



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

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 Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

**on the occasion of the opening of the first meeting
of the International Coordination Committee (ICC)
for the Safeguarding of Haitian Cultural Heritage**

UNESCO, 7 July 2010

Madam Minister of Culture and Communication of Haiti,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is with great pleasure that I open today the first meeting of the International Coordination Committee (ICC) for the Safeguarding of Haitian Cultural Heritage, the beginnings of which took place right here at UNESCO Headquarters on 16 February.

I should like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you. In particular, I acknowledge your presence, Madam Minister, dear friend, and Chairperson of the Committee. We are aware of the strength and steadfastness of your commitment to the rebirth of Haiti through culture. I can also assure you of UNESCO's firm commitment to do absolutely everything in its power to rally support for Haitian culture in all our fields of competence, particularly in the sphere of culture.

Barely a month after the earthquake, at your request, Madam Minister, we organized a meeting here on 16 February which gathered eminent international experts, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as representatives of UNESCO Member States, in order to examine the situation of built and natural heritage, museums and cultural institutions, living heritage, archives and creative industries. This meeting underscored the need for a coordination mechanism at the international level, the implementation of which was entrusted to our Organization by your country's authorities. The Executive Board of UNESCO has approved the creation of an International Coordination Committee for

the Safeguarding of Haitian Cultural Heritage, in accordance with the unanimous wish of all Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would now like to review what has happened in the last four months.

Firstly, as you all know, I visited Haiti in March. I naturally met with the Prime Minister, Jean-Max Bellerive, and was completely receptive to his appeal to rebuild Haiti through culture. I spoke with the Minister of National Education and Vocational Training and with you, Madam Minister. I also met many representatives of civil society. It became evident that we all shared the same desire to increase UNESCO's support for national efforts to rebuild the social and cultural fabric of Haiti as much as possible.

In Haiti, I discovered Port-au-Prince, with its immense wounds and equally immense courage. With you, Madam Minister, I went to Jacmel, which is on UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List – the historical buildings of which have been severely damaged – and to Camp Perrin, also heavily hit by the earthquake.

Evidently, my visit to Haiti gave me an even deeper understanding and grasp of how much was needed and of the real need to coordinate all actions planned in the multifaceted area of culture. This responsibility, which lies at the heart of UNESCO's mandate, rests with us.

Madam Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Secondly, I should like to address the specific issue of the donations received by UNESCO for Haiti. As you will recall, many countries responded to the Flash Appeal, sending very generous contributions to meet urgent needs – primarily linked to education – as quickly as possible.

With respect to culture, however, the first donation was made only recently. This contribution was entrusted to me during my trip to the Republic of Korea, by a local Buddhist institution which I heartily thank, in support of a project to offer "Theatre in Displacement Camps in Port-au-Prince". These plays are based on works by Frankétienne, who I named UNESCO Artist of Peace in March. They are performed in the evening and filmed so as to be shown on video screens set up by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in all the camps in and around

Port-au-Prince. Interactive theatre workshops are also run in the afternoon for children in the camps, who can express themselves through drama, music and dance. Given the healing power of culture, which is increasingly recognized by the international community as an essential element of reconstruction, we intend to multiply and diversify cultural projects in the most creative way possible.

To do so, I have decided to launch a donation campaign for the safeguarding of Haitian culture by establishing an international donors' committee to provide support to the International Coordination Committee which, as a purely technical body, decides what action will be taken.

The responsibility of financing this action falls upon Member States. I therefore renew my appeal to all of you gathered here today to contribute to the joint efforts of the international community to support Haiti by supporting Haitian culture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With regard to our Organization, I am able to tell you that the Culture Sector has managed to set aside some 400,000 dollars from its regular budget, which has provided for the dispatch of expert missions, the organization of the exhibition "Haiti, 500 Years of History" and the holding of the present meeting, among other initiatives. Moreover, funds have been decentralized to the UNESCO Office in Port-au-Prince to enable us to become more operational.

In addition, some \$50,000 have been allocated to the project to safeguard the National History Park Citadel, Sans Souci, Ramiers in the context of international emergency assistance from the World Heritage Fund.

Furthermore, a project to relaunch the cultural economy of Jacmel, to which approximately one million dollars has been allocated, has been submitted for approval to the International Reconstruction Commission. It is a highly comprehensive project aimed at encouraging the contribution of culture to economic development, particularly through tourism and cultural industries. The project also includes the restoration and consolidation of 103 historic buildings in the centre of Jacmel, job creation and an increase in the income of craftspeople, especially with a view to the preparation of the Carnival – a highly symbolic event in the social life of Jacmel's inhabitants. I am very optimistic about the response that will be given to this project. We are expecting an update in the next few days.

In addition, we are currently holding discussions with the Spanish Government which confirmed its interest in supporting UNESCO's initiatives regarding the revitalization of Haitian cultural heritage. We are hopeful in this case too that the outcome of the talks will be positive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to recall the hope expressed by Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive, that over the course of the next 18 months UNESCO will focus on a small number of projects with clear results – projects which take effect quickly and are symbolic, tangible and credible. Prime Minister Bellerive also reaffirmed the importance of culture, which must be included in the design and implementation of every project to ensure long-term success with the Haitian people – a position I fully agree with. You are all aware of my determination to give culture the central status it deserves at the heart of the development agenda.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to announce that I decided to appoint Ms Michaëlle Jean, UNESCO Special Envoy for Haiti, at the end of her term of office as Governor General of Canada. I am extremely happy that she accepted this invitation. In full confidence, I shall count on her experience, energy and commitment in accompanying UNESCO in the fulfilment of the task it has been assigned.

And of course, I would like to thank all the experts on the International Coordination Committee who are ready to share their expertise with UNESCO, in order to carry out coordinated action in the field. Your discussions will no doubt yield excellent results. You will be preparing technical and operational recommendations for the medium and long terms. Rest assured that I shall be following your work very closely.

To end, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to support Haiti in the process of creating an even stronger cultural dynamic, and giving impetus to a comprehensive and fresh start in line with Haiti's own wishes.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you very successful deliberations.