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Organización
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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 ceremony for the award of the
Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to
Mr Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva,
President of the Federative Republic of Brazil**

UNESCO, 7 July 2009

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished First Ladies,
President Abdou Diouf, Sponsor of the Prize,
President Henri Konan Bédié, Patron of the Prize,
President and Members of the Jury,
President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, winner of the Prize,
President of the General Conference,
Chair of the Executive Board,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters, on the occasion of the presentation of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to Mr Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr President, I would like to take the opportunity of this, your second visit to UNESCO Headquarters, to tell you how happy and honoured we are to welcome you once to this House, which is now yours.

Allow me here to extend my warmest greetings to Mr Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal. President Wade received the Houphouët-Boigny Prize in 2005 for his contribution to democracy in Senegal and his mediation in political crises in Africa. On that occasion, I paid tribute to his untiring search for a regional dialogue that could ensure peace, security and development. His presence today is a great honour for our Organization.

I also wish to greet and thank the members of the Jury, headed by President Mário Soares, in the absence of Dr Kissinger, who regrets being unable to join us today.

Lastly, I am delighted to welcome and thank President Abdou Diouf, Secretary-General of the International Organization of the Francophonie, Sponsor of the Prize, and President Henri Konan Bédié, Patron of the Prize, who honour each year by their presence the ceremony for the presentation of the Prize.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In this year which marks the 20th anniversary of the institution of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize, the Jury has awarded the 2008 Prize to Mr Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in recognition of his work in pursuit of peace and equal rights, and his initiatives to eradicate poverty in his country. No choice could better illustrate the philosophy of the Prize and the basic principles which guide UNESCO's action.

President Lula da Silva is taking his place among the peace-builders who have preceded him on this podium, and his name joins the prestigious list of prizewinners established over the past 20 years.

President Lula da Silva,

You have devoted your life to defending the interests of the poorest, initially through your trade union activities, then, after the foundation in 1978 of the Workers' Party, through political action. Your energy and your tenacity in defending the interests of workers and the most disadvantaged have earned you immense popularity.

Elected President of Brazil in 2002, then re-elected triumphantly in 2006, your personal venture is unique in the history of Brazil.

You have, in particular, made universal access to education and alleviating poverty your main areas of concern.

For example, you launched in April 2007 a very ambitious National Education Development Plan (PDE) and a National Programme on Public Security with Citizenship (PRONASCI), helping in particular to prevent violence among young people.

In this context, you have also enabled the introduction of social programmes for immediate assistance to be set up, such as the “Family Grant”, in order to help the poorest homes to keep their children at school.

Lastly, concerned with equality and equal opportunity, you have supported the introduction of quotas in universities which now enable young Afro-Brazilians to pursue their studies like all their fellow citizens. Fifteen million children from underprivileged classes have been able to benefit from the implementation of assistance schemes for school enrolment.

Brazil is now one of the leading emerging economies and plays an increasingly important role on the international scene. On questions as essential as international governance, the distribution of the gains of economic growth, the environment and global warming, you have been able to make a distinctive voice heard.

More than that, you have managed to place your ideals at the service of the emergence of a new multi-polar world, striving relentlessly to promote peace, dialogue and regional integration in South America.

For all these reasons, I am very pleased that the Jury has awarded you the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize.

Once again, I heartily congratulate you and I am delighted to see your name now associated with that of UNESCO.

I thank you for your attention.