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Organización
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the First Prize-awarding Ceremony
of the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use
of Information and Communication Technologies in Education**

***Delivered on behalf of the Director-General by Mr Peter Smith,
Assistant Director-General of Education***

UNESCO, 12 January 2007

Honourable Minister,
Mr President of the General Conference,
Honourable Ambassador,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to welcome you to this first prize-giving ceremony for the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education.

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to His Majesty the King of Bahrain for his generosity in establishing this important Prize. This is one of the many examples of His Majesty's longstanding commitment to improve the quality of education, not only in his own country, but throughout the world.

I wish to extend my particular thanks, and a very warm welcome, to Dr Majed bin Ali Al Noaimi, the Minister of Education of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and Chairman of the National Commission of Bahrain to UNESCO. Dr Al Noaimi has played an instrumental role in the foundation of this prize, as he has in so many aspects of the growing cooperation between the Kingdom of Bahrain and UNESCO.

I would also like to welcome the President of UNESCO's General Conference, Dr Musa Bin Jaafar Bin Hassan. Last month, Dr Musa organized an important

Symposium at UNESCO Headquarters on education in the Sultanate of Oman, where new technologies were revealed to be a significant factor in the country's progress in providing education for all.

May I finally express my gratitude to Mr Hashim Hasan Albash, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to UNESCO, for his support to this event, and for joining us here today.

Created in 2005, the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa Prize is bestowed annually for outstanding projects that use ICTs to enhance teaching, learning and overall educational performance. It consists of a 50,000 dollar award that is divided equally between two laureates, individuals or institutions.

The aim of the Prize is to raise awareness of the importance of ICTs for education. It is to promote the exchange of good practice, and also to encourage the development of innovative educational materials and methods that use ICTs.

The creative employment of new technologies will play a vital role in helping countries achieve Education for All. As the Dakar Framework for Action recognizes, ICTs have great potential for improving the quality, effectiveness and reach of education. The projects awarded here today also highlight the important contribution ICTs can make to enhancing opportunities for lifelong learning, and to strengthening the linkages between education and the world of work.

Of course, we have to proceed strategically. New technologies must be introduced in a coherent and sustainable way. Due regard must likewise be given to local content development, and the preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity. These are all issues that this Prize can help us to address.

The Prize also carries a more general significance. It highlights the ways in which ICTs are revolutionizing our societies. Yet, it also draws attention to the fact that the benefits of these new technologies are not distributed equally. The problem is not just one of access and connectivity. It is above all about the skills and knowledge that are needed to use information and technology effectively. In other words, the digital and education divides are mutually reinforcing and need to be tackled together. By placing ICTs at the heart of learning processes, this Prize points the way forward.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In total, thirty-five projects were submitted for the first award of the Prize. Out of these, an independent Jury, chaired by the Director of the Learning Technology Center at the University of Texas at Austin, Dr Paul Resta, proposed two prize-winners and one candidate for honourable mention. I had no hesitation in accepting their recommendations.

Let me therefore express my delight in announcing our two prize-winning projects: the Cyber Home Learning System for Primary and Secondary Students in the Republic of Korea; and the eDegree Programme in Lapland in Finland.

The Cyber Home Learning system is an initiative of the Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and the Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS). Aimed at addressing the digital divide and providing education for all, this system is innovative in several respects.

First, it represents a collaborative model of planning, which engages government, legislative and educational bodies together with parents and local communities. Furthermore, the system has been developed in a holistic manner. It addresses the legal, institutional, infrastructure, research and training needs of developing a sustainable ICTs programme. Through this, it has served to create a truly participatory learning environment, where everyone – students, teachers and parents – can gain access to and share high quality learning resources.

The system has benefited a vast number of learners, both within and outside the Republic of Korea. Its success carries many valuable lessons that other countries may follow.

I am therefore honoured to present Dr Jong-Seo Lee, Vice-Minister in the Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and Dr Dae-Joon Hwang, President of KERIS, with these diplomas and a cheque for 25,000 US dollars. May I congratulate your two institutions for their great work and leadership.

Our second prize-winning project is the **eDegree Programme in Lapland**, developed by the Kemi-Tornio Polytechnic of Finland. The eDegree Programme

represents a creative approach to providing high quality learning opportunities to unemployed adults in remote, rural and depopulated areas. Initially focused on Lapland, the programme has been expanded to include adult learners across the country. Among its many unique qualities, is the effective way the programme integrates general education with training for working life. The number of people who have succeeded in completing their studies and finding employment is evidence of its effectiveness.

The eDegree Programme can provide a useful model to other countries that face similar challenges in terms of addressing the needs of unemployed or underemployed adults in rural areas.

I am delighted to present Dr Riitta Käyhkö, President of Kemi-Tornio Polytechnic, and Dr Seija Jäminki, Senior Lecturer at Kemi-Tornio Polytechnic, with these diplomas and cheque.

Finally, I am also pleased to award an honourable mention to the **Dedicated Civil Law-Teaching Website for Arab Law Students**, set up by the School of Law at Kuwait University. This highly effective project has encouraged a number of Arab Law schools to make quality learning resources available free to their students via the Internet. Developed in just eighteen months and with minimum funding, it demonstrates that using ICTs in education need not necessarily be a costly venture.

Allow me therefore to present these diplomas to Dr Mashael Abdulaziz Alhajeri and Mr Amr Salah El Sayed Abo Hamer from the Kuwait University School of Law.

Honourable Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to express my support and encouragement for these excellent initiatives to promote ICTs in education. The projects celebrated here today demonstrate the great potential of ICTs to overcome existing socio-economic inequalities, to provide access to quality education for all, and to contribute to building inclusive and sustainable knowledge societies. I can assure you that

UNESCO will not be found wanting in helping to share these good practices so that they may benefit all.

Thank you.