

It is a great pleasure to be here at the opening of the 3rd Migrant Film Festival here at Kinodvor.

Thank you to Zavod Volutariat and Slovenska Filantropia for asking us to get involved.

First, a few words about Ken Loach who is, by any measure, one of the UK's most important film-makers.

His 1969 film *Kes* brought acclaim and regularly appears high up any list of 'best ever British films.'

What people love about his work – what I love - is the strong social commentary – often born of his own political views - combined with what is often described as a social realist approach to the direction.

He makes films that matter, on issues that people care about, including those relevant to this festival.

There is little that I can tell you, which you do not already know, so perhaps you will allow me a few observations on this important set of issues.

The *first* is obvious: we are living through changed and fast changing times.

In less than two years we have seen dramatic changes across North Africa, powered by a drastic need for a new political, social and economic settlement.

We are living through a turbulent period in the life of the European Union and the Euro.

The *second* is material to the first: the numbers.

The global population is growing at a rate of about 6 people per second and yet, certainly in Europe, people are living longer.

Half of the world's 7 billion people are under 25, but the rate of economic growth means the supply of jobs cannot meet the demand.

And, crucial to this occasion, almost 200 million people are living outside their country of birth - compared to half that number only 40 years ago.

The *third* is the role of culture and education in helping to create dialogue, openness and curiosity.

At the British Council, we believe – like you - that societies who believe in, practise and enforce equal opportunity policies are richer for it.

Equal opportunity builds equality.

This builds trust which contributes to peace, prosperity and security.

Wednesday is Worlds Refugee Day, so now is a good time to pause and consider the huge political, social and economic challenges people all over the world are facing as a result of migration – some of which we know is forced and increasingly the changing climate is playing its part.

Culture and education are and should always be spaces where - as many of us struggle with the 21st Century's particularly brutal brand of modernity – we can step back and say, in the words of Aneurin Bevan, this is my truth, tell me yours.

If that makes me sound like a pessimist, I'm not. You have to be optimistic even in the face of everything....its the optimism of necessity.

Thank you.