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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 New Acropolis Museum**

Athens, 20 June 2009

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Ministers,
Mr President of the European Commission,
Mr President of the UNESCO General Conference and the Hellenic Republic's
Ambassador to UNESCO, George N. Anastassopoulos,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to participate in the long awaited inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum together with so many Heads of State and Government and Ministers.

Standing in view of the Acropolis this evening, I am reminded of my first visit and the strong emotion I felt on seeing the impressive craftsmanship of the work undertaken 2,500 years ago. This stunning new home for its artefacts is an important complement to the World Heritage site that will allow visitors to fully appreciate this outstanding heritage of humanity.

I am very grateful to President Papoulias for his kind invitation. Let me also congratulate Prime Minister Karamanlis and the Government and people of Greece on the completion of this ambitious project.

At UNESCO, we believe that museums are places where cultural legacies are safeguarded and transmitted to successive generations. By generating pride and mutual understanding through cultural representations, museums foster appreciation for diversity.

Promoting cultural diversity, particularly through heritage management, is a priority for UNESCO. As a signatory to many of our cultural conventions, Greece has demonstrated its commitment to safeguarding heritage for future generations.

Let me acknowledge its special contribution on the return of cultural property, notably the international conference on the topic in March, 2008, in this very location. Greece has strongly supported the activities of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation. At its fifteenth session last month, this committee adopted a recommendation jointly proposed by the Governments of Greece and the United Kingdom, inviting UNESCO to assist in convening necessary meetings between the two countries with the aim of reaching a mutually satisfactory resolution to the issue of the Parthenon Marbles. We stand ready to do so.

In closing, allow me once more to congratulate our Greek hosts. As custodians of this superb collection, your efforts to showcase this unique heritage will continue to inspire visitors from near and far, as the majestic Acropolis has done for centuries.

Thank you.