



**Statement
by**

Anwarul K. Chowdhury

**UN Under-Secretary-General and High
Representative for the Least Developed
Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries and Small Island Developing
States**

at the

**Shanghai Symposium on the Creative
Economy**

**15 December 2005
Shanghai, China**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Guests.

At this year's world summit, leaders from around the world gathered together to revisit the progress on the Millennium Development Goals and found that the weakest, the poorest, the most disadvantaged countries are at risk of not meeting the Goals by the urgent date of 2015. These are the countries that I have the honor to represent. In fact the Secretary General, warns in his report "In Larger Freedom," that if current trends persist, many countries will not meet the MDGs by 2015 and urges a re-examination of development strategies. The status quo will not lead to enhanced opportunities for our fellow men and women across the South. We must revisit poverty reduction strategies and look at all possibilities available, because we cannot leave

millions of people to survive on \$1 a day. I am grateful to my friend, Mr. Yiping Zhou of the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in UNDP, who has organized this symposium and has challenged us to come together to identify and operationalize new opportunities for development and growth through the use of cultural resources. We must remember that the beaten path is not necessarily the only path to development and wealth creation for a society. Perhaps culture represents one of those unbeaten paths or untapped resources that could lead toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Although a country may be poor according to some measures, the wealth of a country's creativity and culture is not constrained by low GDP. Even in some of the poorest countries that are least developed, landlocked, or small island developing states, there is a wealth of cultural and creative assets.

This was recognized in 2001, for example, at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Brussels under UNCTAD, where the idea of cultural production as a pathway for trade and development hit the international community significantly. The creative economy offers the opportunity for a country to use and leverage their cultural and creative resources for the purposes of development. Today this sector is showing unexpected dynamism in both post-industrial and developing countries, adding increasing value yearly to existing intellectual and cultural assets. Creative industries have been estimated by UNCTAD to account for 7% of the world's GDP, and as much as 4% of the GDP of low and middle-income countries. By 2015, the world percentage is expected to reach 11%. Given this increasing role for creative industry in the world, perhaps it is worth re-evaluating how we view

resources for wealth creation. For instance, rather than weighing the potential of a developing country by its range of natural resources alone, there is room to include an evaluation of cultural assets. Whether these consist of cultural products or artifacts, tourist spots or eco-tourism offerings, music, drama, or even software creation; the fact remains that these are not only sources of identity, but also have a huge potential for generating wealth and development for communities and countries.

Awareness of this cultural wealth is insufficient for the realization of the vast potential offered by the creative economy, instead, there must be efforts made and plans devised in order to market the cultural and creative talent found within the poorest members of the international community. Working with Northern partners and UN agencies certainly offers real opportunities to effectively market the vast cultural

commodities of the South. Beyond just marketing these assets, there are opportunities through these partnerships to improve quality and quantity and to open markets to these products.

Yet there is also a role for South-South cooperation in the spread and commercialization of these assets. Like the US has accomplished through AGOA, and the EU through the “All but Arms” initiative, advanced markets have opened to some of the least developed among us, but more can be done in the South when the emerging economies of the South create similar mechanisms and legal arrangements that remove tariffs and promote trade with developing countries. Moreover, as the Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries clearly notes, South-South cooperation has an important role to play in development for LDCs and recommends increased efforts toward this end. This

recommendation is particularly relevant to today's discussion of the creative economy and its role in development. South-South strategies toward mobilizing and harnessing the potential of creative industries offer significant promise for development. Look at the expertise in creative industries across the South: a robust tourist industry in the Caribbean, the excellent metalworking artisans in Burkina Faso, and the global presence of Jamaican reggae. These cultural products and the lessons learned by their creators can and should be shared across the South. So we need to find innovative public/private partnership mechanisms to market Southern creative products through, for example, organizing expos and cultural trade fairs among developing countries.

As essential as marketing is to the mobilization of creativity as an economic force in a country, there is still the issue of the protection of intellectual

property. Involved in this concept are the ideas of protecting creativity while also ensuring reward for the creators. It's not enough for the cultural resources to be drawn out of one country to be offered to the global market if there is no compensation given to the birthplace of those resources. The protection of countries, communities and individuals must remain a priority when releasing cultural products. For instance, when considering the development of a tourism industry, attention must be paid to the potential effects on the local environment and culture, both positive and negative, and solutions must be devised that seek to create a responsible community-managed tourism industry. Moreover, the question should be asked: how can the current intellectual property regime best protect and preserve these creative and cultural assets while also allowing the creators and communities to reap the available economic benefits?

I have endeavored to provide some of the parameters for the discussion today and tomorrow, not by offering final solutions but to perhaps provoke and encourage discussion and debate over how this emerging force within the world economy can best be harnessed by the South to foster development. I invite your views and ideas to the table. I also acknowledge the significant role played by the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, UNCTAD, UNESCO and other members of the UN system that have pioneered work in this sector. And yet, there is more that can be done in this area and we are here today to explore it further. So, I put to you the following questions: How can creativity be mobilized best within a country, sub-region or region? What cultural resources should be promoted and commercialized, while also protecting their sustainability? What are ways that these creative and

cultural products can be marketed and distributed globally? How can we protect the creative and cultural resources of communities and yet use these resources to meet the MDGs?
