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**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,  
Director-General of UNESCO  
on the occasion  
of the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage  
"Fading Heritage - we can save it"**

**27 October 2009**

On World Day for Audiovisual Heritage 2009, I would like to reflect on the faded legacy of film, television and radio recordings that we may be transmitting to future generations. These media are the instruments that convey our ideas and creativity as well as being the very foundation of modern civilization. They take a variety of forms: moving or still images; oral or musical records and can exist on analogue or digital carriers.

These are the documents that have defined the 20th century, providing new means of cultural expression, and new methods of creating and accessing knowledge. They transcend linguistic and geographic borders, and they offer an immediacy in communication that has a high potential to reach all audiences. Accessible to all, our audiovisual heritage is an integral component of contemporary society.

Yet, the continued existence of this heritage is threatened and every day important losses are recorded. This may arise from ignorance, neglect, physical decay or deliberate destruction, but whatever the cause, one overriding fact holds true: all audiovisual heritage carriers are doomed. Only the rate at which they disappear can be arrested. Their deterioration is often not rapid, but rather a slow fade into nothingness. They can be saved before they reach this point of no return, but urgent measures must be taken. To this end, UNESCO, along with partners such as the Coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archive Associations (CCAAA), has taken a leading role in acting to protect and prolong the life expectancy of sound and moving images.

In 2005, UNESCO's General Conference proclaimed 27 October as the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage in order to raise public awareness of these documents as integral components of national identity and to spearhead efforts for their protection. Since then, this Day has been observed around the world, through activities that bring images and sounds to life, and thus prevent them from fading beyond recovery.

The complexities of safeguarding audiovisual heritage can be daunting given the need for extensive financial, technical, human and political solutions. However, not taking action is not an option since this will inevitably contribute to further losses of our heritage and an impoverishment of the global identity.

On World Day for Audiovisual Heritage 2009, let us commit to redoubling our efforts to preserve this unique and universal testimony of recent decades for future generations.

Koïchiro Matsuura