



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
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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,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the lecture by His Excellency Mr John Dramani

Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana

UNESCO, 5 October 2015

His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana,
Honourable Hanna S. Tetteh (MP), Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Professor Ms Jane Opoku-Agyemang, Minister of Education,
Honourable Dr Edward Omane Boamah, Minister for Communication,
Honourable Franklin Fifi Kwetey, Minister of Food and Agriculture,
Honourable Cassiel Ato Forson, Deputy Minister of Finance,
Excellency Ms Johanna Odonkor Svanikier, Ambassador of Ghana to France and
Permanent Delegate to UNESCO,
Distinguished Representatives of Local Government, Universities, Research
Institutions and the Private Sector of Ghana,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to welcome you to UNESCO today, especially at this time
when we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the creation of this great Organisation.

I see this as an opportunity to renew commitment to the values we share and to the
depth of cooperation and partnership between Ghana and UNESCO.

I was honoured to visit Ghana in July 2013 – during this visit, Mr President, I recall
you saying that UNESCO is a deep friend of the developing world, a strong partner
in providing technical cooperation and policy advice, in sharing best practices.

Let me say UNESCO's mission can only be taken forward thanks to visionary leaders and partners, and I wish to highlight here the beacon role of Ghana, in the stability of its democracy, in the inclusivity of its development.

Mr President, your modern vision of Africa, your vision for Ghana, your commitment to non-violence and the democratic process, your engagement in supporting young women and men, to harnessing the powers of all new technologies – I see all of this is an inspiration for the continent and for people across the world.

You have striven tirelessly to build peace, to foster economic development, and these efforts are embodied today in Ghana's stability and growth.

The *Kumasi Declaration*, signed by you and all presidential candidates in December 2012, committing all to peaceful elections, sent a powerful message for democracy, for good governance, for the rule of law, in a region that has not been immune from violence.

You have matched this with a deep commitment to providing quality education to every citizen of Ghana – I wish to take this opportunity to commend you for increasing public expenditure on education over the past four years.

This has led to a significant increase in pre-primary and primary enrolments – this has catalysed progress towards gender equality, the empowerment of girls and women.

We see the same engagement in the sciences.

Ghana helped lead the proclamation of the 2015 *International Year of Light and Light Based Technologies* -- within this framework, Ghana is building capacity in fibre optics technology at the University of Cape Coast, which I also visited in 2013, establishing a sub-regional Laser Medical Application Laboratory, as well as a solar technology Research Centre and a Museum of Light.

I wish to assure you that UNESCO is determined to support every effort by Ghana, for the development of the sciences, including environmental and ocean sciences,

especially as we approach the 21st *United Nations Climate Change Conference*, in Paris this December.

We see the same leadership in the field of culture.

In July, the Parliament of Ghana ratified all six UNESCO Culture Conventions, as well as the UNIDROIT Convention and I commend the government for this.

These are bold steps to strengthen the preservation of heritage and to integrate culture deeply into national development policies.

At this time when across the world culture is under attack, when cultural diversity is under threat, I believe Ghana is sending a powerful message to all, about the need to unite around humanity's shared heritage, around human rights and human dignity.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je sais qu'un certain nombre de sujets ont déjà été évoqués par nos équipes respectives durant cette visite :

- L'éducation des femmes et des filles, à travers les technologies de l'information et de la communication;
- La liste des sites du patrimoine mondial au Ghana et
- L'Histoire générale de l'Afrique.

Vous avez eu, tout au long de cette journée, plusieurs réunions de travail entre les experts de l'UNESCO et des membres de la délégation du Ghana.

Ce n'est qu'un début.

Je porte l'espoir que ce dialogue puisse nourrir encore davantage notre coopération, et vous pouvez être assuré que l'UNESCO fournira toute l'assistance nécessaire dans ces domaines spécifiques, pour assurer le rayonnement de la

culture, des sciences, de l'éducation, des valeurs démocratiques, qui sont les piliers de la dignité humaine, et de la résilience des sociétés.

J'ajoute que cette visite est d'autant plus symbolique que les Nations Unies viennent d'adopter le nouveau programme pour le développement durable d'ici 2030, qui tire évidemment une large part de son inspiration de l'Agenda du Millénaire, adopté en 2000 sous l'impulsion de Kofi Annan, Secrétaire Général de l'époque, originaire du Ghana.

Par ce geste inaugural, Kofi Annan a contribué à changer la perspective mondiale sur les droits humains et le développement, au-delà des simples déclarations, par un programme précis, avec des objectifs clairs et des cibles concrètes.

Nous toujours les héritiers de cette approche, qui n'est pas la moindre contribution du Ghana à la coopération internationale et je voulais saisir cette occasion de le souligner une nouvelle fois.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.