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Объединенных Наций по  
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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 Inauguration Ceremony  
of the Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Bahrain**

**UNESCO, 18 June 2007**

Madam Under-Secretary for Cultural and National Heritage of the Kingdom  
of Bahrain,

Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters for the inauguration of this exhibition showcasing Bahrain's vibrant contemporary art scene.

I would first like to say how privileged we are to have with us here this evening Sheika Mai Mohammed Al Khalifa, Under-Secretary for Cultural and National Heritage of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Let me also congratulate the Sector of Culture and National Heritage of the Ministry of Information of the Kingdom of Bahrain who, in collaboration with the Permanent Delegation of Bahrain to UNESCO, has mounted this magnificent display.

Over its long history, Bahrain has nurtured a tradition of cultural pluralism and artistic development that is very much alive in modern Bahraini society.

Thanks to its forward-looking cultural policies, Bahrain has become the most prolific book publisher in the Arab world.

The Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to the promotion of contemporary creation is reflected in policy and in practice. In this regard, I would like to applaud the efforts of the Sector of Culture and National Heritage, which attaches great importance to

the visual arts, as attested to by its sponsorship of numerous prizes, studio facilities and foreign study grants in major artistic hubs in the Middle East and Europe.

In recent years, Bahrain has also hosted several international cultural encounters, providing platforms for exchange between local and international artists and the general public.

Owing to its innovative approach to culture, Bahrain is home to one of the most exciting and culturally diverse centres of contemporary creation in the Arab world today.

The 35 works in various media on display here were created by eight artists who represent the diversity of contemporary art in Bahrain. As you visit the exhibit, you will discover the works of established and highly successful artists alongside those of younger, emerging talents.

Most of the artists featured here are members of the Bahrain Arts Society, a non-profit organization created in 1983 as a leading forum for the country's artists in the context of Bahrain's tremendous economic development.

UNESCO, which encourages its Member States to take into account the cultural dimension of development, commends the Government of Bahrain for its initiatives to preserve its tangible and intangible heritage, as well as to promote contemporary forms of expression.

We look forward to expanding our fruitful collaboration not only in the field of culture but in all of the Organization's areas of competence.

In closing, I would like once again to congratulate the organizers of this fine exhibition and wish them every success in their future cultural projects.

I thank you very much and hope you enjoy the exhibition.