



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
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,

on the occasion of the launch of the UNESCO World Report

"Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue"

UNESCO, 20 October 2009

Madam Director-General elect,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here with you today to launch the UNESCO World Report, *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, with the participation of Ms Bokova. Before the Assistant Director-General for Culture, Ms Françoise Rivière, presents this Report, I should like to touch on some features which make this an unprecedented achievement for UNESCO.

First, this Report is the result of intersectoral cooperation. Though it was placed under the supervision of the Assistant Director-General for Culture, it nevertheless required the input of all of the Organization's programme sectors, mobilized for the purposes of an intersectoral working group or as the College of ADGs, which, furthermore, was called upon as work progressed to contribute through its comments to the progress of the project.

I am very attached to the intersectoral nature of the UNESCO World Report. It proves that notwithstanding the segmentation of expertise within the Secretariat, exchange and synergies are possible, as many programme specialists shared the fruit of their long experience in the relevant fields with the team in charge of the World Report. One of the major conclusions of this Report, moreover, is that cultural diversity is a cross-cutting issue that concerns all of the programme sectors in our Organization, which is entirely devoted to fostering dialogue and unity in diversity.

This powerful message confirms the soundness of the views of the Executive Board, which requested, at its 161st session in 2001, that I replace the numerous

sectoral world reports by one intersectoral world report, which would guarantee a more intensive exchange and raise the profile of the Organization. The first UNESCO World Report, *Towards knowledge societies*, was published in 2005 for the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. Today, with this second World Report, we are converting the try.

Secondly, this Report is forward-looking. In fact, it endeavours to identify the main trends emerging on the scene of cultural diversity, which has undergone radical changes in recent years. These changes have resulted, in the course of my two terms of office, in the adoption of four new standard-setting instruments which will guide our action in this sector at the beginning of the 21st century.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the dawn of the new millennium, the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity sent a strong message about the enduring pertinence of UNESCO, in ambitiously confronting one of the foremost challenges of our times.

This was quickly followed by the adoption and entry into force – in chronological order – of three new conventions: the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

With these, UNESCO now has a comprehensive set of conventions for addressing all aspects of the world's cultural diversity. As I have said on many occasions, now that they are operational, we have to assist Member States – in particular developing Member States – to implement them and to elaborate tools that will facilitate the effective monitoring of their implementation.

UNESCO's perimeter of action with regard to cultural diversity has also changed. As strongly affirmed in the 2001 Universal Declaration, cultural diversity is not limited to tangible and intangible cultural heritage, but encompasses creativity and pluralism in all dimensions of our societies. In our increasingly open world, cultural diversity is the very springboard of creativity.

Of course, the corollary of cultural diversity is intercultural dialogue – the need to move beyond a focus on differences, which is too often based on ignorance and a cause of misunderstanding. Instead, we want to put the focus on cultural diversity

as a dynamic process, whereby cultures change, in a permanent state of openness to one another. That is, on the opportunities such change presents for sharing what we have in common. In this connection, I am confident that the report will make a powerful contribution to discussions during the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, 2010, for which UNESCO will play a leading role under the leadership of Ms Bokova. I am therefore very happy that she is here with us today.

My third point relates to the report's policy-orientation. It offers 10 recommendations, on which Member States were consulted in June and July of this year. Covering all UNESCO fields of competence, these recommendations provide the basis for further discussion by the Organization's governing bodies, because the ultimate value of the report lies in what happens next.

As we all know, the libraries of international organizations are collapsing under the weight of the number of world reports that purport to "take stock" of a given question, only to be forgotten once closed. While this World Report and its statistical annex features many phenomena, experiences and good practices that make up a valuable compendium of cultural diversity expressions today, its true ambition is not to provide definitive solutions to selected questions, but to open the way for new questioning, exploring new subjects and stimulating future research.

UNESCO is therefore counting on its Member States, its partners from civil society, and on the other agencies of the United Nations system, to give as much visibility as possible to this World Report, and to help us ensure that it serves as an impetus for renewed and dynamic international reflection.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since its creation over six decades ago, UNESCO has pursued the high road of mutual understanding and peace building.

The UNESCO World Report, *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, constitutes a new marker along that road, building on the work of the past decade. Today is the time to appropriate this valuable tool in our ongoing quest for a sustainable and harmonious tomorrow. I am therefore very pleased to commend it to you before the end of my mandate.

Thank you for your attention.