



UCLG CULTURE SUMMIT
CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES
BILBAO 18-20 March 2015

Opening speech Mr. **Ibon Areso**

MR. **IBON ARESO**, MAYOR OF
THE MUNICIPALITY OF BILBAO





Good morning, Egun on

As a representative of the Municipality of Bilbao, it is a great honour to welcome all participants to the UCLG Culture Summit, "Culture and Sustainable Cities". I would like to again express our sincerest thanks to United Cities and Local Governments, and the Committee on Culture, for their widespread international initiative to help cities reflect on culture. We also thank them for choosing Bilbao to host this event.

What we have just seen is called the Aurreriku of Honour, a dance that is performed as a tribute, and which forms part of Basque culture. Over the next few days, we will discuss the importance of all forms of culture.

In times of crisis and uncertainty, like the ones we are currently experiencing in cities and regions around the world, it seems more important than ever to stop and reflect on culture—particularly on its potential for fostering sustainable development in cities.

Promoting all forms of art is no longer just a crucial part of individual or group education. Indeed, it has the capacity to become a driving force for economic development and to create employment. Artists and creators, cultural industries, and any activity in the services sector with the capacity to further innovation in this field, are beginning to join more traditional industries to carve out new employment and business niches. For example this has included the hotel and transport sectors. Ultimately, the aim is to boost, and contribute to, the development of cities or regions that best know how to take advantage of these new sources for opportunities.

We are no stranger to this phenomenon. Over the last two decades, this city has undergone an extraordinary transformation in its urban planning and economic profile. One specific museum in particular has acted as a catalyst, and has become the symbol of such transformation, drawing international attention to Bilbao. While others initiatives have not achieved the same level of fame, there have been many other innovative cultural projects supported by the City Council, including building the very headquarters we are in.

Implementing cultural policies developed over the last twenty years has helped solidify Bilbao as an international benchmark for cities of culture, with its established networks of cultural actors and important cultural infrastructure.

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Bilbao is a founding member of the Committee on Culture and, since the adoption of Agenda 21 for culture in 2005, the city has aligned its cultural policies with the principles of this document. Furthermore, the city has actively worked on this area, exchanging information and knowledge with other cities.

We strongly believe that this is still part of our commitment to the future. As a result, hosting this international Culture Summit in Bilbao will contribute to a greater knowledge sharing, and to



better networking between cities and local governments that recognise the importance of culture in sustainable cities.

It is a true privilege to be able to hear from the extraordinary speakers who are scheduled for sessions over the next three days. I have no doubt that this UCLG Culture Summit will be an international milestone in helping to establish culture as one of the development goals.

We are also proud that the UCLG Culture Summit in Bilbao has adopted “Culture 21: Actions”, a practical tool for promoting good practices and collaborative learning between cities in the area of cultural policies. Cities need practical tools like this. We hope that this document will become a framework for sustainable cities, that it will help define the global agenda for United Cities and Local Governments, and that it will also have a positive impact on the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda by the United Nations.

» **CITIES NEED PRACTICAL TOOLS. “CULTURE 21 : ACTIONS” IS A PRACTICAL TOOL FOR PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICES AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING BETWEEN CITIES IN THE AREA OF CULTURAL POLICIES.**

Finally, I would like to wish our international guests a very pleasant stay.

Thank you very much. Eskerrik asko.





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