WORLD KISWAHILI LANGUAGE DAY
THE ROLE OF ARTS EDUCATION IN PROMOTING KISWAHILI

3 July 2024, 11.00 am – 1.00 pm (EST)
ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters

In November 2021, the General Conference of UNESCO declared July 7th **World Kiswahili Language Day** to recognize the critical role played by Kiswahili in promoting cultural diversity, creating awareness, and fostering dialogue among civilizations. Resolution 41 C/53 invites all stakeholders to celebrate this day annually, in recognition of Kiswahili's relevance as a language of global connection in Africa, and beyond.

Background

Enriched by a millennia-long history and contributions from a diverse array of individuals and communities, Kiswahili has become Africa's most internationally recognized language. Today, Kiswahili is spoken by over 200 million people across the continent and holds official language status within the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the East African Community (EAC). This underscores its crucial role in facilitating regional integration and cooperation.

Yet, Kiswahili is more than just a means of communication; it is a vibrant culture enriched by a set of traditions transmitted from one generation to another over centuries. Its richness is reflected in an extensive range of cultural expressions, from literature and fine arts to theater, music, and an emerging film industry, all contributing to the vibrancy of this culture. Fundamental values such as respect (heshima) and politeness are deeply embedded within Kiswahili culture, permeating every interaction and reinforcing the social fabric across generations.

To empower both current and future generation, education systems must harness the rich potential of Kiswahili culture. The promotion of Kiswahili through **Arts Education** - the process of teaching and learning in the disciplines of music, dance, theater, and visual arts - can play a pivotal role in catalyzing innovation and creativity among young people. This educational approach not only boosts emotional intelligence, creativity, and critical thinking but also enhances well-being and academic performance. Artistic education also promotes openness to others and respect for diversity within society at large.

Supporting these efforts, the new UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, adopted by UNESCO Member States in Abu Dhabi in February 2024, offers crucial guidance for expanding Arts Education. The Framework emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning in arts and culture within all educational settings and underscores the role of cultural diversity in bridging divides and fostering mutual understanding. Additionally, it highlights the capacities of digital technologies in culture and arts education to promote intercultural dialogue and linguistic diversity, recognizing that learning in, through, and with cultural diversity is vital for overcoming divisions and fostering mutual understanding.

Objectives

The third annual **World Kiswahili Language Day** will emphasize the importance of building resilient education systems that leverage the potential of the rich Kiswahili culture. More particularly, the discussions will delve into the following key issues:

- Why is Arts Education important and how can it help in promoting Kiswahili?
- What is the current status of arts education integration in Kiswahili-speaking countries? How can it be enhanced to further nurture Kiswahili cultural identity and heritage?
- What are the practical challenges and needs associated with integrating Kiswahili arts education into school curricula? What have been some of the proven impacts of such integration?
- How can artists and cultural professionals contribute to the promotion and preservation of Kiswahili, and what roles do they play in fostering creativity and enriching the diversity of cultural expressions?

Event format

The celebration is organized by the Permanent Mission of United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations, the Permanent Mission of Kenya, the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar, and the Permanent Mission of the Sultanate of Oman to the UN, together with the Africa Group to the UN, and UNESCO. The event will take place in person at the UN Headquarters in New York's ECOSOC Chamber. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided from Kiswahili to English. The event will be broadcast live on the UN Web TV.

Kindly RSVP here https://forms.gle/EFFp6WqCMwkTNkte8

Program

11.00 am – 11.20 am	**Opening segment** Welcoming remarks and Moderated by the Permanent Representative of Tanzania to the United Nations, H.E. Hussein Athuman Kattanga • **Hon. Paula Navarez,** President of the ECOSOC • **H.E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani**, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar • **Mr. Eliot Minchenberg**, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office to the United Nations in New York • **H.E. Dennis Francis**, President of the General Assembly [To be represented] • **H.E. Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed,** Ambassador, Permanent Observer, AU Mission [To be represented]
11.20 am – 11.30 am	**High-Level Statements (Video Messages)** • H.E. Samia Suhulu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania • H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda • Other Video messages by HoS or HoG [TBC] • Video message by Prof. Abdulrazak Gurnah, 2021 Literature Nobel Prize Laureate [TBC]
11.30 am – 11.40 am	• **Cultural performance by the students from the Voices of Kilimanjaro, Kiswahili School**
11:40 – 11:50 am	**Key-note Address** • Dr. Ida Hadjivayanis, Senior lecturer in Swahili studies, SOAS University of London, Official Translator of the Tanzanian Nobel Laureate for Literature Abdulrazak Gurnah
11:50 am – 12:40 pm	**Interactive Panel: the role of arts education in promoting Kiswahili** Moderated by the Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations, H.E. Mohamed Al Hassan • Kevin Somoni Machine, Founder and President of the Board, Swahili Cultural Institute • Naomi Mbise, Program Associate for the Lutheran World Federation, Program Business Change Manager for the African Girls Scholarship and Mentorship Program • Walt Mzengi Corey, Writer and Cinematographer, Laureate of the Netflix and UNESCO short film competition "African Folktale, reimagined" Preceded by a screening of a segment of "Katope" of the short film competition "African Folktale, reimagined" (2023)
12:40 pm – 12:50 pm	**Q&A session**
12:50 pm – 12:55 pm	**Cultural performance by the students from Habari Academy, Kiswahili School**
12:55 pm – 1:00 pm	**Closing remarks** H.E. Ms. Njambi Kinyungu, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative, Kenya Mission Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations