



United Nations
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Organización
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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

**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of Human Rights Day**

10 December 2008

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 is the first universal instrument to proclaim the equal dignity and rights of all members of the human family. It enshrines a set of fundamental rights and freedoms that should be realized for everyone, everywhere and always.

The Universal Declaration gives inspiration and a major impetus to the struggle for human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world. The provisions of the Universal Declaration, and of the standard-setting instruments adopted to further their development, are now often an integral part of national laws. Numerous national mechanisms have been installed to monitor their implementation. Systems of human rights protection have been established at universal and regional levels.

We can be proud of the achievements attained over the past sixty years. We must realize, however, that there is still a long way to go to make the aspirations expressed in the Declaration of 1948 a reality for all people of all nations. Armed conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, the deterioration of the environment and climate change pose increasing threats to human rights. Poverty, which still affects a large percentage of the world's population, remains a major obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights by hundreds of millions of children, women and men.

The activities that have marked this year-long commemoration have sought to boost efforts among the international community and global civil society to address these problems. As part of a United Nations system-wide effort, UNESCO has given particular emphasis to the right to education, education in and for human rights, the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression,

participation in cultural life and the protection of cultural diversity, and the realization of the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications. We are grateful, in that respect, to Member States, National Commissions for UNESCO, UNESCO Chairs and many other partners for their contributions to this collective celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Together, we must maintain and build upon the momentum created by this year of commemoration. We must continue and intensify our joint efforts to build a world in which human dignity, human rights and justice are universally affirmed. Faithful to its mandate, UNESCO will pursue its activities to promote respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms with a view to make the Universal Declaration a daily reality for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Matsuura', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Koïchiro Matsuura