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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,**

**on the occasion of the ceremony for the presentation of the 2010  
commemorative medal celebrating the recognition of  
Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam as “Father of the Nation”  
by the Republic of Mauritius**

**UNESCO, 21 September 2009**

Mr Prime Minister,  
Mr President of the General Conference,  
Mr Chair of the Executive Board,  
Madam Ambassador of Mauritius to UNESCO,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you once again to UNESCO Headquarters on the occasion of this ceremony, which affords me the great honour of presenting to you the 2010 commemorative medal, issued in celebration of the 110th anniversary of the birth of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

It is therefore my privilege, Mr Prime Minister, to present you with the first issues of this medal, in gold, silver and bronze.

As you know, commemorative medals at UNESCO celebrate the anniversaries of the births of eminent personalities who have marked the history of their country and humanity in general.

I therefore naturally agreed that UNESCO should join in this Mauritian initiative to honour Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, rightly regarded as “Father of the Nation”.

As you are aware, Mauritius is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its independence this year. Mr Ramgoolam played an exceptional role in that regard, fighting tirelessly for independence. Indeed, it was during his tenure as Prime Minister, from 1961 to 1982, that Mauritius won its independence in 1968.

A man of peace and dialogue, architect of a peaceful independence process, Mr Ramgoolam worked for the sustainable development of Mauritius through a humanistic focus on educational and cultural reform. This medal celebrates his memory and gives future generations an example to follow.

Mr Prime Minister,

It is with great satisfaction that I present you with this medal, as you yourself have promoted a model of good governance based on peace, dialogue and the harmonious development of the island, respectful of individuals, communities and socio-cultural environments.

Under your authority, Mauritius has become a leader in environmental management for small island States, particularly through the *Mauritius, Ile Durable* initiative, which has received my full support.

This continuity of goals and ideals, particularly in the fields of education for all and sustainable development does you credit. It guarantees the quality today of the close and productive links between Mauritius and UNESCO, symbolized by the Aide-Mémoire that we signed during your visit to Headquarters on 16 October 2008.

I should also like to welcome the publication of an outstanding document on cooperation between Mauritius and UNESCO, prepared at the initiative of Ms Thacoor-Sidaya, Ambassador of Mauritius to UNESCO, whose dynamism I salute. Copies of this document, which I have fully endorsed, are available in the room.

The publication of this document coincides opportunely with our Executive Board, when Member States examine how their cooperation with UNESCO has progressed. I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to one of your compatriots, Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Secretary of the Executive Board, whose work over the last five years at this post has been remarkable. Mr Parsuramen will be leaving us shortly to head our New Delhi Office.

Let me conclude by saying again what an honour it is for UNESCO to join in the production of this commemorative medal, which can be used by both UNESCO and the Mauritian authorities and will stand as a symbol of our common goals of peace and tolerance.

Thank you for your attention.