

# 2026 International Tea Day Observance

Cultural and Development Dialogue at  
United Nations Headquarters

**Co-Hosted by:** World Development Foundation (ECOSOC  
Consultative Status; UN DGC Associated)

**Proposed Date:** 21 May 2026

**Proposed Venue:** United Nations Headquarters, New York



## **Table of Contents**

I. Introduction

II. Purpose of the Event

III. Event Overview

IV. Programme Outline

V. Partnerships and Co-Hosts

VI. Ten-Year Vision:

Where Civilizations and Peace Meet Through Tea

VII. Conclusion

VIII. Planning Committee

IX. Concept Note

## I. Introduction

The World Development Foundation (WDF) is honored to present its proposal for the 2026 observance of International Tea Day at United Nations Headquarters. Anchored in the United Nations General Assembly's designation of 21 May as a global day of recognition, this observance seeks to celebrate tea not only as a cherished cultural tradition, but also as a vital contributor to sustainable development, rural livelihoods, and intercultural understanding.

For millennia, tea has symbolized hospitality, reflection, wellbeing, and harmony. In today's interconnected world, it continues to serve as a bridge between peoples and nations, supporting millions of smallholder farmers and offering a unique lens through which to explore themes of sustainability, resilience, and cultural heritage. Through this event, WDF aspires to uphold and advance the United Nations' enduring mission of peace, sustainability, and shared human progress, expressed through the timeless language of tea.

## II. Purpose of the Event

The 2026 International Tea Day observance aims to:

- ❖ Honor the United Nations' official recognition of International Tea Day.
- ❖ Provide a dignified platform where **culture, sustainability, and development** intersect.
- ❖ Celebrate global tea heritage through an inclusive, cross-cultural programme.
- ❖ Illuminate the developmental narratives behind tea, including livelihoods, climate impacts, and community resilience.
- ❖ Strengthen cooperation between Member States, NGOs, cultural institutions, and civil society.

## III. Event Overview

The observance will blend policy dialogue, cultural exchange, and heritage appreciation, creating a holistic experience that reflects both the spirit and the values of the United Nations.

## IV. Programme Outline

### 1. Panel Discussion / Workshop

- ❖ A curated, multi-stakeholder dialogue featuring:
- ❖ Representatives from tea-producing countries
- ❖ Scholars of culture, heritage, and anthropology
- ❖ Experts in climate-resilient agriculture
- ❖ NGOs and civil society advocates

#### Indicative themes include:

- ❖ Tea and sustainable development
- ❖ The role of smallholder farmers in global supply chains
- ❖ Women's leadership and empowerment in the tea sector
- ❖ Climate change impacts and adaptation within the tea economy
- ❖ Tea as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy and peaceful exchange

### 2. Cultural Showcase

A refined and respectful presentation celebrating the diversity of global tea traditions, including:

- ❖ Traditional tea ceremonies (Asian, Latin American, Europe, Middle Eastern, and others)
- ❖ Contemporary interpretations of tea culture
- ❖ Artistic or musical performances inspired by tea heritage

### 3. Tea-Tasting and Heritage Exhibition

An immersive, educational, and culturally uplifting experience featuring:

- ❖ Curated tastings from multiple tea-producing regions
- ❖ Storytelling about tea origins, rituals, craftsmanship, and ecological environments
- ❖ Visual displays highlighting rural tea landscapes, heritage systems, and community stories

This component aims to deepen public appreciation for tea as both a cultural expression and a sustainable livelihood.



## V. Partnerships and Co-Hosts

This observance plans to be held in partnership with:

- ❖ NGOs holding ECOSOC and UN DGC accreditation
- ❖ Permanent Missions to the United Nations and UN Agencies(to be confirmed)
- ❖ Cultural organizations and diaspora associations
- ❖ Academic or heritage institutions

These collaborations ensure a programme that is globally representative, culturally inclusive, and aligned with United Nations values.

## VI. Ten-Year Vision:

### Where Civilizations and Peace Meet Through Tea

Looking beyond 2026, the World Development Foundation aspires to cultivate a decade-long cultural undertaking — one that elevates tea as a universal medium of understanding, friendship, and peaceful exchange among nations.

Through the gentle ritual of sharing tea, this initiative seeks to nurture pathways of dialogue where diversity is honored and where the warmth of culture becomes a quiet force for harmony in our interconnected world.

Over the next ten years, this vision aims at

- ❖ Tea becomes a shared language of intercultural communication.
- ❖ The aroma of tea symbolizes the warmth of peace and human connection.
- ❖ Cultural heritage continues to serve as a bridge toward a shared future for humankind.
- ❖ Peace finds expression in the most enduring, gentle, and universally accessible form.

In united spirit, this long-term vision embraces a timeless truth:

**One World, One Cup of Tea.**

**A Shared Journey Toward Peace and Development.**

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## VII. Conclusion

The 2026 International Tea Day observance at United Nations Headquarters aspires to honor a beverage that has shaped civilizations, supported economies, and nurtured communities across continents and generations. With dignity, cultural respect, and a shared commitment to a peaceful and sustainable future, this event will stand as a meaningful contribution to the United Nations' ongoing mission to foster dialogue, partnership, and global harmony.

WDF warmly welcomes collaboration with partners that share this vision of unity, cultural appreciation, and collective progress.

# Join

## Our planning committee



## H.E. Dr. HENRY LEONARD MAC DONALD

- Ambassador and Former Permanent Representative to the United Nations
- Former Chairperson of the \*\*Intergovernmental Organization (IGO) CARICOM / Caribbean Community\*\*
- Chairperson of the \*\*Third Committee\*\* for the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.



## NISHAT MIRZA

- Correspondent at the United Nations Headquarters
- UN Sustainability Advocate
- Professor at Saint Peter's University



## LILI BAO

- Distinguished Tea Cultural Envoy - representing tea culture at prestigious global expos, including the Shanghai World Expo, Milan Expo, and the China International Import Expo.
- Founder of the “Tea Fairy” brand - advancing refined tea experiences and educational initiatives through the Elegant and Tranquil Tea Academy.
- Prolific author - Author of the China Tea Trilogy "Awakening," "Attitude," and "Elegance and Tranquility," as well as the Tea Fairy series of books.

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## Concept Note

### 1. Background

Recognizing the cultural, economic, and developmental importance of tea, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 May as International Tea Day, with FAO designated as the lead agency for global observance. The day highlights tea's essential role in rural development, livelihood support, poverty reduction, gender empowerment, climate resilience, and intercultural dialogue.

Aligned with this spirit, the World Development Foundation will convene an official observance at UN Headquarters in May 2026, honoring tea as a universal symbol of peace, sustainability, and shared human heritage.

### 2. Rationale

Tea is more than an agricultural product; it is a medium through which communities connect, cultures interact, and global understanding deepens. Its production sustains millions of smallholder farmers worldwide, forming a critical foundation of livelihoods, food security, and economic opportunity.

This event seeks to illuminate the multifaceted narrative of tea — from environmental sustainability to cultural preservation — while fostering constructive dialogue among Member States, civil society, cultural institutions, and the private sector.

### 3. Objectives

- ❖ To promote and elevate International Tea Day in alignment with the UN's mandate.
- ❖ To provide a platform for discussion on sustainability, climate action, cultural heritage, and smallholder empowerment.
- ❖ To celebrate tea's global significance through cultural performances and curated tea-tasting experiences.
- ❖ To enhance public understanding of tea as a bridge for peace, partnership, and mutual respect.