**DRAFT UNON Director-General’s remarks for the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, 21 May 2015**

**Dr. Hassan Wario Arero, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts of the Republic of Kenya,**

**Distinguished Round-table panelists,**

**Invited guests,**

**UN Colleagues,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Welcome to UNON.**

**Thank you all for being with us today to observe the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.**

**As you know, the UN General Assembly, in 2002, designated 21 May as an annual day to celebrate cultural diversity and its role in dialogue and global development.**

**This Day provides us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity, and to learn to live together more harmoniously.**

**When we look at what is happening today -- with conflicts in many parts of the world and violent extremism and hatred seemingly on the rise -- bridging the gap between cultures is urgent and necessary for peace, stability and development.**

**There are those who will always seek to create divisions among human beings, based on differences in cultures, religions and beliefs. Kenya is unfortunately not immune from this plague of violent extremism, as witnessed most recently by the heinous terrorist attack at the Garissa University College on 2 April.**

**But diversity is not the problem. Cultural diversity is actually a strength from which our common world derives great spiritual, social and economic wealth.**

**To fully unleash the power of cultural diversity for dialogue and development, we need to foster deeper mutual understanding and tolerance and counter the efforts of those bent on manipulating our differences for negative purposes.**

**Inter-cultural dialogue is key to our inter-linked future. Promoting mutual understanding is at the center of the United Nations’ goals and values. In all our work, the UN attempts to pave a path towards peace and greater cross-cultural harmony.**

**Just last month, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, together with the President of the UN General Assembly and the High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations, convened at UN HQs in New York a high-level thematic debate on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation, Fostering Peaceful, Inclusive Societies and Countering Violent Extremism.**

**During the debate, the Secretary-General observed that: “We are living through a period of global transition. Technology is connecting us ever more closely, and cross-cultural exchanges are deepening every day. But this does not mean there is more understanding. Societies are more diverse but intolerance is on the rise in too many places.”**

**He said that we need to teach girls and boys “not just how to live together but how to act together as global citizens. We need to nurture tolerance from playgrounds to parliaments.”**

**The Secretary-General also said that he would present to the General Assembly later this year a comprehensive action plan on preventing violent extremism. This UN Plan will emphasize the core values of peace, justice and human dignity as true alternatives to the extremists’ hatred and fear. It will focus on prevention through equitable institutions, inclusive governance and responsible human rights and the rule of law, and will seek to empower women and tap into young people as a major force for progress.**

**Such a plan will help the United Nations to better contribute to the goal of using cultural diversity for dialogue and development.**

**The theme of today’s Round Table – *Culture and Development in the post-2015 Development Agenda* – is very important and very timely.**

**As you know, there are just over six months remaining to the deadline for reaching the Millennium Development Goals, after which a new set of objectives – the Sustainable Development Goals – will serve as the new global development framework. The SDGs are to be adopted at a Special Summit in New York in September.**

**Since the adoption of the MDGs fifteen years ago, the role of culture in development has been brought to the fore. This is reflected in various efforts to mobilize support for the inclusion of culture and cultural diversity in the post-2015 development agenda. For example, the UN General Assembly passed two resolutions, in 2010 and 2011, to highlight the role of culture as an enabler, driver and facilitator for inclusion, reconciliation, sustainable peace and development.**

**The Rio+20 outcome document in 2012 affirmed that “the world’s natural and cultural diversity contributes to sustainable development.”**

**And although culture and its role in development is not a stand-alone goal among the 17 that are proposed for adoption in September, there is now widespread acceptance that culture plays a crucial role in sustainable development and peace. Discussions are therefore continuing as to how to ensure the integration into the post-2015 development agenda of targets and indicators dedicated to the contribution of culture.**

**Culture is a cross-cutting issue that touches all dimensions of development. Indeed, most if not all of the 17 proposed goals -- from ending poverty in all its forms, to securing peaceful and inclusive societies, to revitalizing the global partnership for development -- requires dialogue across cultures and embracing our shared values.**

**I have no doubt that today’s Round Table will create further awareness about the values of cultural diversity and will help mobilize action to use culture as a resource for attaining development goals.**

**I wish you a productive discussion.**

**Thank you for your kind attention.**