

**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,  
to all staff on the subject of the UNESCO Oral Archives Initiative**

During this sixtieth anniversary year for UNESCO, the urgent need to build an institutional memory and to enhance awareness of the Organization's rich history has become evident. Our common history is our identity, and it is also an amazing source of inspiration. My predecessor, Jaime Torres-Bodet, said almost 60 years ago that archives are "the instructive traces of life"; a critical, historical reflection on these traces can help us cope with the challenges we are facing in today's world.

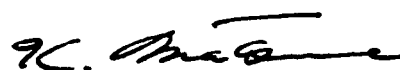
UNESCO was not created and developed by governments only; our Organization is also the result of the commitment, imagination and efforts of every one of you, of former staff members and of all the other men and women who have worked for the ideals of this Organization since its inception six decades ago.

I therefore take great pleasure in announcing the beginning of the UNESCO Oral Archives Initiative. This project aims at interviewing key players in UNESCO's history and other persons who have been involved in the life and functioning of our Organization, from 1946 to the present. A project document and a protocol for the interviews have been prepared; the first interviews will be carried out shortly.

I encourage you to volunteer to participate in this initiative, whose success depends on the active involvement of individual staff members. Different tasks and skills are required, such as interviewing, transcribing and other kinds of support activities. Interviews will normally be prepared and conducted by two persons: for example, an experienced staff member and a younger person. If you wish to be part of this activity, please contact Mr Jens Boel, whom I have designated as project coordinator: [j.boel@unesco.org](mailto:j.boel@unesco.org)

This initiative is an internal contribution to the UNESCO History Project, which I launched in 2004 in Circular Letter/3710. The first major activity of this project was the international symposium on UNESCO's history that took place at Headquarters on 16-18 November 2005.

I invite managers and supervisors to facilitate the participation of their staff in the UNESCO Oral Archives Initiative. These interviews will help us to achieve a better understanding of our past. Individuals do make a difference, and we will all be able to draw inspiration from this new archival collection of personal UNESCO accounts.



Koïchiro Matsuura