

HIS EXCELLENCY SHEIKH SALEM BIN KHALID AL QASSIMI

Minister of Culture, United Arab Emirates

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, good evening. It is a pleasure to be with you on this very special occasion, and on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I extend my gratitude to everyone for joining us tonight. This dinner provides a moment of reflection following this year's sessions at the World Policy Conference.

Tonight, I would like to reflect on the cultures' profound role in our shared future. Culture shapes our world, it connects us across borders, beliefs and generations. Ladies and gentlemen, through this rapid transformation, the UAE has stood its ground when it comes to culture, our anchor in this rapidly changing world. We are a nation that is enriched by diversity as a home to over 200 nationalities and united by its heritage and cherished tradition. Our heritage teaches us the importance of hospitality, generosity and mutual respect, values that are essential in a world that is often marked by division. These principles are not only shared by our domestic policies but also our approach to international cooperation. By preserving and celebrating cultural diversity, we have built a more tolerant, peaceful and prosperous future for all.

Culture also serves as a medium through which we can address some of the most pressing issues, such as climate change, one of the most urgent challenges of our time. The UAE has demonstrated leadership in this area from hosting COP 28 to championing international efforts, such as the launch of the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at the UNFCCC, co-chaired by the UAE and Brazil. This Group of Friends was established last year to integrate culture and heritage into the pressing climate action policies. Through this Group of Friends, we continue to build very important momentum in recognizing the cultural dimension of climate solutions, from the arts and the creative industries, tangible and intangible heritage, to indigenous knowledge systems, reaffirming our commitment to preserving culture in the framework of environmental policy.

Culture inspires actions by connecting us to shared stories of resilience and adaptation, as well as serving as a pillar for society that influences policies and progression. Moreover, we continue to see the creative economy as a driver and enabler for growth and inclusive, sustainable development. In this spirit, the United Arab Emirates issued a federal decree law to empower the arts sector and to support artistic institution as part of a wider effort to enhance the UAE's artistic ecosystem and the creative economy. The UAE is committed to supporting the culture and creative industries known as the CCIs, at the core of the creative economy and nurturing collaboration across national, regional and global platforms. Through initiatives such as the National Grant Programme for Culture and Creativity launched by the Ministry of Culture, we aim to support creatives, as well as foster talent and overall cultural production.

We also recognize the increasing importance of data across all sectors, including culture. As such, the UAE continues to promote the development of data indicators in order to measure culture, which is also vital to support the long-term growth of the sector and measure its impact on our societies and to inform future policies.

Ladies and gentlemen, the pursuit of peace and stability is another area where culture plays a significant role. In a world increasingly marked by polarization, fostering inter-cultural dialogue can build bridges and mutual understanding. By promoting the values of tolerance and co-existence, the UAE has demonstrated the importance of cultural exchange and inclusive solutions, and these principles come to life in our region. For example, the UAE's partnership with UNESCO and the government of Iraq and the Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative exemplifies how cultural preservation can foster healing and resilience. The UAE contributed over USD 50 million to this ambitious project, which will soon be finalized, and continues to make progress by restoring cultural and religious sites in Mosul. These include the al-Nuri Mosque and the al-Hadba Minaret, and the al-Tahera and al-Saa'a churches. These efforts build more than just physical structures, they restore the cultural and communal bonds that are essential in the long-term development of societies.

The UAE's commitment to peace is interlinked with our values and promoting tolerance and cultural diversity, both in the region and globally. In this spirit, the UAE recently adopted the National Policy for Preserving Modern Architectural Heritage, a strategic initiative designed to protect the country's unique architectural legacy. This policy aims to enhance public awareness, promote education and research and advances in cultural growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, education is key to the UAE's vision for cultural and international engagement. By investing in the arts and culture we empower future generations to flourish. Through UAE-led initiatives, like the recent UNESCO World Conference on Culture and Arts Education, hosted here in Abu Dhabi, we shed light on the importance of linking cultural dimensions and education systems. This enriches lives while equipping a new generation with the creativity and skills needed to address the contemporary world. This milestone event also saw the adoption of a new framework for culture and arts education fostering a deeper appreciation for the nexus between culture and education in our strategies and our global policies. An education rooted in the arts and humanities shapes thinkers who can empathize, innovate and adapt. The UAE's effort in integrating cultural education into its broader development reflects our commitment to fostering these qualities for the betterment of humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen, to conclude reflecting on culture, we not only find the connection to our ancestors but also a path towards a more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous future. Let us carry that purpose with us.

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to the organizers of the World Policy Conference for creating a platform that not only addresses global issues but also celebrates the diversity of perspectives and cultures that enrich our world. I also thank all the participants for your dedication. Thank you.