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Organización  
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para la Educación,  
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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 of the exhibition  
“Cultural Heritage on the Croatian Coastline:  
Drawings by Hrvoje Šercar”**

**UNESCO, 21 April 2008**

Mr Jasen Mesić, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Culture  
of the Republic of Croatia,

Mr Mirko Galić, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate  
of the Republic of Croatia to UNESCO,

Ms Rut Carek, Secretary-General of the Croatian National Commission,

Mr Hrovje Šercar,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters for the inauguration of this exhibition showcasing the historical monuments and sites along Croatia's spectacular Adriatic coast, through the imaginative drawings of Hrvoje Šercar.

Allow me to thank the Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Croatia to UNESCO for organizing this event, which is a testimony to the importance that your country attaches to its cultural heritage and to creativity.

I have twice had the privilege of visiting Croatia as Director-General of UNESCO, first in 2002 and then in 2006, when Croatia hosted the Fourth South East Europe Heads of State Summit in Opatija. On both occasions I was able to witness the richness of Croatia's heritage, as well as its commitment to safeguarding culture within and beyond its borders.

As I said on the occasion of the official visit of H.E. Mr Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia, to UNESCO last December, Croatia's collaboration with UNESCO in the field of culture at the international level is commendable.

Only one month after joining UNESCO in July 1992, Croatia became a State Party to the World Heritage Convention, the foremost legal instrument for the protection of the world's outstanding cultural and natural properties.

To date, six Croatian properties have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. Its five cultural World Heritage sites, illustrated by the photographs and drawings in this exhibition, attest to the region's long and multi-layered history.

In this context, I cannot fail to mention the Old City of Dubrovnik, whose stunning historic centre was so damaged by the civil strife of the 1990's that it had to be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. A major restoration programme undertaken by Croatia in cooperation with UNESCO led to its removal from the Danger List in 1998, when I had the privilege to be Chairman of the World Heritage Committee, in Kyoto, Japan. I was able to see for myself the excellence of the restoration when I visited Dubrovnik in 2002 during my first official visit to Croatia.

When I returned in 2006 for the Opatija summit, I was also able to visit the Episcopal Complex of the Euphrasian Basilica in the Historic Centre of Poreč, an outstanding example of an early Christian ensemble inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Croatian Government's commitment to cultural diversity is clearly demonstrated by its swift ratification of all the relevant UNESCO Conventions, and in particular the 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Heritage. Here, I would like to pay tribute to Secretary of State Mesić, who is a specialist in underwater archaeology and whose active role in the drafting and subsequent promotion of that Convention is much appreciated.

Indeed, it was thanks to Croatia's initiative that the International Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar was created. This was approved by the 34<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference as the first Category 2 Centre under UNESCO's auspices in this field. And it was fitting that the International Centre for Underwater Archaeology was inaugurated when Croatia hosted the fourth session of the Conference of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe, in Zadar, in September 2007.

At that Conference, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to reinforce regional cooperation for the enhancement of the shared cultural heritage in pursuit of our goal of ensuring a sustainable future based on peaceful coexistence for all people of the region. UNESCO is grateful to Croatia for its active support in this regard.

In closing, I wish to reiterate my gratitude to the organizers of this exhibition and express my thanks and best wishes to Mr Šercar for his creative pursuits.

Thank you for your attention.