

Panel Discussion
The Role of Culture in Transatlantic Relations: Realities and Visions.
Views from both sides of the Atlantic

Keynote speech by Ambassador David T. Killion

Permanent Representative of the United States of America to UNESCO

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Wallraf-Richartz-Museum Fondation Corboud, Cologne

Dr. Kronen, Mr. Hirche, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen. What an honor, indeed immense pleasure, it is to be invited to participate in this remarkable Transatlantic dialogue in the beautiful and historic city of Köln (Cologne). I just had a tour of your magnificent cathedral and a most interesting Roman site, which was such a fitting prelude to our discussion on UNESCO, and particularly, culture, the theme you have chosen to highlight in this program.

First of all, let me thank the German National Commission UNESCO and Amerika Haus North Rhine Westphalia for organizing this event. National commissions are integral to the success of UNESCO, and I know the German Commission for UNESCO has contributed greatly to UNESCO in many areas. But I believe that your record of working with other national commissions is truly remarkable and deserves highlighting. This event today is in a way a continuation of that effort. Amerika Haus has served as a “Window on America” with its exceptional record of hosting cultural events and organizing trans-Atlantic dialogues such as this one.

I am very much indebted to our own national commission for advice and assistance. I am sure they will provide invaluable help as we undertake some of the initiatives that I am about to describe. I really count on some of its members to serve as my “kitchen cabinet.”

The list of questions for discussion is long, and the time allotted to me is not so long, so I will have to focus on one aspect of the theme, and I hope it is the one you most want to hear from me: “UNESCO - The view from Washington”, particularly after the results of our mid-term elections, which have been widely covered by the European media.

Given the political uncertainties in Washington, it’s prudent that my delegation and I do our very best to make sure that Washington, and by that I mean in this case the

Congress in particular, understands the value added that UNESCO and U.S. participation bring to the U.S. national interest.

Interestingly enough, since it has not always been the case, there's been a lot going on at UNESCO, and much of it has been political, much to the surprise of those who still believe UNESCO is an organization that doesn't get involved in political issues. Nothing is further from the truth. But we have been successful in most of these battles and believe there is much we can accomplish at UNESCO.

Our success in navigating the politics of this Organization is critical. It is important that we maintain the Organization's credibility with the American people, so that we can, in turn, be more effective in Paris, knowing that we have the support to continue to advance our policy goals through UNESCO's work. I will be making the case for continued strong engagement with UNESCO later this month in Washington, and knowing Congress as I do, I am quite confident I will be successful.

For one thing, President Obama fully supports U.S. engagement and indeed enhanced engagement, and everything I say today is fully reflective of his views.

I think you may be interested in hearing some examples of how the U.S. delegation has succeeded in bringing change or preventing harm to UNESCO, which incidentally will become ammunition for our discussion with the Hill:

- We were instrumental in the election of Irina Bokova, the first woman Director-General of UNESCO. The DG is working hard to reform and revitalize the organization.
- We worked with other like minded countries to derail the Obiang prize, which was to be funded and named after the President of Equatorial Guinea. Some strong negotiating, world-wide demarches, along with help from several like-minded countries, enabled the U.S. to find a solution to UNESCO's Obiang Prize dilemma. We effectively stopped in their tracks any efforts to advance the prize now or in the future.
- As you know, UNESCO recently disassociated itself from a planned event celebrating World Philosophy Day in Tehran. The U.S. worked tirelessly

behind the scenes to achieve this result, which is also a credit to the leadership of Director-General Bokova.

- The decision also affirms what both my mentor, the late Representative Tom Lantos of California (a Democrat), and George W. Bush (a Republican) recognized as the underlying value of restoring our UNESCO membership some seven years ago - a bipartisan belief in freedom and human rights.

In the few minutes remaining, I'd like to mention some of the U.S. and my priorities for UNESCO in the near future.

- The U.S. is coordinating an international project for the creation of the first UNESCO museum, the International Museum for Women in the Arts, to be located in Amman, Jordan.
- The Queen of Jordan has generously donated a building that must be renovated and, of course, there will be a major fund raising campaign to secure financing for this museum.
- There are two other issues on the culture front that I wanted to share with you:
- The first is that the last World Heritage Meeting in Brasilia in July put the first American site on the World Heritage List in many years.
- The Papahānaumokuākea Marine Park is a spectacular and enormous natural preserve, which now will benefit from even greater protection. In fact, the celebration of its inscription took place in Hawaii last Friday.
- The Papahānaumokuākea site is important not just because it protects one of the truly pristine natural marine parks in the world, but also because it honors the culture and history of native Hawaiians, who view the site as an integral part of their spiritual heritage.
- The other issue I want to raise is in regard to Intangible Cultural Heritage. As you know, the U.S. is not a signatory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

Convention, but I'd like to report that the U.S. government has begun a review process to determine if we should consider ratifying the Convention.

- We want to be sure we are not missing a key opportunity that could help promote U.S. culture around the world and also benefit our tourism industry.
- Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education Arne Duncan visited UNESCO last month and spoke to an audience of more than 400 members of UNESCO's permanent delegations (representing 193 member-states), the UNESCO Secretariat, university leaders and representatives from NGOs devoted to education. He outlined his vision of education reform and discussed the role of education in economic competitiveness and global prosperity. It was an extremely successful event for the Secretary, the mission and UNESCO.
- As this was his first international trip as Secretary of Education, I can tell you that he was very excited about the welcome he received at UNESCO, and I know that he will be looking to do more with the Organization in the future.

Advancing U.S. Commercial Interests at UNESCO

- We are excited about a number of public/private partnerships. We are anxious to develop UNESCO's relationships with major U.S. companies that can lend their expertise to helping UNESCO build capacity and build knowledge around the world.
- Apple, Microsoft, Intel, TripAdvisor, and many others are already engaged in programs with UNESCO.
- In the Sciences, the partnership with L'Oreal is well known, and provides UNESCO with international media coverage every year as it honors women scientists.

- Again, this year, another American, Dr. Jillian Banfield, a professor of Earth and Planetary Science, of Environmental Science, Policy and Management, and of Materials Science and Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, was selected as the North American Laureate.
- Two winners from previous years went on to receive Nobel Prizes in the Sciences following their selection as UNESCO-L’Oreal Prize laureates.
- The interest in having UNESCO’s brand is great. In connection with World Heritage, Education, and Science, there is much to be done. We are always looking for new ideas on how American companies can partner successfully with UNESCO.

Shaping UNESCO for the Future

- The recent external evaluation that was done at UNESCO identified weaknesses, but also made recommendations that can be used to shape UNESCO into an organization that can be cost-effective, and one that can better address the challenges of its mandate in the 21st century.
- There is a lot of good happening at UNESCO, and the organization’s importance can grow exponentially.
- UNESCO need only seize what works and expand on it. This transformative attitude and a relentless drive for ensuring that money is spent effectively will position UNESCO to take a global leadership role for the 21st century.
- I am determined that the U.S., the U.S. Mission and I personally play a major role in helping UNESCO achieve this leadership role.
- One last thing I would ask all of you to do is to take a look at the U.S. Mission to UNESCO’s website. We have worked hard on it, but we’ve only just begun.

- Notably, we'll be adding a section that will provide details on the U.S. extra-budgetary contributions to UNESCO, and will give a clear picture of how our money is being spent at the Organization.
- We're also adding a section that profiles Americans working at UNESCO and at the U.S. Mission, from interns to the Assistant Director-General for Science. The first profile or two may be up by now.

Again, thank you so much for this opportunity to share my ideas about America's future with UNESCO. I am truly looking forward to the rest of the program.

Thank you.