



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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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,  
at the cultural performance held on occasion of the unveiling  
of the bronze statue of Sri Aurobindo, India**

**UNESCO, 16 september 2009**

Mr Secretary of Education of the Government of India,  
Dr Vatsayan, Member of the Executive Board,  
Dr Singh, Chairman of the Auroville Foundation,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to UNESCO for this special cultural performance.

Earlier this evening, some of you were present when I had the honour to unveil the statue of the great Indian philosopher and spiritualist, Sri Aurobindo.

He will forever be associated with the founding of Auroville, the unique international township founded in February 1968, as a place where people from different cultural, educational and political backgrounds could work together towards their common goal of unity through diversity. Last year, we celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a Round Table and cultural performance in this very room.

Dr Vatsyayan and other Members of the Executive Board have observed in recent days that the crises we are traversing at present are not only economic and financial, but moral, ethical, and spiritual. The teachings of Sri Aurobindo, and the model provided by Auroville, resonate particularly strongly as we search for long-term solutions to these crises.

UNESCO is pleased to host this evening's cultural performance, as it demonstrates our belief that human creativity underpins such strategies.

Since becoming Director-General of UNESCO in 1999, I have made it a priority to alert the international community to the significance of safeguarding the diversity of world's cultural expressions. Not only do they provide us with the sense of identity and continuity that underpins the life of all societies, they also enrich our lives.

UNESCO's involvement in this living heritage, and more specifically our belief in the arts as a source of harmony and fulfilment, is demonstrated by many of our programmes.

Yet, it is arguably through our normative action that UNESCO has made its greatest impact on the safeguarding of cultural diversity. UNESCO's worldwide advocacy in this area is based primarily on three legal instruments: the 1972 World Heritage Convention; the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; and last, but not least, the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

India promptly ratified, and continues to actively support, all three of these landmark international treaties.

In addition to the 27 sites inscribed on the prestigious World Heritage List, India proudly claims three Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity – Kutiyattam, Vedic Chanting, and the Ramlila, demonstrating the Government's commitment to protecting its vibrant living heritage.

India also played a pivotal role in the elaboration of the 2005 Convention, and remains one of the most fervent advocates of the vital importance of cultural goods and services as vehicles of identity, values and meaning.

In a few moments, we will have the opportunity to enjoy some cultural expressions rooted in India's rich heritage. Let me therefore close by reiterating my own, and UNESCO's, deep appreciation to the Indian Government and people for their ongoing support for our work, and wish you all a very pleasant evening.

Thank you.