



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
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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
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

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 Ceremony of Inauguration
of the UNESCO Olympic Portrait Gallery**

UNESCO, 3 October 2009

Excellencies,

Dear participants of the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters to share with me in this auspicious event. As you may know, the UNESCO Olympic Gallery is organized in the framework of the 'Olympic Friendship Children and Youth Forum' initiative, a programme that associates young people with the Olympic spirit, and mobilizes the powerful attraction of the Olympic flame to bring the world's youth together in a spirit of dialogue and solidarity.

Allow me to begin by thanking the Sports Information Agency of the Russian Olympic Committee for taking the initiative to organize the Gallery and, more generally, for its support to UNESCO's action with and for youth.

My particular thanks are extended to Mr Sergey Prisekin, State Artist of the Russian Federation and member of the Russian Academy of Fine Arts, for his realistic portrait of me. This work truly reflects my engagement, as well as that of this Organization, to youth, sport and the Olympic values of peace and dialogue among civilizations. These are goals that we have striven to pursue over the ten years of my mandate as Director-General. I feel honoured that our efforts have been recognized in this very personal manner.

In receiving this portrait, I know I join a gallery of 'greats' in the world of the Olympic movement, including Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic

Committee; Patrick Hickey, President of the European Olympic Committee; Sergey Bubka, President of the Youth Olympic Games and UNESCO Champion for Sport; and Philip Craven, President of the International Paralympics Committee. To be placed with them in this manner is a personal privilege, but it is also a tangible recognition of what we, as an Organization, have achieved in partnership with the Olympic movement.

UNESCO strongly believes that sport has an important educational role to play, particularly among young people. Through sport, youth learn about sharing, cooperation and developing trust in others; they experience new ways of thinking and share knowledge about fundamental values, such as excellence and brotherhood. At the same time sport contributes to personal growth through skill appreciation and the development of new competencies that contribute to greater self esteem and confidence.

Sport is a powerful tool for strengthening social ties and networks, as well as promoting ideals of peace, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice. It is crucial, therefore, to continue raising awareness among the general public about the values of sport, excellence and brotherhood. No single event does this better than the Olympic events.

Indeed, those who were present at the Beijing Games or who followed them through TV, radio, internet, and other media would have experienced the positive energy of the event, the strong friendships that developed among people of different nations, the manifestations of goodwill and the common aspiration to excel in an atmosphere of respect for diversity and understanding between peoples.

The Beijing games were also the first to take place since the International Convention against Doping in Sport came into force on 11 December 2007. As of 8 September this year, 124 countries had ratified this Convention the launching of which would not have been possible without the active engagement of men such as Messieurs Rogge, Hickey and Bubka, as well as Sir Craven. I take this opportunity to reiterate my appreciation to them, the whole sporting movement and to UNESCO's Member States, who helped us reach this crucial goal.

Thanks to the Convention, the Beijing games enjoyed the sharpest fall in the number of abuses in a very long time thanks to the largest testing programme ever put in place during an Olympiad, involving 4770 controls.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As major international manifestations of peace and friendship, demonstrations of global achievements in the field of culture and sports, as well as vivid examples of dialogue of cultures and civilizations, international sport events such as the Olympic, Paralympics and Delphic Games can provide fruitful opportunities to promote youth-related issues, and notably youth participation and civic engagement.

Sports and the Olympic spirit are not just abstract notions. They are primarily embodied in real personalities who have found the inner force to develop their capacities and abilities to reach the best of themselves. Champions are not extraordinary people from birth. With will-power and continuous work, any of you can become a champion in life. This is what this UNESCO Olympic Portrait Gallery aims to highlight.

Thank you all for your attention and enjoy the exhibition.