

Statement by George Steinmann, COP21, Climate Conference Paris 2015.

What Change can Art and Culture Achieve?

Arts and culture matter. Even in conflict situations, they are anything but a luxury. The promotion of arts and culture holds great potential for conflict prevention and transformation, as well as for post-conflict reconstruction.

Guided by the conviction that arts and culture can change individual lives, strengthen social cohesion, bring about transformation and build bridges, art is a characteristic and indicator of change. I believe that our society, together with state- and academic agencies, should include arts in the debate on future viability.

In order to understand the complexity of our present situation we have to see our world in a holistic way. Dialogue is the essence of the 21st century. We live in a globalized world, we are completely inter-connected and we have access to infinite information. But this will count to nothing unless we find our way to a culture of mutual respect. Only mutual understanding of different views and perspectives will allow us to resolve our current problems.

Let me make one thing very clear:

There is no time left for pessimism. We must act. Let us work today for tomorrow's world. If we care about our legacy for future generations, it is time now to take decisive global action. We must galvanize political and personal will across and beyond all borders.

To be successful, we ought to create a 'Symbiosis of Responsibility'. This also means questioning our daily routines and practicing mitigation, credibility, frugality and humility. I am certain that change towards a lastingly viable society cannot be achieved without the knowledge inherent in and imparted by art in all its aesthetic and cultural dimensions. We must work to resolve conflicts in a spirit of reconciliation. Doing so involves a sense of compassion and empathy. We have to reconcile ourselves with our world. The answer lies within ourselves.

Parts of this text are from George Steinmann's keynote address to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. *The Artist in the Context of Climate Change – a subtle profundity*, delivered on September 29, 2009.