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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
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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,
at the tribute ceremony to mark the fourteenth
anniversary of the death of Yitzhak Rabin**

UNESCO, 4 November 2009

Mr Mayor of Tel Aviv,
Mr Ambassador of Israel to France,
[Madam Director-General elect]
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have gathered today to honour the memory of Yitzhak Rabin, murdered in Tel Aviv fourteen years ago on 4 November 1995, as he was pursuing the courageous dream of peace in the Middle East and bringing an end to the suffering of all the peoples in the region. He was an inspiring leader and a brave statesman who defied the prejudices of the past to tackle the most complicated of problems in a forthright manner. It was this determination that led to his being awarded, along with Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat, the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize in 1993.

I am pleased to have many personalities here with us, in particular the Mayor of Tel Aviv, Mr Ron Huldai, whose presence gives special meaning to this ceremony, a moment for collective reflection. I remember with great pleasure how warmly he welcomed me in his office during my last official visit to the State of Israel, in February 2008.

Mr Huldai's visit to UNESCO comes at a time when the city is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its foundation in 1909. In 2003, the "white city" was inscribed on the prestigious World Heritage List for its unique architectural ensemble dating back to the 20s and 30s, and which has made Tel Aviv the capital of the Bauhaus

or International Style architecture. My visit in 2008 gave me the chance to see for myself how well the historic city is being safeguarded.

Over the decades Tel Aviv has flourished, and is today a symbol of modernity, multiculturalism and tolerance, all values that would have resonated with Yitzhak Rabin, who spent his life fighting for them.

A very warm welcome also to Ms Noa Karavan, representing her father, UNESCO Artist for Peace, Dani Karavan, who designed this Square of Tolerance, dedicated to Yitzhak Rabin, and which remains for all of us a source of inspiration and a powerful motivation to action. Thank you for joining us here today.

The example embodied by Yitzhak Rabin is even more meaningful in these days of uncertainty, when a renewed commitment for peace is urged by the peoples of the Middle East to fulfil their legitimate aspiration to a better future. Today, it is our shared responsibility to redouble our efforts to continue our search for a just and lasting peace in the region.

Let me therefore reaffirm that UNESCO will, more than ever before, be engaged alongside the international community in the implementation of a global strategy for reconstruction and reconciliation in the Middle East. This is the meaning of the actions we are undertaking in our fields of competence, in particular through education, to promote lasting dialogue in the region.

Allow me to conclude by recalling the words spoken by Yitzhak Rabin when receiving the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize at UNESCO in 1993. I quote:

“We are in a hurry, ladies and gentlemen – and therefore we are proceeding slowly ... for our children and their children, we are moving towards peace. We are proceeding slowly, and we shall hurry to bring it to you. That is our vow to you.”

These words resound with us today, more alive than ever.

Thank you very much for your attention.