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PRESS RELEASE

KENYAN FASHION FLIES THE FLAG AT UNCTAD14, SEES THE SECRETARY-GENERAL DANCE

Nairobi, Kenya, 21 July 2016 - Bold patterns, striking poses and African rhythms spilled out on the roof of the Kenyatta International Convention Centre on Tuesday night as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) hosted the crème of Kenyan fashion at [UNCTAD 14](#) in Nairobi.

A collaboration between the United Nation body and the hottest Kenyan clothing and accessory brands may once have seemed like an unlikely partnership, but the fashion show highlighted the vast potential of creative industries to create jobs in developing countries such as Kenya. For that to happen, clothing companies in particular will need to change the way they work.

"If we are just manufacturing for the Walmarts and the H&Ms of the world, it just means a lot of people employed on the minimum wage," said Ann McCreath, a designer and managing director of Kenyan fashion house KikoRomeo, and an organizer of the UNCTAD event.

"If top international luxury designer brands come and work with our people in the slums, again it's a very minimal wage that's being paid and all the added value stays in the developed country where the product is sold or where the brand originates."

Ms. McCreath said she sees a different path that can bring better results for creative industries, including fashion in developing countries.

"It's important to push out our designer and affordable luxury brands because they raise the ceiling and leave a lot more space for everyone else," she said.

"They are also the best things for changing the perception of our country and its sophistication level because if they create a "wow" factor in a developed market, everyone now imagines a whole string of things that are associated in terms of lifestyle. At the end of the day, fashion leads lifestyle. That means Kenya can sell its tea and coffee and everything else by having fabulous fashion out there."

Tuesday's fashion show embraced both high-street and haute couture labels to show the breadth of Kenyan fashion. It featured ying-yang-inspired pieces from Waithira Kibuchi for VIVO and a selection of Lornah Sports "athleisure" wear in eye-catching patterns. Designers Jamil Walji and pieces for KikoRomeo also featured. These were accessorized with bags from Arnold Muriithi for Suave, Akinyi Odongo for Honey from the Moon and John Kakeve for Sandstorm. Premium jewellery by Embody Accessories and Le Collane di Betta finished off the looks.



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UNCTAD believes that creative industries like art, design, cinema, advertising, fashion and tourism can bring significant gains for developing countries.

"The creative industries represent the new frontier of development, moving on from industrialization, commodities exploitation, manufacturing, and now onto the knowledge-based economy," said Bonapas Onguglo, senior economic affairs officer, chief of the creative industries programme of UNCTAD. "They will widen and deepen opportunities for growth, trade and economic development."

"The creative industries are massive," Ms. McCreath added.

"They should be used by Governments to promote their countries since the flag gets flown very high when you work with creatives," she said. "They push boundaries all the time in their artistry."

The fashion show gave United Nations and Kenyan Government officials a chance to let their hair down during intense negotiations at UNCTAD 14. Music by Kenyan star Suzanna Owiyo prompted UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi to leap from his seat and lead an impromptu dance around the venue.

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