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Organización
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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the Welcoming Ceremony of the 3rd Meeting of the
Scientific Advisory Board**

Kuala Lumpur, 26 May 2015

The Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Hj Muhyiddin Hj Mohd Yassin,

Professor Tan Sri Zakri Abdul Hamid, Science Advisor to the Prime Minister,
Member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the United Nations Secretary-General,

Ministers and Deputy Ministers, High Commissioners,

Excellencies,

Members of the Scientific Advisory Board,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply grateful to the Government of Malaysia for hosting the 3rd Meeting of
the Scientific Advisory Board of the United Nations Secretary General.

Let me express special thanks to Professor Zakri Abdul Hamid for his leadership
and to the *Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology* for its
support.

I believe this reflects the deep commitment of Malaysia to nurture science,
technology and innovation for more sustainable and inclusive development.

I see this embodied in the leadership of His Excellency Mr Najib Razak, Prime
Minister of Malaysia, and his *Science2Action Programme*, to transform the
country's science, technology and innovation landscape.

The three directions of *Science2Action* -- Science2Governance, Science2Industry and Science2Well-being – reflect the comprehensive approach needed to make the most of the power of the sciences.

One of the questions which the Scientific Advisory Board is addressing is that fundamental research is an essential source of new ideas that can have transformational impacts on humanity's future.

This raises the immediate question of the level of investment dedicated to research – I believe Malaysia has strong lessons to share here, given its leadership in setting high targets for national research and development spending.

Supporting the sciences for sustainable development stands at the heart of the partnership that exists between UNESCO and Malaysia.

This is embodied in the *International Centre for South-South Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation*, under the auspices of UNESCO and based here in Kuala Lumpur.

The same spirit guides our cooperation across the board – in protecting Malaysia's unique biodiversity through Biosphere Reserves, as well as in safeguarding this country's breath-taking cultural heritage and diversity.

Our partnership is wide and deep, and I thank the Government once again for its leadership.

We need this more than ever, in this year when Governments shape responses to climate change and a new global sustainable development agenda.

The sciences are the way to link together the economic, the environmental and the social dimensions of sustainability.

Humanity, I believe, has entered a new age of limits, and this calls on all societies to make far more of the boundless opportunities to be found in human creativity, to craft new solutions that are inclusive, just and sustainable.

This calls for stronger sciences – it calls for more connected sciences.

This calls for deeper collaboration across all fields and borders, to share in the creation and distribution of knowledge and innovation.

Science, technology and innovation holds answers to key questions societies must address — about promoting equitable and inclusive growth, about eradicating poverty, about bolstering energy, water and food security, about controlling disease, about mitigating disasters, about building sustainable cities.

The post-2015 agenda must help States tackle these big questions, together.

For this, the sciences are drivers and enablers, to craft new approaches that are inclusive, rights-based and founded on solid scientific ground.

This is the inspiration underpinning the Scientific Advisory Board.

Our guiding principle is clear.

The complexity of challenges facing the world today calls for a new unity among the sciences.

It calls for innovative approaches across disciplines.

It calls for stronger linkages between science and policy.

Our objective is to ensure, at the highest level, that decisions are informed, enabled and accompanied by the best available knowledge, and brought together in a holistic manner.

To these ends, the Scientific Advisory Board is actively contributing to debates and deliberations on the post-2015 agenda and, we hope, a possible and solid climate agreement.

The Scientific Advisory Board is looking into the emerging issue of climate-induced risks, such as the flood events which have affected this country recently.

Sustainable development can only be achieved if it brings benefits to the well-being of every woman and man, to every society.

The Scientific Advisory Board is exploring also how the data revolution can promote access to information, data and services for all, as well as the capacity needed in regions where ICT infrastructure is lacking.

Malaysia has a strong tradition of linking science with top decision-making, embodied in role of the Science Advisor to the Head of Government – to the Prime Minister.

In the same spirit, the Scientific Advisory Board is producing advice to strengthen the interaction between science and policy at multiple levels.

The Secretary-General has asked the Board to identify the top challenges for the future of humanity and the planet, requiring his attention and that of the United Nations – and I know this is attracting much interest.

In all this, we must seize the opportunity we have this year to demonstrate the centrality of science for sustainable development.

This is also about recognizing the contribution of all relevant knowledge, including indigenous and local knowledge.

All of this, Ladies and Gentlemen, resonates with the mandate of UNESCO. It is not by chance that the Secretary-General asked UNESCO to contribute and lead the discussions of the Scientific Advisory Board. This year we celebrate our 70th anniversary – and reaffirm the relevance of our mandate to harness the power of the sciences to eradicate poverty, to craft new approaches to inclusive development, to strengthen the defences of peace.

I am pleased the Scientific Advisory Board has this opportunity now to open its doors, to engage with prominent personalities present here today, eminent academics, the private sector, civil society, the media and the people of Malaysia.

On this occasion, I wish to thank once again every member of the Scientific Advisory Board for their commitment.

Most especially, I thank the Government – the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and all Ministers with us today – and the people of Malaysia for their leadership and support to UNESCO to advancing sustainable development and lasting peace across the region and the world.

Just two days ago, on Sunday, I was with the Deputy Prime Minister to celebrate Hari UNESCO Malaysia on the theme of *Togetherness*. It was a wonderful celebration of unity in diversity – cultural diversity, ethnic diversity, religious diversity – and a call to the world to unite around the notion of a single humanity.

In a world of tremendous opportunities and new openings, but also deep challenges, uniting around this sense of togetherness is a foundation for peace. How you use diversity as strength is a lesson to many societies. I thank Malaysia for sending this strong message to UNESCO and to the world.

Thank you.