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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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**Address by Ms Irina Bokova
on the occasion of her installation
as Director-General
of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)**

18th Plenary meeting, Paris, 23 October 2009

Mr President of the General Conference,
Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,
Mr Director-General, dear Koïchiro
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Heads of Delegation,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Today, as I stand before you who have entrusted to me the lofty office of Director-General of UNESCO, I solemnly undertake to devote my efforts to serving Member States and their peoples.

I shall be unswerving in my commitment, true to my ideas and faithful to my vision which meets the ideals of the Constitution of UNESCO. This moment will be forever engraved in my memory.

I am proud to be the first woman at the helm of UNESCO. Successor to nine outstanding leaders, I take my place as the tenth person elected to this lineage. I am resolutely determined to discharge the great responsibilities that have been assigned to me. I shall lead our noble institution with lucidity.

My accession to this high office also sends a message of confidence to all women throughout the world. It is an indication that they must have access to knowledge and power in order to contribute to society and take part in the conduct of world affairs.

I am also very proud to be the first representative of Eastern Europe at the head of UNESCO. Only 20 years ago, the fall of the Berlin Wall was a historic event that was highly symbolic of world peace and democracy. It marked a new beginning in history, the beginning of global aspiration not only in Eastern Europe, but throughout the world, for democracy, prosperity and a better way of life. A new chapter had begun. It was the end of a long era of conflict. Europe was reunited around the values of freedom, human rights and pluralism. The entire world rallied round those fundamental values.

East, West, North and South: I shall strive to build countless bridges between these parts of the world, all involved in globalization. Indeed, we must be ever on our guard for while globalization brings freedom and has helped millions of people to break free from poverty and absolute poverty, it also bears the inherent danger of imposing uniformity on our world of diversity.

I now turn toward my predecessor, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, to whom I wish to pay glowing tribute, joining all those who, at yesterday's magnificent ceremony, expressed their gratitude to him. Mr Matsuura, dear Koïchiro, you invested your energies most remarkably in many endeavours, particularly those major undertakings that will stand as your most important accomplishments: you scored a great success in conducting the reform of UNESCO by decentralizing the Organization and bringing it closer to countries. You also understood that UNESCO should find its rightful place within the United Nations system, and by retrieving that position you have set the Organization on the right track. I congratulate you most sincerely on that achievement and I shall continue your action in these fields.

Moreover, dear Koïchiro, you felt the need, the urgency even, to provide UNESCO with an extremely solid normative platform. Here too, your commitment has been fruitful. You understood the urgent need to stand by Africa in its progress towards a better world, and I commit myself to pursue your mission. UNESCO will invest more and more in this venture. You also raised the number of UNESCO Member States to 193 so that ours is the most universally representative Organization in the United Nations system. Finally, you threw all your energies into ensuring the recognition of cultural diversity and the intangible heritage, which binds us, you and me and both of our countries, Japan and Bulgaria, equally aware of this irreplaceable dimension.

Dear friend, dear Koïchiro, I express my deep gratitude and that of the entire UNESCO family for all that you have accomplished. I am sure that you will continue to draw on your unique experience and on your sense of dedication to serve the causes of UNESCO and humanity.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I was born in Bulgaria where the mountains, the valleys and the peoples have shaped geographical and human landscapes of a deep richness and great variety. I belong to the post-war generation. It is also the generation that founded UNESCO. I belong to the generation that lived in a divided Europe. It is also the generation that learned lessons from the past and had the historic opportunity to reunite Europe. This is a source of pride for me. Indeed, after working to secure my country's accession to the Council of Europe, the oldest European institution, I took part, as a Member of Parliament, in drafting Bulgaria's new democratic Constitution. Then, as the first Secretary of State for European Affairs, I established the framework for relations between my country and the European Union. Much earlier, as a young diplomat at the United Nations in New York, I understood what multilateralism meant. Later, I travelled the world in my capacity as Deputy Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, I must admit very sincerely that it is here, at UNESCO, where I have found something that is unique and exceptional. It is the will to listen: being attentive to others, sharing and respecting diversity.

Many of you discovered my country when the 23rd session of the General Conference of UNESCO was held in Sofia, in 1985 – the last held away from Headquarters. To the younger people, I would say that Bulgaria, founded in the seventh century, is one of the oldest countries of Europe. During this long history, Bulgaria's influence in culture and the arts extended over the European countries. Obviously, we have long been marked with the seal of Europe! My country has always been naturally at the crossroads of East and West, North and South. It has often been said, metaphorically, to be the geographical and spiritual bridge that the ancient civilization crossed on the way to Europe. Bulgaria has inherited the cultural and historical heritage of many and great cultures, namely that of ancient Thracian, the Slavs, who have bequeathed a message of unique power, that of ancient Greece, of Rome, of Islam and of the Ancient Bulgarians whose roots have left a deep mark on the country's millennia-old history. The elements which remain from those cultures have been preserved to this day.

Our intangible heritage is very much alive, conveying in songs, celebrations, dances and stories the source of our Bulgarian identity. Thus, the Nestinari still perform their ritual dance on glowing embers, a dance which originated in an ancient Thracian rite in honour of the Goddess Mother and her son, the Sun God. This dance was recently included in the Representative List of Masterpieces of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

It was in Bulgaria, too, that a new alphabet was devised in the ninth century, which gave the Slavs their writing. The gems of Slav literature have sparkled through 30 golden letters. This is our contribution to world civilization.

The President of Bulgaria, Mr Gueorgui Parvanov, at the opening of the second extraordinary session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in Sofia in February 2008, stated, and I quote: "Any person or society that cannot express themselves in front of others would be like the occupants of a mirrorless house – they could not see their own reflection or know themselves. Yet, without knowing oneself, it is impossible to open up to others and enter into enriching dialogue with others. For this reason, our house must not only have mirrors, but also windows wide open onto the outside world, other traditions and cultures".

My very dear friends, my family comes from a small town in the South-West of Bulgaria, where 80% of the population is Muslim. I know what it means to live in a multicultural, multireligious and multi-ethnic community. I know what respect and tolerance are. Yes, I know what respect for the

other means. In the cities of Bulgaria, such as Sofia and Plovdiv, which are among the most multicultural cities of South-East Europe, it is natural to see an Orthodox church, a mosque, a synagogue and a Catholic church side by side, merely a few dozens of metres apart. I have experienced such an open and peaceful climate, such respect among beliefs, from childhood.

For these reasons I stand against the theory of the clash of civilizations. I reject it completely. I wish to state clearly, from the outset, what I understand by civilization and what I understand by culture. To my mind, the concept of civilization is embedded in the very principle of human community. The same sap flows through the trunk and the branches of the tree of humanity. Cultures, for their part, are the countless forms of expression that our civilization can take: all cultures flow into the same river, that of human civilization. The theory of the purity of cultures is an illusion. In the long thread of history, cultures have always mingled, enriched and influenced each other. There are no fault lines between cultures, all ready to trigger shocks and conflicts. An affirmation to the contrary is tantamount to imputing ulterior motives to humanity. I, in full agreement with UNESCO's position, refute that theory. My vision is quite different because I believe that we are naturally bound by our status as human beings, that we all have the same dreams of happiness and prosperity and that we know full well that such dreams can come true only if there is peace. I should add, as stressed by President Obama at the University of Cairo last June:

*"It's easier to start wars than to end them.
It's easier to blame others than to look inward;
to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share."*

The commitment to peace is built day after day in the minds of people. It is built through exchange and dialogue. I believe deep down that dialogue among cultures is the most appropriate response to the so-called "clash of civilizations". I shall go even further by saying that I believe in the power of dialogue – dialogue with civil societies, dialogue among cultures, and dialogue through and with the media. There will never be enough dialogue to build peace, and here at UNESCO, we are in the house of dialogue.

However, we are also in the house of all cultures. Culture is, possibly, the most visible part of our Organization. The great international campaigns for the protection of monumental heritage have done much to spread UNESCO's action far and wide: Borobudur, Angkor, Abu Simbel and Machu Picchu

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Over time, our cultures have constantly enriched each other through borrowings, transfers and exchanges. Cultures reach over barriers and across oceans. They all, together, give our world its sparkle. Cultures are internally driven and at the same time beat to a constantly changing planetary rhythm.

In the words of Julia Kristeva, the great French intellectual of Bulgarian extraction, "if the globalized world does not want to be reduced to a uniform and absolute universal, it must cultivate cultural diversities that must respond to and respect each other".

We know that such cultural diversity is what makes us rich. It is also our future, a powerful vector of communication between peoples that makes dialogue possible when there is no other solution, and the pillar, on which the preservation of our heritage rests, whether it be tangible and intangible heritage, languages, the preservation of nature and development.

For these reasons, I propose the establishment of a High-level Panel on peace and dialogue among cultures. I shall invite eminent persons from the intellectual world to join UNESCO in furthering the debate on culture, tolerance, reconciliation and balance in our own societies and

throughout the world. Pluralism is a prerequisite for mutual understanding, and peoples must display solidarity in this vast world. UNESCO has been named leader in the United Nations system for the 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. I shall use this leadership to establish multiple partnerships with UNESCO, including initiatives such as the Alliance of Civilizations. I commit myself to personally establish contacts at the highest level with other organizations in the international community that share our values, such as the International Organization of La Francophonie, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and other institutions, in order to secure their support for UNESCO's project on peace and dialogue among cultures.

Many threads have been woven together between culture, education, development and science. Together they form a close-knit fabric and it is sometimes difficult to know which thread should be used to begin new projects. It is a known fact that development is a holistic process in which culture is a major component, and I am very sorry that culture is not included among the Millennium Development Goals. I certainly do intend to rekindle the debate on the very close links between culture and development.

UNESCO will base its action even more on the solid normative platform that it has developed. Our role now is to translate the Conventions and Declarations pragmatically into effective action and to achieve universalism, which is the very embodiment of "unity in diversity".

Cultural diversity and dialogue among cultures contribute to the emergence of a new humanism in which the global and local are reconciled and through which we learn anew to build our world.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The year 2009 has been marked by challenges that have affected humanity in an unprecedented manner. The crisis is worldwide in the economic, financial, social and environmental fields and also in the moral and ethical spheres, threatening the achievement of the most important multilateral agenda in existence today: the Millennium Development Goals. Urgent action is needed. Moreover, the most vulnerable countries – African States and Small Island Developing States – have been the hardest hit by the crisis. We do not all face the crisis on equal footing. Throughout the world, the standard of living of disadvantaged people grows worse in times of crisis. We cannot ignore suffering, in any form, whether in our immediate surroundings or far away. We cannot obliterate the suffering of a humanity to which we all belong. When the crisis ends, we shall not accept a return to the *statu quo ante*. Nor do we stand on an equal footing as we face climate change. Here too, the poorest population groups are in the front line, faced with rising sea levels, desertification and diminishing water resources.

In that connection, I should like to read a very beautiful sentence from Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio's Nobel Lecture last year:

"So that in this third millennium, which has only just begun, no child on our shared planet, regardless of gender or language or religion, shall be abandoned to hunger or ignorance, or turned away from the feast. This child carries within him the future of our human race. In the words of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, a very long time ago, the kingdom belongs to a child."

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am convinced of the need for global governance, founded on universal ethics, in order to take up these common challenges.

Images of gigantic cranes lifting the temples of Abu Simbel have marked our memories for ever. What cranes can we use today to eradicate absolute poverty, illiteracy, hunger and thirst?

I propose a new, universal vision, open to the entire human community and embracing each and every continent. I have dubbed this vision a “new humanism”. An accomplished person today is one who acknowledges co-existence and equality with others – even those far away and seeks a *modus vivendi* with others. Modern society and current events will take humanism further. World citizens will henceforth care for and respect the Other, they will admit that they may not make decisions alone, and will seek agreement and consensus.

I think that humanism is an aspiration to peace, democracy, justice and human rights; it is an aspiration to tolerance, knowledge and the diversity of cultures. It is rooted in ethics and in social and economic responsibility; it is embodied in assistance for the most vulnerable. Humanism is central to our commitment to take up major common challenges, including respect for the environment.

Respect for fundamental rights, for the dignity of every individual and for diversity, thus a humanity that is mutually supportive and responsible – this is my message. It is also the message of UNESCO, whose role it is to give fresh impetus to solidarity, to bring people together and awaken their conscience.

As an intellectual organization, UNESCO – the “conscience of humanity” in the powerful words of Jawaharlal Nehru, a great citizen of the world – must take the lead in humanist thinking in the international community. These ideas appear at the heart of its Constitution, in its preamble, which states the following:

“A peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world ... the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.”

In regard to the spirit of its mission, UNESCO is in the vanguard of peace. In a climate of trust, it takes action upstream: before misunderstandings arise, before the outburst of conflicts and intolerance, when it is still possible to change things and establish bearings.

UNESCO holds all of the keys to providing an intellectual and humanist response to globalization and the current crisis. We know that culture, art, science, education, communication and knowledge are the true values upon which the essence of humanity rests.

More than 2,000 years ago, the great Chinese historiographer Sima Qian wrote:

“When the year turns cold, pines and cypresses reveal their persistent green.”

In today’s crisis, such green pines and cypresses are solidarity, tolerance and respect for diversity – the values of UNESCO.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The crisis is compelling us to reposition UNESCO around its mission and mandate.

It is indeed showing that, more than ever, UNESCO’s ideals form the bedrock of social progress and sustainable human development.

In these circumstances, and in order to advance our ideals, we should reach out to those opinion leaders and decision-makers, in all sectors of activity, at the international, regional and national levels, that are shaping our global economy.

This can be done by giving greater attention to our visibility; by actively engaging and partnering with the media on topics that show how UNESCO can, and is helping countries find concrete solutions to their development challenges by investing in education, the sciences, culture, information and communication.

We must leverage emerging information and communication technologies and networks to get our messages out, more forcefully, to a broader and more diverse public.

As a result, I am convinced that our Organization will be stronger and its actions more effective. This is necessary if we want to bring about the paradigm shift that UNESCO has been calling for with all its might.

Our mandate is so far-reaching, however, we cannot act alone.

It is inconceivable that at a time when the governance of our world is being revisited the tasks entrusted to us in the Constitution will not be given their rightful place in the global framework, including in the context of the G8 and the G20.

UNESCO's sphere of influence and powers of persuasion have to expand.

This can be done if we reach out to, and mobilize, networks and communities of practice with whom we establish innovative alliances. These could be Mayors; gender activists; youth groups and federations; the music, film and communication industries; the media; the wide world of Arts; science and scientific associations and industry.

I will actively seek to forge such strategic alliances and partnerships with groups such as these from the public and private sectors, as well as with international and intergovernmental institutions that can enhance UNESCO's response to the challenges facing humanity.

The relevance of networking, sharing of experiences and best practices is a critical feature of international intellectual, scientific and cultural cooperation.

Good examples of such partnerships are the ones established with L'ORÉAL and Globo, to whom I express my full commitment.

And of course, UNESCO's National Commissions, as one of our most faithful allies, also deserve our full support and recognition for their remarkable work. No other United Nations institution has this type of mechanism. It is unique to our Organization and anchors us at the national level.

I therefore intend to reinforce our ties with the National Commissions that, I believe, are particularly well placed to ensure that UNESCO's values and role within the United Nations family, are better understood, visible, taken advantage of, and ultimately supported.

The same should be said about the dynamic NGO communities with whom we collaborate to advance our agendas in all of our fields of competence.

Civil society groups, at the international and now increasingly at the national levels, are our key partners, defending UNESCO's ideals and raising our profile.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I profoundly believe in the "power of words and ideas", and the ability of ideas to move nations. However, to be effective in our advocacy we must be confident that we deliver on our promises.

We have to inspire the trust, and demonstrate that we deliver quality programmes that lead to meaningful and visible transformations.

This requires that we continue concentrating and focusing our actions on our key strategic priorities, while never losing sight of the core responsibilities that define us.

UNESCO must be intellectually ambitious, strategic in its choices, forward-looking in its thinking and for ever driven by the idea that there are clear benefits in international cooperation.

Under my leadership, the Secretariat will serve UNESCO's Member States with these guiding principles in mind.

Furthermore, I am firmly convinced that UNESCO has two overarching and intersecting priorities that deserve our undivided attention: Gender Equality and Africa.

The question is: What should we do to operationalize this commitment?

The compounded effects of the multiple crises are jeopardizing decades of hard won development gains in Africa and in terms of gender equality. Our commitment to these two priorities must therefore urgently translate into qualitative gains.

I want to see our energies and resources concentrate on two key missions.

First, given UNESCO's mandate and ethical authority, I expect our Organization to mobilize public opinion on these issues and raise public accountability for development results. This is fundamental to steer national policy and budget planning processes that, down the line, determine who benefits from public spending.

Second, I intend to ensure that UNESCO re-focuses its existing programmes on the specific issues that can positively impact on gender equality and Africa, notably small island developing States (SIDS).

Finally, I will make sure we advance these causes by mobilizing the full range of UNESCO's know-how, convening power, networks and partnerships, at the international, regional and national levels.

I am deeply committed to ensuring that Africa is effectively treated as a global priority for the Organization.

I therefore look forward to continued collaborations with the African Union as well as other regional organizations, mechanisms and initiatives, including the regional and global financial institutions.

We must strengthen our initiatives in this region, notably those supporting teachers, quality education and universal access to HIV/AIDS education.

In all regions, and especially in sub-Saharan Africa, education and lifelong learning are essential to equip learners with the necessary skills to overcome poverty, to build knowledge-based societies and to foster sustainable development and lifestyles.

Today, especially in the wake of the crisis, we need a stronger emphasis on knowledge-based investments in Africa, but also in the other regions, linking education even more to the world of work, in particular through teacher training and professional development, technical and vocational education and training, and higher education, as well as science education, research, technology, innovation and science policies.

On all these matters, I will make sure that we achieve tangible results.

We must also make it understood that gender equality concerns and affects us all.

Gender inequality is an obstacle to the achievement of all the internationally agreed development goals, as well as peace. It stifles economic growth, threatens public health and disempowers nations. Ensuring women's full and equal participation in development and in peace-building processes, at all levels, is a sure way of building stable and open societies, and ensuring sustainable development.

More needs to be done, more systematically, and with greater persistence; in the area of education in particular that is, without contest, the key to the achievement of several development goals.

UNESCO could launch an international campaign for increased budget allocations to programming for secondary education for girls in all regions, and in sub-Saharan Africa, southern Asia and Oceania, a campaign for tertiary education.

It seems unthinkable to me that in our day and age, two thirds of the 774 million illiterates are women. What have we done wrong? Why are we not seeing the same levels of progress in literacy and adult education that we are now seeing in primary education? UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) will have to more squarely look into this.

I will spread this message wherever I go because without clear and strong leadership on gender equality, change is not possible.

I also plan to seek advice from an international women's support group to devise promising gender equality initiatives that resonate globally.

Our sectoral work is our daily obligation, if not our mainstay, to meet these objectives. However, we must also recognize that our world has become much more complex and multidimensional requiring a new type of multilateral and multisectoral response. One sector alone is unlikely to be able to resolve the panoply of challenges confronting us daily.

I will launch a climate change initiative to bring to bear the full range of UNESCO's expertise in order to help all nations confront the challenges of climate change: climate science, the contribution of biosphere reserves, education for sustainable development, the social and ethical dimensions of climate change, support for disaster risk reduction, and the effective and ethical use of science, research, technology and innovation for adaptation, with a view to building sustainable societies.

Factors such as the gendered division of labour, access and control of natural resources, knowledge and skills and participation in decision- and policy-making, expose women and men to different risks and opportunities. These dimensions of climate change that are only starting to be taken into account in climate research will be considered to ensure quality policy responses.

The visibility and impact flowing from this initiative will, I have no doubt, establish UNESCO as a formidable player on the international scene.

Ladies and gentlemen,

UNESCO is the uncontested leader in the promotion of quality education for all, once again commended by this session of the General Conference.

I am determined to ensure that UNESCO retains this leadership.

Although not all countries will reach the EFA Goals by 2015, UNESCO has done a great deal to support Member States' efforts in education.

UNESCO developed three core initiatives – the Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TISSA), the HIV/AIDS Education Initiative (EDUCAIDS) and the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) – as well as the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD),

the United Nations Decade for Literacy (UNLD) and the new strategy for technical, vocational education and training (TVET).

All is in place.

UNESCO must now develop and forcefully advocate a more coherent and holistic vision of education; a vision that integrates the many dimensions of quality education, in both formal and non-formal settings, from primary to higher levels, throughout life, including technical vocational education and training, as well as the other initiatives it has developed.

UNESCO must in tandem accompany Member States in their efforts to achieve the EFA Goals and targets, building on South-South and North-South-South cooperation and the fruitful exchange of good practices among countries. This includes monitoring progress towards the achievement of the EFA Goals and building national capacities to do so.

I will unremittingly advocate increased funding for education, together with Member States whose responsibility it is to support education.

With equal resolve, and at the highest levels of government and global governance, I will advocate for an increase of the share of Official Development Assistance going to education.

This for me is a *sine qua non* in order to ensure the predictable and timely flow of adequate resources to education in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions and the promises made in the context of the G8 and G20.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am fully committed to science. I am convinced that UNESCO should become a lead agency in science, as it is in education. I intend to establish a High-level Scientific Panel under my authority, composed of eminent persons such as Nobel laureates and winners of other scientific prizes, to reflect on UNESCO's role in today's major scientific issues.

As the environmentalist Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize has said: "there can be no peace without equitable development; and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space."

In taking this holistic approach, UNESCO must help Member States even more to strengthen national science, technology and innovation policies. It must help them integrate more effectively into the development process new scientific findings and innovation that are sources of progress, and to harness them to serve humanity. UNESCO must also promote science education and ensure that science is included in school curricula. Lastly, it must help developing countries to build capacity in the field of science. I shall see to it that priority is given to States hit hardest by the crisis, in particular those in Africa and Small Island Development States (SIDS).

Science is the solution to the many challenges that UNESCO must take up urgently, namely biodiversity, climate change, disaster mitigation, natural resource management, water management, sustainable development and pandemics. To those ends, we must base our action, *inter alia*, on the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, as these sites are both models of sustainable development and can be used to monitor the effects of climate change. Our goal is to protect the Earth and ensure that in years to come we can still listen to and fully understand these lines by Gabriela Mistral:

*"Indian boy, if you are tired,
Lay down on the Earth,
And when you are happy,
My son, play with her ...*

*Wondrous things are heard
Through Earth's Indian drum:
One hears the fire that leaps and falls
Searching for the sky, never to be soothed.
Round and round, the rivers sound
In countless cascades."*

UNESCO is the ideal forum where we can shape the policy-research nexus that helps to define policy options. We can facilitate the translation of scientific knowledge into sustainable policies that can assist Member States in their fight against poverty.

We also have a key role to play in addressing from an ethical and normative perspective the multiple crises which are rooted in a moral crisis of a systemic nature.

Ladies and gentlemen,

UNESCO should hence be more involved in the ethical, legal and socio-cultural implications of the information society, emphasizing the opportunities which the information and communication technologies provide for each and every individual.

Freedom of expression, independent and pluralistic media, free flow of ideas, universal access to quality content, information and knowledge through new technologies, are also essential for ensuring transparency, accountability and good governance.

As the drivers of knowledge-based societies, ICTs cut across all of UNESCO's fields of activity, providing unlimited opportunities to bridge the digital divide.

This brings me to my next point: UNESCO's engagement in the United Nations reform process.

UNESCO's contribution to the United Nations reform process will be a priority for me.

There is no alternative to forging a unified system, especially at the field level.

Together we will make a difference in supporting Member States to attain their development priorities and the internationally agreed development goals.

Together the United Nations system is more than its parts, especially when specialized agencies can play their full role. Alone, or even worse, fragmented, the United Nations system will face marginalization.

UNESCO has over the past years benefited from its insertion in the "Delivering as One" approach, both in substantive and financial terms.

Our sister organizations – and above all, Member States – have acknowledged the lead role of UNESCO in key domains.

I intend to build on the accomplishments thus far – globally through the Chief Executives Board under the leadership of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon – and at the country level through our field offices who, as members of United Nations country teams, are at the frontline of the Organization's efforts in order to bring all our competencies to bear for the benefit of Member States.

I will be particularly persistent in advocating the critical role not only of education, but also of the sciences, culture and communication and information in the pursuit of sustainable development in aiding countries to invest out of the current crises, and in creating knowledge-based societies and above all in building and fortifying peace in all its dimensions.

When UNESCO speaks, it must speak as one UNESCO covering ALL our competences. This is our vocation. Our mandate is as indivisible as peace.

I intend to broaden our contacts in the United Nations system at large by engaging constructively the heads of the international financial institutions, the World Trade Organization and the regional development banks and other multilateral development banks.

My objective will be to strengthen programmatic coherence of action beyond the traditional United Nations development system, creating new partnerships and alliances, and exploring possibilities for mobilizing resources, in an innovative way, at a larger scale for UNESCO's strategic priorities.

The foundation of our country-level action and our contribution to a performing United Nations will be our decentralization.

Based on the resolution of the General Conference at the present session, I will strive to put in place an affordable, effective and high-quality system, which ensures an equitable regional coverage, the availability of high-quality advice and support in all our domains, in full respect of national priorities.

While building on our significant accomplishments and impact over the past decade, we will be entering a new phase.

The prime challenge from now on will be to move from a quantitative to a qualitative strengthening of decentralization in terms of staff and programme resources, making full use of our capacities and aligning them with the programme priorities of UNESCO, which you, the Member States, have so clearly defined in the Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (C/4) and Programme and Budget for 2010-2011 (C/5) documents, which are central in determining the objectives of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and other common country programming documents.

All of this is possible, if we advance in complete synergy, the governing bodies and the Secretariat. I will therefore be counting on you, the Member States, for your guidance and support throughout this process.

It is for this reason that I will launch, as soon as possible, a dialogue with Member States on the challenges, tasks and benefits of the "Delivering as One" approach for UNESCO.

On the basis of this shared understanding, I am confident that we can position UNESCO as a leader in its fields of competence.

With good ideas and solid programmes we can make great strides.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The final ingredient to ensure that our best intentions are translated into credible results is the good management of programmes, budgets and staff.

My main concern, in this respect, is rather straightforward: our management system must support and facilitate programme delivery.

UNESCO's budget is modest compared with our ambitions and so we must be realistic in times of crisis. UNESCO can make a difference by being more reactive and efficient in its use of available resources, both extrabudgetary and under the regular programme.

This requires a greater emphasis on rapid and strategically oriented programme monitoring systems that guarantee that we remain on target.

I also wish to see high-quality evaluations that support programme management decisions and proper accountability mechanisms.

I am committed to working closely with the External Auditor who has rendered so many good services to the Organization in all transparency.

This will be necessary as we prepare for the House-wide evaluation that I reckon will help us to improve our processes and working methods.

To improve our performance, I intend quickly to establish an internal and time-bound Task Force that will review and simplify our bureaucratic procedures.

We also need more flexible administrative structures to manage our intersectoral programmes and projects that are destined to be increasingly in demand. This will be done as part of a comprehensive effort to optimize our administrative structures.

Of course, this will also be done within the framework of our decentralization plans that deserve to be reinforced and implemented in accordance with the resolution adopted at this session of the General Conference.

Our active presence at the country level is crucial at this stage and therefore demands that we adjust our working methods and possibly structures.

As the United Nations reform moves forward with its ambition to “Deliver as One”, we too must adapt to function as “One UNESCO”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am thoroughly convinced that our high performance and ultimately our credibility will depend on our finely tuned ability to analyse, assess, develop strategies and respond to Member States' needs in a timely manner.

We are expected, as the intellectual arm of the United Nations, to provide evidence-based advisory services and technical assistance based on our experience and international good practices.

Having a diverse staff of women and men with knowledge spanning a broad range of fields will be of the utmost importance in this respect. At the same time, core ethical and professional values and principles will need to be maintained and strengthened to protect the principles of the international civil service. This should apply to all levels of the staff.

In brief, my future activities will be guided by the following principles:

- transparency, accountability and a result-based approach;
- improved intersectoral coordination and interdisciplinarity;
- better management of human resources, staff mobility and rotation, encouragement of the spirit of initiative;
- promotion of women to senior posts;
- more equitable geographical distribution of Secretariat staff, experts and consultants.

On this last note, allow me to reiterate my enthusiasm at the prospect of leading the Secretariat of this noble Organization so that it serves our Member States.

I firmly believe that, united behind UNESCO's Constitution, and the shared vision that I have in these last few minutes sought to outline, we are setting the stage for success.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I now turn to the Ambassadors and Permanent Delegates of UNESCO Member States to assure you, my very dear friends, that in my new functions, I shall always be with you. I would even say “more than ever”. Together we will look for the most equitable ways and means of contributing to the improvement of life in our countries.

I also wish to thank France, our host country, for its unfailingly renewed support. The spirit of freedom and of human rights for which France stands continues to inspire UNESCO.

I now turn to the guests of honour. Your presence here today denotes great friendship, and I call on you to take the lead in supporting UNESCO’s messages and activities.

Lastly I turn to my closest friends and family, and to my husband who is here. Your faithfulness has constantly supported, encouraged and moved me in a manner than words cannot express.

My very dear friends, I close this address with verses by Rûmî, the great poet, that visionary who has given a message of tolerance and peace to the world. I specifically chose this quatrain because it speaks of a new beginning:

*“It’s good to leave each day behind,
Like flowing water, free of sadness.
Yesterday is gone and its tale told.
Today new seeds are growing.”*

Thank you.