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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
nomination of the Philippine Madrigal Singers as
UNESCO Artists for Peace**

UNESCO, 27 July 2009

Mr Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines,
Madam Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Philippines to UNESCO,
Mr Mark Anthony Carpio, Choirmaster of the Philippine Madrigal Singers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you all to UNESCO Headquarters for the designation of the Philippine Madrigal Singers as UNESCO Artists for Peace.

Let me extend a particularly warm welcome to the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Mr Conejos, who has travelled to Paris especially to attend this ceremony.

The Philippine Madrigal Singers is one of the world's most awarded and acclaimed choirs. The group was founded in 1963 by the National Artist for Music, Professor Andrea Veneracion. We are honoured to have with us on stage Mr Mark Anthony Carpio, who was selected by Professor Veneracion as her successor as musical director in 2001.

The group performs in a variety of styles but specializes in the madrigal, a polyphonic and challenging musical composition popular during the Renaissance when singers and guests would gather around the banquet table to sight-sing and make music together. This is the inspiration for the group's unique style of performance, which is to sing seated in a semi-circle without a conductor. We are all very much looking forward to their rendition of the madrigal later this evening.

The Madrigal Singers first won critical recognition at the First Choruses of the World Festival held at the Lincoln Center in New York in 1969. Their performance brought them into the international limelight, and launched the beginning of an illustrious musical career.

Over the years, the Madrigal Singers has won top prizes at the most distinguished choral competitions. In June 1997, they received the grand prize at the European Grand Prix for Choral Singing in Tours, France. Ten years later, at the 2007 European Grand Prix in Arezzo, Italy, the Philippine Madrigal Singers triumphed again, becoming the only choir to win the grand prize twice in the competition's entire history. On both occasions, they bested the prize winners of the most prestigious choral contests in Europe.

We are therefore deeply honoured that the Philippine Madrigal Singers has accepted to become UNESCO Artists for Peace.

In this capacity, the group will contribute to UNESCO's efforts to promote cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace, with a special focus on South East Asia.

As you may know, the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2010 the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. UNESCO, which since its foundation has been working to foster dialogue in the service of peace, has been invited to play a lead role in preparing the celebrations of this Year. I very much hope that the Philippine Madrigal Singers will join us in this endeavour, helping to advance throughout the world the values of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding.

As UNESCO Artists for Peace, the Philippine Madrigal Singers will join other distinguished artists – such as the Japanese composer Missa Johnouchi, the Brazilian singer Gilberto Gil, and the Lebanese musician Marcel Khalifé, as well as many other well-known personalities – all of whom have put their fame and influence at the service of UNESCO's ideals.

It is now my great pleasure to designate the Philippine Madrigal Singers as UNESCO Artists for Peace and to present Mr Mark Anthony Carpio with the diploma.

I wish you every success in your new mission and thank you for having joined forces with UNESCO.

[Reading of diploma]

Thank you for your attention.