



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
CULTURAL DIVERSITY TODAY

HUMANITY MUST RESONATE WITH CULTURAL DIVERSITY



Cultural diversity is a driving force of development, not only with respect to economic growth, but also as a means of leading a more fulfilling intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life. This is captured in the culture conventions, which provide a solid basis for the promotion of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is thus an asset that is indispensable for poverty reduction and the achievement of sustainable development.



grounds and skill sets may decide to solve a dilemma in the same way they always have. An increase in innovation and creativity among a culturally diverse group can create an esprit de corps and the feeling of positive progress for the benefit of the group and the organisation.

According to Richard Brislin, author of *Working with Cultural Differences*, he says "Even though the challenges of extensive intercultural contact are formidable, they can be overcome if people understand the sources of cultural differences and understand a range of behavioural responses to deal with them. If they learn to identify and work well with individuals who have good advice to offer, such as cultural informants and professional interpreters, they will increase their chances of success." Relationship and communication skills are critical for group effectiveness. For them to be effective in achieving results, people-focused aptitudes such as cultural competence are key. Take the time as an organisation to celebrate employee differences. Realize that employees at every level must understand the company's commitment to zero tolerance in regards to discrimination and harassment.

As a fundamental human need, recognition should be seen as a courtesy (Taylor and Guttman 1994). In a society where people with different cultures mix together both in private and public areas, it is crucial to provide everyone with a sense of belonging. A recognized culture is an indispensable element for cultivating a sense of belonging.

Assimilation leads to the extinction of minority cultures and identities. Denying the contribution of some groups and individuals and their cultures and identities is dishonest to the histories of those countries. Political recognition refers to recognition of cultures in legal and political areas, such as citizenship and the right to vote. It emphasizes combining recognition and redistribution to provide for equal participation in public life. However, without admitting past wrongs, it would be difficult to rectify past injustices, let alone create a just and an inclusive environment for all. Human beings need recognition from one another to live with dignity, especially in a society where cultural diversity is a fact. No one should be discriminated against or granted exemptions just because of his or her differences, and everyone should be entitled to participate equally in decision-making processes, especially when they can determine whether or not a minority group could be granted exemptions. Globally the brightest and most effective politicians do not all come from one particular group. Reaching out to minority communities and encouraging interested individuals to participate in politics has potentially enormous benefits. For example, it draws on a larger pool of candidates, increasing the chances that the very best will take office. It also encourages political participation by traditionally marginalized groups, helping to bring their particular issues to the forefront. Diversifying candidates, in turn, diversifies policy.

By arguing that dialogue is indispensable to teach about cultural diversity, this approach emphasizes that diverse cultures should be seen as a treasure for human beings to have a more complete and comprehensive view of this world and preserve human culture. All people should be included in the process of dialogue to attain cooperation. It is time to put an immediate end to discrimination and violence based on language, religion and ethnicity. We are all human beings. Our cultural diversity must be the foundation of our unity.

DISHAN JOSEPH

Three-quarters of the world's major conflicts have a cultural dimension. Bridging the gap between cultures is necessary for peace, stability and development. In 2001, UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. In December 2002, the UN General Assembly, in its resolution 57/249, declared May 21 to be the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, and in 2015 the Second Committee of the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution on Culture and Sustainable Development, affirming culture's contribution to the three dimensions - sustainable development, acknowledging further the natural and cultural diversity of the world, and recognizing that cultures and civilizations can contribute to sustainable development.

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CULTURE SHAPES PEOPLE

Cultural diversity is a term, which generally refers to a reality of coexistence of diverse knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, religions, languages, abilities and disabilities, genders, ethnicities, races, nationalities, sexual orientations of human beings. It could extend to the way people react to this reality and the way people choose to live together with this reality. As a way of being, culture shapes people in a way through passing down from one generation to the next.

People start to learn everything around them at the very beginning through their cultures. Nearly 5,000 to 8,000 distinct languages are spoken today (Evans and Levinson 2009). There are more than 4,300 religions around the world, though over 70% of the world's population practices one of the five most influential religions of the world: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism.

Language is another example of cultural differences which can be seen as superficial or substantial. Literature in psychology and linguistics demonstrates that languages (especially mother language) shape ways of interpreting, understanding and

communicating with the world. In many societies, social status, a sense of belonging, and access to resources are largely influenced by people's competence in the dominant language in the society.

Culture links closely to identity, such as the way people see themselves and others. Diverse cultures lead to diverse identities which bring both opportunities and challenges to education and the society. Nowadays, different countries, workplaces, and schools increasingly consist of people from various cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. People need to have a level of understanding about each other in order to live together and collaborate with each other, which require learning about other cultures and identities. This situation demands people to understand different perspectives within the world in which they live and to diminish misunderstandings, stereotypes, biases, and discriminations about different cultures and people.

INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Teams and companies that make diversity a priority offer a variety of ideas, perspectives and learning opportunities. Diverse employees can bring together their different talents, experiences and various skill sets to come up with creative and inventive solutions, whereas another group made up of people with similar back-