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Organización
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para la Educación,
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Объединенных Наций по
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Celebration 20th anniversary of the Slave Route Project

Opening remarks

by

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Vice-Minister of Education
of the People's Republic of China**

UNESCO Headquarters, 10 September 2014

Madam Director-General Irina Bokova,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to be here today to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Slave Route Project - a concrete response to the request raised by the 37th Session of General Conference to "develop a programme of activities to celebrate the project in different regions of the world". Thus, I thank the Director General, as well as all those who have brought their contributions to this project, for your tireless efforts in mobilizing the international community for this important event.

This moment makes me recall my student times, 36 years ago, when I began my studies of world history and learned on one of the world's saddest human tragedies: the Slave Trade and Slavery of African people. I was also impressed by watching the movie *Roots* and visiting a historical seaport in Senegal, which reflected tragic mistreatment of African people. However, this memory was not reflected enough in the world history education. Silence replaced centuries of crime and little was known by the future generation.

History is the mirror of the present. Beyond our necessary act of remembrance, our aim has been to generate reflection on the past, whose impact continues to delay, to some extent, the development of Africa. It helps us to understand the systematic human and cultural persecution, and the prejudice that continues to affect the people of Africa. It also helps us understand the exclusion, poverty and inequality inherited from slavery and experienced by black people in the different regions in the world today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Achievements are already behind us, more is needed to be accomplished. We need to continue paying more attention to history education by facilitating the creation and publication of textbooks. Only when people, especially our young generation, acknowledge the truth of history can we avoid similar tragedies, and to maintain peace and harmony for the future. Therefore, we encourage our partners, member states and international organizations, to continue their support for this project. We should also reinforce the capacity building of the population of Africa and its descents, through education and cultural exchange. For this purpose, UNESCO has made tremendous effort in prioritizing Africa's development on its agenda. It is also worth noting that more and more countries have established, through UNESCO, the trust-in-fund in Africa for teacher training and educational development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Africa being the birthplace of humanity, conceiving world development, without that of Africa, will be a vain illusion.

African civilization has enriched the cultures and development of the world. Therefore, let us join hands and work together to overcome these challenges and to realize the dreams of African people for development and prosperity.

Thank you!

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