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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 Exhibition
“Thai Silk: Cultural Heritage”**

UNESCO, 18 May 2009

Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives of the Kingdom of Thailand,
Minister of Commerce of the Kingdom of Thailand,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to UNESCO this evening to inaugurate a series of events around the heritage of silk weaving in Thailand.

Let me first thank the organizers - the Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand to UNESCO, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the Queen Sirikit Institute of Sericulture - for giving us the opportunity to deepen our appreciation of this delicate and precious substance.

Allow me also pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit who has recognized both the intrinsic beauty of handwoven silk and its potential for development. By encouraging artisans to produce silks of the highest quality, Her Majesty has opened up opportunities for economic diversification to communities across the country, as well as pride in the continuity of a traditional cultural expression. Indeed, I note with pleasure that numerous Thai craftspeople have received the UNESCO Award of Excellence for Handicrafts, our flagship programme for supporting craft producers.

As a much admired and sought after product, silk has been an integral part of Thailand's culture and identity for many centuries. Exported around the world, it has

opened the eyes and minds of people to Thailand and perhaps encouraged them to discover more about the country, its values, cultures and ideas.

This resonates strongly with UNESCO, which was founded in the aftermath of the Second World War to cultivate bonds between peoples by encouraging dialogue and mutual understanding; promoting creativity; and, most importantly, safeguarding cultural diversity.

It is therefore very fitting that this series of events around the theme of silk should be presented as part of our International Festival of Cultural Diversity. Not only do the rich colours and designs of Thai Silk reflect the different regions of production, they also beautifully illustrate the concept of diversity.

In closing let me once again thank the Kingdom of Thailand for this contribution to the Festival. I wish you a very pleasant evening and thank you for your attention.