



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
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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,**

**on the occasion of the concert held to mark Georgia's national holiday**

**and its accession to the Convention for the Safeguarding**

**of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

**UNESCO, 27 May 2009**

Mr Minister of Culture, Cultural Heritage and Sport of Georgia,

Mr Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Georgia to UNESCO,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you here this evening to UNESCO as we celebrate Georgia's national holiday.

I am especially pleased that these festivities are a ringing tribute to the vitality of Georgia's intangible cultural heritage, represented here by the famed violinist and conductor, Liana Issakadze.

Allow me, therefore, to extend warm words of greeting to Mr Nicolas Rurua, Minister of Culture, Cultural Heritage and Sport of Georgia, with whom we maintain close and productive working relations.

I should also like to thank Mr Mamuka Kudava, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Georgia to UNESCO, on whose initiative this musical evening is being held to promote the wealth and diversity of Georgia's artistic creativity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This evening's concert by the violinist Liana Issakadze will give pride of place to the diversity of Georgia's intangible cultural heritage.

Georgia, which ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in February 2008, is today a key player in the Caucasus region in cultural heritage safeguarding policies.

As early as 2001, it won recognition of Georgian Polyphonic Singing as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity, now included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity established under the 2003 Convention.

This age-old musical practice with highly complex melodic structures, which accompanies and sets the rhythm for so many everyday activities, is quite remarkable and fully deserves of our attention.

I myself had the great privilege of attending a performance of this polyphonic singing on United Nations Day at the Aichi Universal Exposition (Japan) in 2005.

I do hope then that we shall continue to work together in this field to preserve this tradition and implement effective and sustainable safeguarding policies.

I must add at this juncture that while Georgia is particularly attentive to living cultural traditions, it has also been very active in sustaining that the tangible cultural heritage under the 1972 World Heritage Convention, which it ratified in 1992.

Three magnificent Georgian cultural properties are now on the World Heritage List: the Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery (1994), the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (1994) and the Upper Svaneti (1996). Here too, allow me to share a personal memory with you, that of my official visit to Georgia in September 2000, when I had the great pleasure of visiting the beautiful churches of Mtskheta, Georgia's former capital.

I am of course delighted that Georgia takes a comprehensive, holistic approach to cultural heritage matters, its vision being one that encompasses the challenges of creativity, development and social cohesion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In honour of Georgia's national holiday we welcome Ms Liana Issakadze, who will conduct the National Chamber Orchestra of Georgia, as it performs the German, Georgian and French classical music on this evening's programme.

Liana Issakadze is a remarkable musician who, for more than 30 years, has continuously served the cause of young Georgian musicians by supporting them in their careers.

I have no doubt that she will strike a chord and make us aware of the ideals of intercultural dialogue that she has chosen to promote through this "concert for peace".

I wish you a very pleasant evening. Thank you.