its so-called "T Revolution(Transportation, Telecommunications and Tourism)." Now is the time for young people to use their energy to bring about a new revolution. This revolution needs to be something centered on universal human values rooted in human dignity. In terms of strengthening the dynamic energy of young people, I believe the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO) can play a pivotal role in young people's development. Currently Indonesia is working to ensure that young people can live without conflict or tensions, where pride and freedom

are assured. That world is a world where justice and prosperity are guaranteed for all people and humanitarianism is practiced in all areas. We need to work toward this kind of vision. Let us see to it that young people's dynamic energy is accentuated and used to build a noble civilization and society.

— **Hamat BAH** Youth is an early stage of growth for the individual. I see it as referring to people from the ages of 18 to 35. Of course, I also agree when people call it "youth" to be young at heart. Culture is a person's way of life. Every way of life for us—including food, housing, religious, and clothing—can be defined as culture, and this is transmitted from one generation to the next.

The Gambia has a very diverse and rich culture. The problem is that cultural resources such as music, dance, drama, and storytelling are not being used appropriately for societal development and job creation. 61 percent of the Gambia's population is aged 24 and under. It is the opposite of South Korea, which is becoming an aging society. Many young people who are suffering from difficulties due to their inability to find work are risking their lives to migrate to countries in Europe.

Not long ago, the Gambia was in a very difficult situation politically. The president refused to relinquish power after losing the election. At that time, we were able to get through those difficulties thanks to the roles played by young people and culture. Seven political parties in the Gambia came together in a union to oust the dictator, but all of their means of activity were taken away by the dictator, and they suffered hardships such as press controls. People supported the party union and drew attention to the dictator's wrongful acts through social media, wall paintings, street demonstrations, and canvassing. Many young people were sent to prison and threatened, but they brought about change, no matter what kind of sacrifices this entailed. Finally, there was an election in January 2017, and the dictator lost, garnering just 39 percent of the vote. Now the Gambia has entered a new era of democracy. A sustainable future must be a tolerant one. Different people must

participate in the country's development without being discriminated against. This includes women, the disabled, and foreigners. We can achieve interchange through tourism, and promote peace and achieve economic growth through mutual understanding. Young people and culture can contribute to the creation of this kind of sustainable culture.

— **Eduardo MÉNDEZ** El Sistema achieves a culture of peace through music. To this end, it values teamwork and opens up opportunities for young people. El Sistema was founded in 1975 and fosters autonomy and community spirit through music. With the orchestra and chorus in particular, you learn what you can do within society through that community consciousness and development of your potential. Thus El Sistema uses music as a tool for personal and community development. The positive experience of being a member of the orchestra or chorus offers new opportunities to students who have not had a chance for education, or who have been exposed to violence. El Sistema uses community organizations called “Núcleos” to learn about social coexistence. To achieve these communities, young people become leaders and play a role in promoting social unity.

Through music, we are instilling the potential to combat violence and to solve problems in peaceful ways. This leads to a decrease in problematic activities and promotes healthy competition. The orchestra's activities also teach respect for other people's differences. Thanks to these efforts, El Sistema was awarded UNESCO's International Music Prize in 1993, and the founder of El Sistema, Maestro José Antonio Abreu, was appointed a Goodwill Ambassador and has been working to achieve peace through music. Our performance for the UN General Assembly in 2016 was an opportunity to share this message of peace through music with the rest of the world. I would like to finish by quoting something El Sistema's founder once said: “Putting together a chorus and orchestra means planting the seeds for a culture of peace.”

— **Umair MUSHTAQ** The Little Art is an art education institution that uses media in particular to help

children and early adolescents understand the social issues that affect their lives. Through this program, we are instilling wisdom for living, so that these children can become responsible members of society who resolve various social issues. We develop creative and diverse art programs for children and early adolescents to participate in. In Pakistan, we are planning and running a variety of festivals and events, including the International Children's Film Festival. These events are designed so that not only the children but adults and teachers too can take part at the community level. To that end, we also organize filmmaking, photography, animation, and art workshops and strive so that low-income children in particular can benefit in many ways. We are working so that children can realize their potential through art, achieve their dreams, and become aware of universal values like peace.

— **Leen NASSERALLAH** Palestine has been forcibly occupied by Israel for 69 years. The Balata refugee camp was created in 1996 and is involved in culture and arts activities to uphold the rights of Palestinian refugees. The center's goal is to preserve the memory of the Nakba(the history of Palestine since its occupation by Israel in 1948) and promote understanding of our rights. Each year, young people are given the chance to take part in festivals, parades, plays, and other activities. It is a way of reminding them of their right to return to the precious land they inherited from their ancestors. The children's rights are our center's top priority. Through various projects and workshops, we work to instill values of freedom, democracy, justice, and human rights in children and young people. We believe that through these activities, young people can grow to become leaders for a sustainable future for Palestine.

— **Daniel LINDEMANN** What kind of roles do Korean young people play? Culture holds great strength and is often referred to as “soft power.” Culture is also a good tool for diplomacy. Cultural interchange is important in and of itself to promote mutual understanding. The reason we fear others is because we do not know them. That is why cultural interchange is

essential. This is an age of globalization. In the past, we were not able to communicate, but today we have many means that allow us to communicate with each other. Young people have played important roles in Korean history. Young people were at the heart of the March 1st Movement and many other historical revolutions. At the same time, with things like Trumpism and Brexit, young people need to take an interest in politics and play an active role amid this wave of widespread nationalism. A healthy interest in politics is something nurtured through culture. A healthy interest in politics is something that not only young people but also older people should work toward. That, and a healthy competition between generations, is a way for us to maintain our humanity in these unstable times.

— **SHIN Hwajeong** Jejudo Joa is a group that develops artwork out of refuse found in the sea off the coast of Jeju Island. The members of Jejudo Joa met at the Hansupul school for haenyeo(women divers). Haenyeo dive into the ocean to gather seafood. For 16 weeks, we took classes with the haenyeo every Saturday. Every time we went into the water, we found ourselves seeing more trash than beautiful ocean scenery. That is where our sense of critical awareness originated. With the sea, it is hard to hold any one country accountable for the constant flood of garbage. We wanted to live on beautiful Jeju Island, and we wanted to do something to achieve that. So what we ended up doing was beachcombing. Beachcombing is about picking things up from around the beaches and using them to make art. We have been collaborating with various artists to do this. There is a lot of different kinds of garbage that we find while beachcombing. We look at all the different possibilities in those items. We work with professional artists, and plan to expand into a campaign to protect not just Jeju Island but all of South Korea. It is small now, but we hope to see it become a large movement that can bring about a positive transformation. Haenyeo have to adjust their breathing when they are in the water. It is important for us to be like the haenyeo and make individual decisions about

what we need to focus on and adjust accordingly.

— **LEE Sunghoon** We have learned some tremendously important things about what kind of things young people need to do before and after social change occurs. Maybe we can look at the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) in a different way—since culture involves singing and dancing, perhaps we can understand the SDGs as “singing and dancing?”

Policy Implications

- This was an invaluable opportunity to share different experiences and ideas about the ways in which young people serve as a driving force for positive change in the world. It was also an excellent occasion to realize that understanding differences and cultural interchanges are key to achieving sustainable peace.
- We learned about the various activities and efforts made by and involving young people. The different activities and efforts in conflict zones like Palestine demonstrate how young people will play a leading role in achieving peace in the future. They also show how art, music, and other forms of culture will make a positive contribution in achieving a culture of peace.