



AUSTRALIAN INTERVENTION  
at the 34<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference  
of UNESCO

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**to UNESCO**

Wednesday, 17 October 2007

Mr President

Director-General

Distinguished Delegates

May I, too, begin, by congratulating you on your election to this key post and wish you well for the tasks ahead of you. This is not always an easy ship to steer, but we can have great confidence in your capacity to do so.

I would also like to congratulate Singapore on their return to UNESCO.

The vision of an international organisation working for peace through education, science, culture and communications continues to inspire. In affirming our support for the Organization, Australia has often expressed a desire that UNESCO focus on greater budget accountability and higher programme productivity. *and*

We commend efforts to make UNESCO more effective and would like to acknowledge the Director-General's push for reform and for a return of the Organization's focus to its core mandates. UNESCO needs to be very clear about in which areas it can best add value – it cannot be, and should not try to be, everything for everyone.

Australia encourages the Director-General to reinforce his efforts to implement a rigorous reform plan, which includes clear direction for programme sectors. But we, as the members and ‘owners’ of UNESCO through the General Conference and Executive Board, must also provide clear direction to the Organization.

This will ensure that the ideals of UNESCO are realised in its programmes – with clear objectives not only being set, but also measured and achieved. Such reforms will engender a more relevant, responsive and effective Organization. It will be able to address challenges decisively, and be an organisation that better meets the needs of all 193 members.

UNESCO needs to be driven by Member States’ concerns, not by the Secretariat. To be effective, the three key actors - UNESCO itself, Member States, in other words governments – and their National Commissions. All need to work closely together, respecting each other’s areas of responsibility to implement programmes effectively.

Australia is strongly committed to the first global compact on education – the Education For All Fast Track Initiative. This initiative will assist developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education,

through increasing the number of children in school and improving the quality of education that they receive. Over the next four years, Australia will contribute \$40 million towards the Initiative.

It is a tribute to the UN's system's capacity to work together that, through the IOC, that early warning systems are being created to alert countries to the possibility of tsunamis. Australia is an active partner in this, with our natural focus on both the Pacific and Indian Oceans. We are very pleased that Perth, in Western Australia, will host the IOC Secretariat office and my government has committed funding of \$400,000 per annum to this office. Having gone to Phuket as part of Australia's emergency response team after the 2004 tsunami, I have seen myself the devastation nature can wreak. The network of systems that is being put in place has a highly practical application, but also is important in terms of world scientific collaboration.

Australia was pleased to see the International Convention Against Doping in Sport come into force earlier this year. This framework of international cooperation to address the challenge of drugs in sport is now supported by 65 UNESCO member states – and we look forward to others joining it. Australia has continued to show its commitment to the Convention by

contributing to the Voluntary Fund for the Elimination of Doping in Sport.

Mr President,

UNESCO has had a high profile in Australia this year, it is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of both our UNESCO Delegation and National Commission. We were delighted to be able to celebrate this with the World Heritage Listing of the Sydney Opera House – a building that has become an icon. The building is very unusual in terms of the World Heritage Listings because it is only one of two buildings on the list that was designed by an architect who is still alive today – a Danish architect, which also underlines how geography need not be a barrier to artistic creativity and how one country may contribute successfully to the cultural life of another.

Australia continues to be a strong supporter of the World Heritage Convention. We congratulate New Zealand, which as Chair of the World Heritage Committee, put greater focus on the Pacific region. We are committed to advancing this and to continue sharing our extensive strategic, policy and practical experience in cultural and natural heritage management with all State Parties to the Convention.

Climate change poses a unique set of challenges to the protection of the world's natural and cultural heritage. As heritage sites occur in many different forms, each may require a carefully considered, specific response. It is imperative to have a responsible approach to climate change to curb its impact on world heritage. The experience we are gaining, for example in managing the Great Barrier Reef, a park about the size of Italy, is relevant to many other countries.

In that context, we are committed to making a substantial contribution to protecting the world's priceless natural and cultural legacy. Australia's domestic initiatives and international partnerships have contributed to the development and sharing of a "best practice" management framework.

Earlier I noted that this year is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australia's UNESCO Delegation and National Commission. While much has changed in the international landscape since 1947, Australia's commitment to UNESCO and its role in promoting peace and security for the peoples of the world endures.

Thank you.