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Organización  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

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 Prize-giving Ceremony  
of the Emir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize  
for Research and Training in Special Needs Education  
for the Mentally Disabled**

**UNESCO, 4 December 2006**

Your Royal Highness, the Emir of the State of Kuwait,  
Mr President of the General Conference,  
Honourable Minister,  
Mr President of the International Jury,  
Honourable Ambassador,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to welcome you to this Prize-giving Ceremony for the UNESCO/Emir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for Research and Training in Special Needs Education for the Mentally Disabled.

I have had the opportunity to visit Kuwait twice since taking up office. On my first trip, in 2000, I was privileged to meet His Royal Highness, the late Emir. Sheikh Jaber sadly passed away in January this year. He was an eminent statesman, deeply committed, not only to his people and his country, but also to the needs of other peoples around the world. His generosity is exemplified by the Prize we will bestow here today.

We are greatly honoured to have present to award this Prize His Royal Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of Kuwait. I had the pleasure of meeting Your Royal Highness during my second official visit to Kuwait, in 2002, and am delighted to receive you here today at UNESCO. Let me also thank the

distinguished Minister of Education and Higher Education of Kuwait, Dr Adel Taleb Al-Tabtabaei, for taking part in this ceremony. Please accept my warmest welcome.

Finally, I wish to extend my thanks to those who have made today's event possible. My special thanks and appreciation go to the President of the International Jury of the Prize, and Ambassador of Kuwait to Canada, Dr Al-Haroun. We are honoured to have you with us here today. Let me also warmly thank Dr Al-Nafisi, Ambassador of Kuwait to UNESCO, for his great help and support.

The UNESCO/Emir Jaber Prize will reward, every two years, one person or institution from the Arab region, and one from another part of the world, for their contribution to the education of the mentally disabled. The Prize celebrates UNESCO's inclusive vision of education, and our belief in education's power to transform attitudes and lives. It also draws attention to the need for special measures to target society's most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

It is particularly significant that we will be awarding this Prize today, after yesterday's commemoration of the International Day of Disabled Persons. This is a time to promote awareness of disability issues, and of the importance of achieving the full inclusion of disabled persons within society.

UNESCO is strongly committed to these goals, notably through its EFA Flagship initiative on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities. Under this initiative, we have been actively engaged in the negotiation process for the UN Convention for Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted in August this year. The Convention will be an important tool for ensuring that education is truly inclusive of all. It is this noble goal that we honour with today's Prize.

Your Royal Highness,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The first call for candidates for the Prize, in 2004, attracted 52 countries who nominated 92 candidates. Out of these, the International Prize Jury, chaired by Dr Al-Haroun, proposed two laureates, who I had no hesitation in confirming.

Let me therefore express my delight in announcing our two prize-winners: Dr Farouk M. Sadek from Egypt; and the Ntiro Project for Supported and Inclusive Employment from South Africa. Each will receive a diploma and a cheque for 20,000 US dollars.

Dr Sadek is recognized for his pioneering work to improve the quality of life of children with special needs in Egypt.

Currently Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Special Education at Azhar University, Egypt, Dr Sadek has achieved a great many “firsts” in his field. He was the founder and director of the first university model centre for mental disabilities in the Arab States. Here, he initiated and edited the first journal in the Arab region to report on research studies in mental disabilities. Dr Sadek was the founder and first president of the Egyptian Society for Special Needs Children. As a university professor, he has further taken the lead in developing curriculum, teaching materials and textbooks for special needs education. Dr Sadek also organized the first National Conference on Special Education, in Cairo, in 1995. The proceedings of this Conference have been instrumental in the development of inclusive education in Egypt.

The list of Dr Sadek’s professional achievements is long. Through them, he has had a far-reaching impact on the lives of children with mental disabilities in Egypt and other Arab countries. Through this Prize we honour Dr Sadek’s commitment and devotion, and encourage him to continue his inspiring work.

Our second prize-winner, the Ntiro Project for Supported and Inclusive Employment, is recognized for its contribution to education and training for children and adults with mental disabilities in South Africa.

Founded in 2000 in the Tschwane South District of the Guateng province, the Ntiro Project targets the multiple barriers that persons with disabilities face in the fields of education and work. It seeks to address in a holistic way the many overlapping grounds of exclusion – from poverty and disease to problems of language and curriculum relevance.

Of particular significance, is the Ntiro Project’s emphasis on changing attitudes and building integrated community-based support. It gives strong focus to providing

information and skills to district officials, NGOs and community organizations, and to building partnerships among them. This inclusive model has proved extremely successful, serving to progressively replace older segregationist models throughout the district.

The Project gives concrete expression to the new vision of inclusive education in South Africa and to the call for more intersectoral approaches. I hope that the award of this Prize will help to support the Project leaders in their noble work, and enable them to extend its benefits across their district, and beyond.

Your Royal Highness,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by expressing once again my deep appreciation to the State of Kuwait for sponsoring this important Prize, and to His Royal Highness, the Emir, for joining us here today.

I would also like to extend my warmest congratulations to our two laureates for their shining achievements. May these serve as beacons to guide us towards achieving the Education for All goals and, through this, towards a more inclusive and equitable world.

Thank you very much.