

Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa

The Observatory is a Pan African international NGO created in 2002 with the support of African Union, the Ford Foundation, and UNESCO. Its aim is to monitor cultural trends and national cultural policies in the region and to enhance their integration in human development strategies through advocacy, information, research, capacity building, networking, co-ordination, and co-operation at the regional and international levels.



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OCPA News aims to promote interactive information exchange within Africa and between Africa and the other regions. Please send us information for dissemination about new initiatives, meetings, research projects and publications of interest for cultural policies for development in Africa. Thank you for your co-operation.

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Le Mont des Arts, Kinshasa



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Editorial

Holiday Time

The pivotal months of the two halves of the year July and August are considered the great holiday season. It is indeed the beautiful climatic period for the Northern Hemisphere, which, thanks to globalization, has spread to the entire world.

The primary meaning of holidays is the absence of the stressful obligation of work, which is replaced by free time leisure time.

But the enjoyment of leisure is the result of the work of others: creators, producers, and service providers from the cultural world, for whom the vacation time of some is a time of work for them. Festival organizers, tourist offices, and exhibitors of all kinds would certainly agree!

However, the hardship of this work is somewhat alleviated by the recognition attached to it the presence of an audience and sometimes in the form of awards, even though the end-of-year period is also often marked by decorations and honors.

Make no mistake: awards and honors are part of the elements that should be included in a legitimate national, regional, and/or international cultural policy, as can be read in the 1980 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist, which has been continually recalled in recent years.

Therefore, it is a right that must be supported for creators and their mentors, and its implementation is a duty of public authorities.

Maputo, July 26, 2025

Lupwishi Mbuyamba

H. Headlines

H.1 OCPA

Third session of the RICADIA webinar series

The third webinar in the RICADIA series was held on July 11, 2025, at 10:00 AM (UTC) via Zoom. This session, titled “Reparations: Acting for the African Cultural Renaissance,” was introduced by Prof. Lupwishi MBUYAMBA and focused on the initiatives of RICADIA’s member institutions. Moderated by Dr. Hamadou MANDE, the participating panelist institutions included:

- Pan-African Strategic & Policy Research Group (PANAFSTRAG) based in Nigeria;
- Afro-Arab Cultural Institute (ICAA), headquartered in Bamako, Mali;
- National Institute of Arts (INA) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

H.2 UNESCO:

a) World Kiswahili Language Day: Celebrating a language of unity, identity, and global influence

World Kiswahili Language Day, celebrated annually on July 7, honors Kiswahili, one of the most widely spoken languages in Africa and the world, with over 200 million speakers. Kiswahili is an essential tool for communication and integration in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa. It is the official language of the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, and the East African Community. Kiswahili is more than just a language: it is a vehicle of African identity, unity, and culture.

From its role in liberation movements particularly those led by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere to its modern use in education, diplomacy, and media, Kiswahili continues to foster regional cohesion and global cultural understanding. Recognized by UNESCO as the first African language to receive an international day, Kiswahili embodies the power of multilingualism to promote diversity, tolerance, and sustainable development. As a bridge between communities and civilizations, this language plays a crucial role in education, cultural preservation, and socio-economic progress.

Source: <https://www.un.org/fr/observances/kiswahili-day>

b) Girls for Culture | Culture for Girls: Call for Applications for Female Cultural Professionals in West Africa

UNESCO’s Regional Office for West Africa has launched a call for expressions of interest to identify inspiring women working in the fields of culture, creativity, and heritage in the West African region. This call aims to: Identify and promote women involved in cultural and creative industries as well as in heritage preservation and transmission; Develop a regional network of female cultural professionals

These actions are part of the regional program Girls for Culture | Culture for Girls, which seeks to promote gender equality in the cultural sectors of West Africa by creating an inclusive environment where girls and women can thrive in terms of rights, training opportunities, employment, and professional development.

To apply: CV; A short biography including a description of your background, key projects, and achievements (max 500 characters); One or two visuals representing your work in action or your productions/artworks.

Deadline for submission: July 20, 2025. Send to: m.schmitz@unesco.org with Girls4Culture UNESCO Dakar in the subject line.

Source: https://www-unesco-org.translate.goog/en/articles/girls-cultureculture-girls-women-cultural-professionals-west-africa-call-interest?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=fr&_x_tr_hl=fr&_x_tr_pto=sc

A. News from the Secretariat

A.1 News from the Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa (OCPA)

1. Following an invitation and participation on the jury of the International Mexico Prize awarded to Creative Cities by UCGL/UCLG after the COVID-19 years, OCPA, through its Executive Director, was approached to serve in July 2025 on the jury for the ENCATC International Award for Excellence in Cultural Policy, based in Brussels. He was also invited to serve on the jury for the KYOTO PRIZE awarded by the INAMORI Foundation, based in Kyoto, Japan, for the 2026 edition in the fields of art and philosophy, specifically in music.

2. On July 3rd, Executive Director Mr. Lupwishi Mbuyamba received Ms. Ofélia da Silva, Head of the Culture Unit of the UNESCO Maputo Office, for a working visit. The meeting focused on the priorities assigned to the Unit within the country office, among which national cultural policy, cultural and creative industries, and cultural statistics were key discussion points.

3. On July 11, Prof. Lupwishi Mbuyamba was invited to the Portuguese Cultural Center in Maputo, the Camões Institute, to attend the opening of an exhibition on the history and current state of cooperation between Mozambique and its former colonizer.

During the same week, OCPA was invited as an observer to the 2nd edition of the CULTIVARTE project workshop on the development and promotion of the cultural and creative industries sector. The workshop was held at the Franco-Mozambican Cultural Center in Maputo, organized by the Ministry of Culture with the collaboration of the local offices of the European Union and the French Cooperation. OCPA was represented by Ms. Nilza Siteo, a daily worker and former intern.

Finally, the Secretariat supported coordination efforts in preparing and conducting the third RICADIA webinar, held on July 11 and led by its Coordinator, Dr. Hamadou Mandé, from Ouagadougou.

OCPA also coordinated African participation in preparations for the revival of the Modern Arts Olympiad, directed from Paris in coordination with UNESCO Headquarters, as seen on July 16.

A.2 News from RICADIA

The 3rd RICADIA Webinar was held and featured three presentations by cultural organizations based in Mali, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The session brought together participants from various African countries and beyond.

A.3 Development of National Cultural Policies in Africa

A request for assistance was received by OCPA for the development of a cultural policy for the Republic of the Comoros. After the initial request stage, a field mission is planned, to be followed by activities outlined in the Observatory's strategic approach to this type of support.

A.4 News from Other Partners

1. From its primary partner, UNESCO, OCPA noted back-to-back invitations: one to take part in the 43rd General Conference of UNESCO, scheduled for October 30 to November 13 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, and another for the online preparatory meeting of NGOs with the responsible structures at UNESCO Headquarters on Monday, July 21.

2. In connection with the African Union's efforts as outlined in the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (Chapter V, Article 25), OCPA welcomed the proclamation in July 2025 of five new African sites added to UNESCO's World Heritage List. OCPA congratulated the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) a member of RICADIA for its tireless efforts in achieving this result.

3. Beyond ENCATC, a long-time European partner that honored OCPA by inviting it to serve on the jury for its International Award for Excellence in Cultural Policy (won in 2025 by Ernesto Ottone, currently UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture), OCPA's outreach also extends to Asia, with its participation on the 2026 international music jury of the Japanese INAMORI Foundation, as mentioned earlier.

B. News, Events, and Cultural Projects in Africa

B.1 Senegal:

a) 16th Edition of the International Festival of African Traditional Arts and Know-How

The Monument of the African Renaissance hosted the official opening ceremony of the 16th Edition of the International Festival of African Traditional Arts and Know-How on Friday, July 11, 2025, at 5 PM.

In a spirit of cultural convergence, members of the African Cultural Alliance (ACA) hoped to outline paths toward harmonious development. The festival, which took place on July 10, 11, and 12, 2025, across various cultural sites in the capital, served as a platform to announce a renewed commitment to addressing economic and social issues.

The goal is to now integrate a broad dynamic of new political, economic, and strategic doctrines following a bitter realization that the current geopolitical situation still does not favor the African continent.

Dr. Bakary SARR, Secretary of State in charge of Culture, Creative Industries, and Historical Heritage, presided over the festival's official opening ceremony.

Source: <https://senegalnews.sn/index.php/culture/item/3236-16eme-edition-du-festival-international-des-arts-et-savoir-faire-traditionnels-africains>

b) Summer Afrovibes Festival (SAF)

The Summer Afrovibes Festival (SAF) 2025 highlights African heritage, supports emerging talents and entrepreneurs, and serves as a platform for youth through African culture, art, sports, and entrepreneurship. The event features concerts, exhibitions, workshops, and conferences.

The program showcases a unique aspect of African culture each day: July 12: A day dedicated to entrepreneurship, education, and professional opportunities for young creators and startups. July 13: A focus on sustainable tourism, culture, and Senegalese craftsmanship. July 19: Festive closing with the 2025 Olympiads, including a sports tournament, entertainment, a live concert followed by a DJ set and fireworks.

SAF 2025 is a cultural crossroads where tradition meets modernity, with a strong emphasis on job creation and innovation.

Source: <https://www.au-senegal.com/summer-afrovibes-festival,17411.html>

B.2 South Africa: Durban International Film Festival (DIFF)

The 46th edition of the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) in South Africa will take place from July 17 to 27, 2025. Over the course of about ten days, a series of initiatives will be offered to support young filmmakers, women, and directors, along with screenings of several films from various countries, including South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, and Senegal.

Founded in 1979, DIFF is the oldest and largest film festival in Southern Africa.

Source: <https://africa24tv.com/event/festival-international-du-film-de-durban>

B.3 Burkina Faso:

a) Cultural and Creative Industries Promotion Days (JPICC 2025)

The 9th edition of the Cultural and Creative Industries Promotion Days (#JPICC_2025) will take place from July 29 to 30, 2025, at the National Museum of Burkina Faso, under the theme: "Cultural entrepreneurship in Burkina Faso: What catalysts for real development?"

The program includes: Business formalization training; A youth incubation workshop for cultural entrepreneurs; Thematic presentations and panel discussions; Masterclasses; B2B meetings with renowned national and international experts; Exhibitions and sales; and Visits to cultural enterprises.

Source:https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02BZcKc7C9tCPxNoLB5ueRUJnJCrPNHU1U8x1MKTjQFBX3eQS355xU9MDzKWi8nAj9l&id=100066891655028&mibextid=Nif5oz&_rdar__=f

b) Cultural Initiatives Development Support Program: The Ministry of Culture and Swiss Cooperation sign a 2-billion CFA partnership

On Thursday, July 10, 2025, in Ouagadougou, the Ministry of Communication, Culture, Arts and Tourism signed a partnership agreement with the Swiss Cooperation Office and Consular Agency in Burkina Faso. This agreement aims to fund the first phase of the Cultural Initiatives Development Support Program (PADIC1). Switzerland has committed to supporting Burkinabè culture. Through this agreement, the Swiss side will contribute 67% of the total budget for Phase 1 of the program (2025–2028), amounting to 2 billion CFA francs, or 1.34 billion CFA francs. The remaining 33% (660 million CFA francs) will be covered by the Burkinabè government.

Source: <https://www.sidwaya.info/programme-dappui-au-developpement-des-initiatives-culturelles-le-ministere-en-charge-de-la-culture-et-la-cooperation-suisse-signe-un-partenariat-de-2-milliards-f-cfa/>

c) First Forum of Students and Young Professionals of the International Council of Museums (ICOM)

On Thursday, July 17, 2025, at the National Museum of Burkina Faso, Minister Pingdwendé Gilbert OUEDRAOGO, in charge of Communication, Culture, Arts and Tourism, presided over the first forum for students and young professionals of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Held under the theme “Students and Young Professionals: Drivers of a Dynamic ICOM in Africa,” this hybrid forum (in-person and online) served as a platform for engagement and reflection on the crucial role of youth in revitalizing African museum institutions.

B.4 Tunisia: International Festival of Hammamet

The 59th edition of the International Festival of Hammamet (FIH) will be held from July 11 to August 13, 2025, at the International Cultural Center of Hammamet, under the slogan “Continuous Vibes.”

This year’s edition offers festivalgoers a diverse program featuring music, theater, and dance. The iconic House of the Mediterranean for Culture and the Arts will host 33 evenings and 36 performances from 15 countries, including: Tunisia, Palestine, Algeria, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, Jordan, Mali, France, Italy, Spain, Colombia, Haiti, and the United States.

The festival opened with “Ragouj”, a Tunisian musical comedy directed by Abdelhamid Bouchnak, with music composed by Hamza Bouchnak.

Source: <https://lapresse.tn/2025/06/29/le-festival-international-de-hammamet-devoile-son-programme-2025/>

B.5 Mali

a) Launch of the 2025 “City-Tour Program”: Boosting the Local Economy and Promoting Cultural Heritage

The Minister of Handicrafts, Culture, Hospitality Industry and Tourism, Mr. Mamou DAFPE, presided over the official launch ceremony of the 2025 edition of the City-Tour Program on Wednesday, July 16, 2025, at the National Museum, in the presence of several government members including: Mr. Abdoulaye DIOP, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Dr. Mahamadou KONÉ, Minister of Religious Affairs, Worship and Customs; Ms. DEMBÉLÉ Madina SISSOKO, Minister of Transport and Infrastructure; Mr. Balla Traoré, President of the Special Delegation of the Bamako District Municipality; Mr. Ali Mohammed SINANI, Head of the UNESCO Office; Political, administrative and traditional authorities; Members of the National Transitional Council (CNT); and Many figures from Mali’s tourism, cultural and handicraft sectors, and renowned Malian architects.

The City Tour Program, led by the Mali Tourism Promotion Agency (APTM), is part of the Year of Culture declared by General Assimi GOÏTA, President of the Transition. It aims to revitalize cultural spaces, showcase national cultural heritage, and promote a positive image of Mali as a destination. Targeted at a wide audience children, youth, families, residents, and the diaspora activities are scheduled every weekend from July 16 to September 28, 2025.

Source: <https://nyelenimagazine.org/lancement-de-ledition-2025-du-programme-city-tour-dynamiser->

b) 3rd Cultural and Artistic Week of Mopti: Art as a Vehicle for Social Cohesion

From June 23 to 29, 2025, Mali's "Venice," Mopti, hosted the third edition of its Cultural and Artistic Week. Organized by the Urban Municipality with the support of Sudu Baba Center, the event was held under the theme: "Culture as a Driver of Resilience and Women's Empowerment in Times of Conflict"—as part of the 2025 Year of Culture. This new edition builds on the success of the Mopti Artistic and Cultural Biennale held in July 2023, which drew nearly 10,000 participants, further cementing Mopti's status as a cultural hub in Mali.

Source: <https://www.journaldumali.com/3eme-semaine-artistique-et-culturelle-de-mopti-lart-comme-vecteur-de-cohesion-sociale/>

B.6 Ghana PANAFEST: A Cultural Pilgrimage

PANAFEST (Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival) is a landmark event celebrating Pan-African history and culture. From July 25 to August 3, 2025, in Cape Coast and Accra, the main edition will feature theatre performances, concerts, conferences, and commemorative ceremonies, particularly around Cape Coast's historical slavery sites. This festival is a profound moment of connection between Africans and the diaspora.

Source: <https://ambassade-afrique.fr/les-festivals-africains-a-ne-pas-manquer-en-2025/>

B.7 Mauritius: The Liquidation of AFRINIC, Africa's Regional Internet Registry

In the famous biblical story, two women appear before King Solomon, both claiming to be the mother of a living child. Without witnesses or clear evidence, Solomon gave a shocking order: "Cut the child in two, and give half to each woman."

One woman agrees.

The other cries out: "No, let her have the child, but don't kill him!"

It was then clear who the real mother was.

Today, a modern version of this story is unfolding in Mauritius, where Cloud Innovation has filed for the liquidation of AFRINIC, Africa's regional internet registry.

Two parties now stand before the community.

One is ready to see the entire institution dismantled, its assets liquidated, the "baby"—our registry—cut in two.

The other, bruised and battered, still says: "Let it live."

We can debate who did what to cause the conflicts that brought us here. Yes, AFRINIC had governance issues. Yes, members had legitimate grievances.

But ending Africa's only RIR, the only one in the global Internet governance structure with an African mandate and identity?

This is not justice.

It is annihilation.

Solomon's wisdom was never in the sword it was in seeing who truly cared whether the child lived.

Let us be wise too.

The survival of AFRINIC is not about saving an institution.

It's about protecting Africa's autonomy in cyberspace.

Source: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/brian-munyao-longwe-25432_in-the-famous-biblical-story-two-women-came-activity-7349291478176665600-fXMg?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android&rcm=ACoAABdshUcB7kSmGyoO07zxVDmOWwW49NhOIYY

C. News on Cultural Policies, Institutions, and Resources in Africa

C.1 Djibouti: Official Launch of the M2EE ICCUE-UNESCO Project

On June 18, 2025, the National Library of Djibouti hosted the official launch of the M2EE ICCUE-UNESCO Project. Implemented by UNESCO and funded by the European Union, in partnership with the National Agency for the Promotion of Culture (ANPC), the project's main objective is to establish a national strategy to strengthen support structures and create tailored financing mechanisms for Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) in Djibouti.

Alongside this project, entrusted to experts Tojo Rakotomalala and Fatouma Mahamoud, UNESCO, in partnership with UNDP, launched a study on employability in the CCIs, led by experts Luc Mayitoukou and Amina Saïd Chiré.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/p/Zhu-Culture-Officiel-100050292431640/>

C.2 Benin: Africa Design, Thematic Conference: Creation and Cultural Economy: What Future for the Creative Industries in Africa?

Can design transform Africa's cultural industries? How can tradition, innovation, entrepreneurship, and international influence be combined? This conference will bring together creators, policymakers, and committed thinkers for an essential conversation on the future of the CCIs (Cultural and Creative Industries) in Africa. A session that explores the role of design in enhancing heritage, creative entrepreneurship, fashion, visual arts, and cultural diplomacy.

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DMKs5Vut-88/>

C.3 Congo: First Meeting of the Culture Commission of UCLG Africa in Brazzaville

On July 9 and 10, 2025, the Culture Commission of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa) held a meeting in Brazzaville, Congo, at the invitation of Mr. Dieudonné Bantsimba, Member of Parliament and Mayor of Brazzaville. The meeting was honored by the presence of Ms. Fatimetou Abdel Malick, President of the Nouakchott Region (Mauritania) and current President of UCLG Africa. The meeting opened under the theme: "Culture in the Service of Local Government Development", and was inaugurated by Gilbert Mouanda-Mouanda, Prefect of the Brazzaville department, representing the Minister of the Interior, Decentralization and Local Development.

The Culture Commission of UCLG Africa, chaired by the city of Brazzaville, brings together local governments that have volunteered to champion the cultural agenda at the local level, aiming to make culture the fourth pillar of sustainable development, and to support the campaign for culture to be included as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Source: <https://www.uclga.org/news-fr/premiere-reunion-de-la-commission-culture-de-cglu-afrique-a-brazzaville/?lang=fr>

D. News, Institutions, and Cultural Events in Other Regions

D.1 Belgium: Africalia: Webinar on "North-South Cultural Collaborations"

As part of Africalia's 25th anniversary, in partnership with the Cultural Forum, a panel was held on Saturday, July 12, 2025, bringing together critical and committed voices around a central question: How can we imagine more equitable, autonomous, and meaningful North-South cultural collaborations?

For over an hour, three diverse figures, Patrick Mudekereza (DRC), author and curator, director of the Waza Art Center, Leslie-Yosra Lukamba (Belgium), public policy analyst and founder of the nonprofit "I See You", Dorcy Rugamba (Rwanda), director of the Rwanda Arts Initiative and the Kigali Triennale, shared sharp insights, concrete experiences, and proposals for transforming a system still perceived as unbalanced.

The discussion was rigorously moderated by Cameroonian journalist Jeanne Ngo Nlend.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=vo9YlOHCBQI>

D.2 Germany – BARKWENDE Africa Festival 2025

From July 4 to 6, 2025, the city of Bad Kreuznach (Germany) pulsed with African culture during the 5th edition of the BARKWENDE Africa Festival. This edition highlighted Burkina Faso, and carried the theme:

“Cultural Cooperation and Resilience for Peace”, emphasizing the central role of culture as a lever for dialogue, solidarity, and social cohesion.

The event was held under the high patronage of Mr. Pegdwendé Gilbert OUÉDRAOGO, Burkina Faso’s Minister of Communication, Culture, Arts and Tourism, demonstrating the country’s commitment to promoting cultural initiatives on the international stage.

Source: https://web.facebook.com/infosculturedufaso/posts/barkwende-africa-festival-2025-lallemagne-accueil-la-5e-%C3%A9dition-sous-le-signe-/1265781715556601/?_rdc=1&_rdr#

D.3 Canada: 39th Edition of the Festival International Nuits d’Afrique

From July 8 to 20, 2025, the 39th edition of the Festival International Nuits d’Afrique took place in Montreal, offering a musical journey across Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Over 13 days, more than 700 artists from around 30 countries performed in various venues, with outdoor events from July 15 to 20 at the Quartier des spectacles in Montreal. A memorable experience unfolded at the Nuits d’Afrique Village, with over 100 free concerts, workshops, and family-friendly activities, not to mention the authentic Timbuktu Market.

Source: <https://www.quebecvacances.com/fr/evenements/festival-international-nuits-dafrique>

E. Cultural Information in the African Press

E.1 www.noocultures.info – World Heritage: Two New African Sites Inscribed by UNESCO

Africa has increased its presence on the UNESCO World Heritage List with two new cultural sites, officially recognized on July 11, 2025: The archaeological site of Diy-Gid-Biy in Cameroon, The Mulanje Mountain Range in Malawi Located in the Mandara Mountains of northern Cameroon, Diy-Gid-Biy is known for its dry-stone structures, terraced agriculture, and ritual spaces. Spanning about 25 kilometers, it showcases a deep connection between spirituality, social organization, and environmental mastery—dating from the 12th to the 17th century.

In Malawi, the majestic Mulanje mountain range has been listed. A hotspot of biodiversity and living spiritual traditions, Mulanje is a sacred site for many local communities. It is home to the Mulanje cedar, an iconic endemic tree species. UNESCO praised the site’s exceptional ecological and cultural value, which now stands as a symbol of conservation, identity, and cultural transmission.

Source: <https://www.noocultures.info/2025/07/12/patrimoine-mondial-deux-nouveaux-sites-africains-inscrits-par-lunesco/>

E.2 A Training Center in Salé Introduces Youth to Ancestral Trades

In the city of Salé, northern Morocco, a craft training center has, for more than a decade, worked to preserve and transmit traditional know-how. Since 2012, the center has welcomed over 500 young trainees annually, aged between 15 and 30, who wish to learn manual trades often ancient and at risk of disappearing. Disciplines include carpentry, wood carving, leatherwork, embroidery, and more.

Source: <https://fr.africanews.com/2025/07/17/maroc-un-centre-a-sale-initie-les-jeunes-aux-metiers-ancestraux/>

F. News from Bulletins and Information Services of Other Networks

F.1 UCLG Africa: 2025 UN High-Level Political Forum on the SDGs

The 2025 United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) was held from July 14 to 23 at the UN Headquarters in New York under the theme: "Developing Sustainable, Inclusive, Science-Based and Evidence-Informed Solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs to Leave No One Behind."

Source: <https://www.uclga.org/french-events/forum-politique-de-haut-niveau-des-nations-unies-de-2025-sur-les-odd/?lang=fr>