



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,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Discours de Mme Irina Bokova,
Directrice générale de l'UNESCO,
à l'occasion de la réunion de l'Equipe spéciale
des commissions nationales
sur le dialogue euro-arabe**

UNESCO, le 27 Janvier 2010

Mesdames et Messieurs les présidents et secrétaires généraux des commissions nationales de la région Europe et de la région des Etats arabes,
Mesdames et Messieurs les représentants d'organisations régionales et interrégionales et de fondations,
Chers collègues et amis,

Je me réjouis d'inaugurer ce matin avec vous cette réunion de l'Equipe spéciale sur le dialogue euro-arabe. Je tiens en particulier à saluer les efforts des deux Coordinateurs, les secrétaires généraux des commissions nationales de Slovénie et du Koweït, qui sont à l'origine de cette heureuse initiative.

Je saisis cette occasion pour adresser mes vœux de prompt rétablissement à Madame Hafner, Secrétaire générale de la Commission nationale slovène, qui n'a pu nous rejoindre aujourd'hui.

C'est ma première rencontre, en qualité de Directrice générale, avec un groupe de commissions nationales. Je me réjouis que ce premier contact s'inscrive sous le signe du dialogue entre les cultures, et participe ainsi à l'émergence du nouvel humanisme que j'appelle de mes vœux.

Je considère que les commissions nationales sont l'instrument par excellence de la promotion du dialogue et de la solidarité intellectuelle internationale. J'en ai la très ferme conviction. Uniques au sein du système des Nations Unies, elles constituent un des réseaux les plus larges et universels de l'Organisation. Elles sont une force qui compte dans la défense des valeurs de dignité, d'égalité et de respect mutuel auxquelles nous sommes attachés.

Comme je l'ai déclaré dans mon discours d'investiture, les commissions nationales méritent qu'on les reconnaisse, qu'on les soutienne sans réserve, et j'ai l'intention de resserrer nos liens avec elles. Je sais que le Groupe de coordination des commissions nationales, qui se réunira dans deux jours, se penchera sur les moyens de consolider notre coopération. J'espère que les propositions qu'il formulera nous ouvriront de nouvelles perspectives à cet égard.

Dear colleagues,

The purpose of today's meeting is highly relevant to UNESCO's mission. It is also timely in light of the current international context. Our world is more interconnected than ever, but it is fragile. We see daily occurrences of cultural, ethnic, racial and religious strife. More than 60 years after the founders of our Organization committed themselves to construct the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women, it is evident that we must envision new ways to promote mutual understanding, respect and tolerance between peoples and cultures. I am convinced that it is only through dialogue that we will succeed in this ambition.

The Euro-Arab Dialogue Project, launched almost a decade ago, embodies this ideal. Inspired by the recommendations of UNESCO's International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, National Commissions from both regions joined forces to promote "learning to live together". Over the years, through grassroots activities, you have built bridges of trust. You have deepened understanding and respect for cultural diversity between two regions with a long and rich history of cultural interdependence. As you know, UNESCO has been directly involved in promoting these ties, whether through World Heritage Sites from Baalbek to Cordoba, the translation of literary masterpieces, interreligious dialogue and initiatives with youth.

Alongside our long-standing partners such as ALECSO, ISESCO and the Council of Europe, we have given warm support to your project. Thanks to the commitment and active participation of many National Commissions from both regions, we are reaping the fruits of these activities today.

I am truly pleased that you are now committed to multiply exchanges between your two regions, through initiatives in education, the sciences, culture and communication.

Your ambition is in perfect resonance with the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, which I will be launching on 18 February. On this occasion, I will be convening the first meeting of a High Level Panel on Peace and Dialogue among Cultures bringing together people from all regions and walks of life to provide thoughtful guidance and creative initiative.

UNESCO will play a leading role in the celebration of this Year, drawing on our rich experience in the field of intercultural dialogue.

We will strive to achieve wide recognition of the equal dignity of all cultures, to promote mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation as foundations for peace.

Just last week in New York, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed UNESCO's leadership in this Year. During our conversation, he noted that tackling today's multiple challenges and conflicts calls for better cooperation and exchange among cultures, religions and beliefs. Let me take this opportunity to invite you to actively participate in the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. We will of course be working with the United Nations and other Intergovernmental Organizations, including the Alliance of Civilizations. But National Commissions are in a privileged position to relay our ideals and messages, to launch initiatives that bring cultures and people closer together. It should be a year of celebration among cultures, and advances for peace.

Be assured of UNESCO's full support for your activities. I look forward to hearing about the outcomes of your meeting today and trust you will agree on joint actions that will open a new chapter in intercultural cooperation between two regions that have contributed in such profound ways to shaping our world.

I hope you have a fruitful day and come up with fresh ideas and proposals for concrete actions.

Thank You