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Organización
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

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,
for the promotion of the reconstruction of the 3 monuments:
the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka,
the Orthodox Cathedral of Mostar
and the Franciscan Monastery in Plehan**

Mostar, 26 March 2008

Your Excellency, Orthodox Bishop of Herzegovina,
Governor of the Canton,
Mayor of Mostar,
President of the City of the Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to make my third visit to the Old City of Mostar, whose outstanding universal value to humanity was recognized by its inscription on the World Heritage List in 2005.

When I first visited Mostar in 2002, the restoration of the Old Bridge was already underway.

Two years later, in July 2004, I was privileged to return, this time for the inauguration of the reconstructed Bridge.

It was an occasion of strong emotion, with the renaissance of the bridge serving as a potent symbol of international solidarity and reconciliation in the wake of conflict and strife. I am therefore deeply honoured on this visit to have been awarded the certificate of honorary citizen of Mostar, in recognition of UNESCO's contribution to this process.

The rebuilding of the Old Bridge and its surroundings and its World Heritage Listing has rekindled and strengthened the emblematic power and significance of the City

of Mostar as a symbol of the coexistence of communities from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

Awareness of the reconstructed bridge has been a key factor in persuading many thousands of visitors to come to Mostar each year. Managed properly, cultural tourism of this type can be a powerful motor for economic development and the promotion of a city at the international level.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today's event, coming 13 years after the Dayton Peace Agreement, is an opportunity to reaffirm the role that cultural heritage can play as a symbol of a people's identity, as an instrument of reconciliation and tolerance and as a tool for development in its broadest sense.

It was because of its symbolic value that the decision to rebuild the Old Bridge and its historic neighbourhoods was made. Accordingly, the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Municipality of Mostar requested UNESCO's technical and scientific expertise for the project.

UNESCO considered that reconstruction of this outstanding work of architecture deserved the greatest possible effort, according to the highest scientific and cultural standards and with the involvement of all of the country's communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today the Old Bridge is once more fulfilling its most important function, of connecting the communities of Mostar. As the core of the Old City of Mostar, it represents the link joining today's communities to the common past and a shared future.

Building on this experience, we have come together on the site of the Orthodox Cathedral to affirm UNESCO's commitment, with its international partners, to cooperate with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their government to reconstruct three religious monuments that have come to symbolize the significance of inter-religious dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The three

monuments are this Cathedral, Ferhat Pasha's Mosque in Banja Luka, and the Franciscan Monastery of Plehan.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen

In closing, allow me once again to congratulate all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the inscription of the country's first two sites World Heritage sites, and to encourage the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their government to continue with its laudable efforts to protect, rehabilitate and promote the entire cultural heritage of the country.

Thank you.