



The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals:

Perspectives from the Foundation for Post Conflict Development

Key Note Speech by

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Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

I would like to begin by thanking the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy for inviting me to participate in your Forum on Cultural Diplomacy here at United Nations Headquarters. I wish to extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation to ICD Director General Mr. Mark Donfried for the important work he is doing leading the Institute and for the distinct honor of providing me an opportunity to make a contribution to your discussions and reflections.

It is a somber moment for our world. There are too many people, families, children, suffering due to active conflict and poverty. It saddens me so much. What can I do about it? What can we collectively do about these atrocious and painful acts of violence we are witnessing?

This afternoon I will be speaking about the role of Cultural Diplomacy in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, from the perspective of the Foundation for Post Conflict Development – FPCD- and how this relates to current events. I will provide an overview of the Foundation’s mission and activities and illustrate where FPCD fits into the conflict spectrum as well as United Nations activities. I will provide examples of FPCD’s concrete work and conclude with a call to action for your consideration.

FPCD mission origins.

Inspired by my United Nations career, FPCD was founded in 2005 to support the UN Charter and to bridge post conflict communities in need, to those with capacity, with concrete projects that fulfill the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The hopeful premise was: if we could impact communities with health, youth or education projects, there would be less of a reason to reengage in conflict again. In reality, this is not always true, however, we have had successes in Timor-Leste, Haiti, Cote’ d’Ivoire, South Africa and are committed to do doing what we can, where we can. Our mission was broadened to also include assistance to conflict-affected communities.

With the Prince Rainier III Maternity clinic, the first of its kind in Timor-Leste, FPCD embarked on a country-owned and country-led process,

that used “triangular cooperation” to achieve its goal. Through “shuttle diplomacy,” in essence, an American NGO, inspired entities from the Principality of Monaco to deliver and develop multiple projects that benefited communities in Timor-Leste. Through this, FPCD brought 2 different cultures together, resulting in the signing of diplomatic relations and respective Heads of State visiting each other’s country. This is an example of cultural diplomacy that utilized the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a vehicle. And we wouldn’t have the SDGs with the United Nations.

Conflict – from an academic point of view

In an academic sense – looking at the different phases of conflict, broadly speaking we have a cycle that could include – tensions; mounting tensions; acts of war; the conflict; a ceasefire; if the UN is involved, maybe mediation, or conflict resolution by the parties themselves, perhaps a regional peacekeeping mission, and finally a cessation of hostilities. Then and only then, can there be a post conflict environment. It is fragile. It is unpredictable. This is where FPCD fits in.

Post Conflict Development is not Conflict Resolution

As a non-profit organization, the FPCD has not reinvented the wheel – we redirected the focus.

The FPCD is a neutral organization that makes no judgement on conflict or the manner in which it may or may not have been resolved. We leave conflict resolution to the experts. FPCD focuses on development in the post conflict environment. Our sole purpose is to work on projects that capacity build, fill a gap, lift communities out of poverty and most importantly – work on projects that the communities themselves have requested. Communities make the final decision on how and where projects like Maternity Clinics, youth centers and reforestation programs should be. Our projects are community led, and community owned. FPCD serves as a bridge and a catalyst. We have been *cultural diplomats* since 2005 out of NYC and in 2015, I founded the Post Conflict Development Association of Monaco, under the High Patronage of HSH Prince Albert II, with plans for a third branch in the Asia Pacific region.

How does the FPCD fit into the role of the UN in today's inter-dependent world?

The United Nations is a complex umbrella of Member States, Principal Organs like the General Assembly, specialized agencies and civil society organizations. The FPCD is in the last category of the UN Family and we have been in *associated status* with the UN Department of Global Communications since 2009. With this status comes certain

responsibilities that we take very seriously and they include promoting and contributing to the work of the UN.

People to People Cultural Diplomacy -No Experience Necessary

What is cultural diplomacy? For FPCD, the essence of cultural diplomacy derives from people to people exchanges. It does not have to be complicated, and I always say there is no experience necessary – each one of you here today is an individual with a unique background and when you meet others you share a bit of your culture with them, even unconsciously.

Examples of FPCD Cultural Diplomacy

Right from the start typical cultural mediums were used in tandem to the work of the FPCD. We launched the FPCD in 2005 with a Documentary about Timor-leste, at NY's Fashion Institute of Technology in the presence of The President of Timor-Leste Xanana Gusmao and Nobel Peace Prize winner, current President Jose Ramos Horta and the award winning film maker Ted Folke.

A couple years later we organized the I Heart TL Culture Week at the Gabarron Foundation in NY, with support from Mayor Bloomberg. Through film, exhibits, art and roundtables we exchanged on ways to lift the Timorese people out of poverty.

In the short time we have together, I cannot tell you about every project we have done, however I would like to share 3 cultural programs that achieve the SDGs.

1. Midwife Capacity Building

In 2018 the Post Conflict Development Association of Monaco welcomed midwives from Cote d'Ivoire for a one-month training at the Princess Grace Hospital. In the sidelines of the training, we had a cultural exchange program, with future editions in the pipeline.

2. Prince Albert of Monaco Leadership in Post Conflict Development Award

In 2019, FPCD inaugurated its Prince Albert II of Monaco Leadership in Post Conflict Development Award. This award program aims at empowering young leaders from different backgrounds by offering them training on post conflict development and global sustainability. We brought together 2 youth from Monaco and 2 from Timor-Leste to New York and Salt Lake City, Utah. The 3 main goals of the Programme:

1. Expose the award winners to the UN and international diplomacy;
2. Represent FPCD + participate at the UN Civil Society Conference;
3. Foster cultural exchange and understanding.

The COVID 19 Pandemic prevented us from replicating this program exactly however we adapted it and soon hope to recharge the program as it was designed.

3. MOU with g7+

In the summer of 2022 in the sidelines of the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, the FPCD and the g7+ signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the presence of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco and H.E. Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao of Timor-Leste. The g7+ is an intergovernmental organization that promotes peace and stability through advocacy on aid effectiveness and facilitates peer learning on good development practices. The g7+ provides a platform for conflict-affected countries to collectively voice their needs which include national dialogue and reconciliation and effective development cooperation.

The FPCD and g7+ have an operation plan which included early this year, a cultural visit of the g7+ Secretariat to Monaco and we have exciting plans in the pipeline.

D.A.N.C.E. with FPCD - A call to action

Looking toward the future, the FPCD team always strives to adapt to global trends and realities. Last year we launched ***DANCE with FPCD*** as a mission oriented strategic Plan through: **Diplomacy, Awarding Excellence, Navigating Development, Collaboration and Eradicating poverty.**

I will wrap up my remarks with a call to action. If you are intrigued by what I have shared and you desire to associate yourselves with our work, I propose 2 simple opportunities that draw you in to FPCD's cultural diplomacy, which in turn can be a positive action as a stand-alone or it has the potential to become a tool for the UN Family to activate as needed.

1. Institute for Post Conflict Development

First, is an invitation to be part of *The Institute for Post Conflict Development*. This will be a public sharing platform that will showcase people to people experiences about many aspects of post conflict or conflict-affected situations. Our website will house the Institute comprised of short smart-phone videos that we label: "Two-minute Tutorials"

2. FPCD Cultural Diplomacy Pledge

On the occasion of my participation and in consultation with my team, the FPCD would like to launch, right here, today, the **FPCD Cultural**

Diplomacy Pledge. It is very simple, all you have to do is fill out a very intuitive form where you pledge to learn more about and respect the UN Charter, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the SDGs, the FPCD Mission, and especially, different cultures. After you take the pledge you will instantly be emailed a Certificate... I have some QR codes that will link you directly to the pledge and where you can find more information about how to be involved.

In conclusion, what I would like you to walk away with today is how cultural diplomacy is critical to fulfilling FPCD's mission; where FPCD fits in the Conflict spectrum and UN umbrella, and that for the Foundation, cultural diplomacy is a vehicle to achieve the SDGs.

With this overview in mind, when reflecting on current events, you can see where FPCD can and cannot yet take action.

FPCD is not important enough to bring the world to peace or put an end to poverty. **So why do we even try?**

We take action when the harm is done... We take action where it's too late to prevent... We strive to do our best **because communities and families living in post conflict situations need help;**

What could be more important to them, than health when the health system is broken? ; What could be more important than hygiene where the infrastructure has been destroyed? ;What could be more important

than a mother giving birth in a safe environment and while holding her newborn being able to just smile with hope for her child's future?

At FPCD, we live in the dream that we will not be needed in the future but, until then, we are here.

Thank you for your generous attention and I look forward to exchanging with you.