

Edinburgh International Culture Summit starts today



The Edinburgh International Culture Summit convenes today – with nations from every corner of the world meeting at The Scottish Parliament for an historic debate on how culture can bring countries closer together.

The Culture Summit is a collaboration between the Scottish Government, UK Government, British Council and Edinburgh International Festival, hosted at the Scottish Parliament. It is a unique opportunity to gather Culture Ministers with prominent artists, thinkers and others responsible for formulating and implementing cultural policy to discuss how the arts enrich the lives of people around the world and contribute to the wellbeing of nations.

Some of the world's major economic powerhouses – including Brazil, Japan, Russia and the USA – are expected at the two-day Summit, which will feature plenary sessions in the Parliament's Debating Chamber streamed live over the Internet, as well as policy discussions between countries.

They will be joined by delegates from developing nations, including Malawi, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Zambia. The concept that culture is a bridge that promotes dialogue amongst nations, irrespective of other external events, lies at the heart of the Summit.

Countries with current or recent experiences of conflict – including Iraq and Northern Ireland – will take part in debates on how culture can act as a bridge between divided communities and assist in reconciliation.

Delegations are also expected from the European Commission,

Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Guernsey, Ireland, Jersey, Jordan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Uganda and Wales.

The Summit will be opened this afternoon by the Scottish Parliament's Presiding Officer Tricia Marwick MSP, with welcoming remarks from Scotland's Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop MSP and UK Culture Minister Ed Vaizey MP.

Scotland's Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said:-“In the Year of Creative Scotland, we are honoured to welcome Government Ministers from around the world to the first-ever International Culture Summit held during the biggest and greatest arts festivals in the world in Edinburgh. At a time when so many nations are striving to secure a peaceful existence and equal human rights for their citizens, culture is able to translate these ideas into a common language that transcends societal differences.

“As a meeting of nations, this Culture Summit illustrates how Scotland cherishes and nurtures these ideals, showing that principle and human values lie at the heart of our constitutional journey. Culture and the arts are also powerful tools in building long-term relationships and trust between nations. This Summit celebrates and enhances Scotland's credentials as a responsible global citizen.

“That is why I am delighted that so many Culture Ministers, artists, thinkers and policymakers have come to Edinburgh, to discuss and explore how the arts can transform and enrich the lives of people around the world and contribute to peace and the wellbeing of nations.”

UK Culture Minister Ed Vaizey said:-“The Olympics and the London 2012 Festival have been fantastic celebrations of UK culture, and clearly illustrated the role that the arts can

play in bringing nations closer together.

“I am therefore delighted that so many nations will be represented at this, the first ever International Culture Summit, and look forward to the discussions that will follow.”

Martin Davidson, Chief Executive of the British Council, said:- “The Edinburgh International Culture Summit is an historic and unprecedented event. As the UK’s cultural relations body, the British Council understands that culture acts as a bridge between nations, breaks down barriers and crosses political divides, allowing people worldwide to relate to our common humanity.

“The British Council is delighted to be a partner in the Summit, using our global network of 110 offices to maximise opportunities for intercultural dialogue.”

Director of the Edinburgh International Festival Jonathan Mills said:-“It is a great indication of the power and importance of culture to a country’s success and identity that so many nations have sent ministers and delegations to Edinburgh to attend and take part in the first Edinburgh International Culture Summit.

“We have already begun to enter a period in history where no specific culture, ideology, religion or politics will be all pervasive or dominant. We are now living in world in which knowledge comes simultaneously from various, divergent technological, ethical, philosophical, and above all, cultural sources and locations.

“A summit focussing on mutual cultural interests and shared human values is both timely and appropriate and I look forward to the debates and discussions over these two days and to learning from nations and cultures from around the world.”

Scottish Parliament Presiding Officer Tricia Marwick MSP said:-“Holyrood itself is a cultural icon that encourages

debate and dialogue. It is an ideal home for these conversations exploring the unique role that arts and culture play in connecting nations and building bridges.

“I look forward to presiding over the Summit and it is an honour to welcome the representatives of so many nations to our Parliament.”