



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
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

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the celebration of the “Legacy of Sheikh Abdullah Al
Jaber Al Sabah” in the areas of Culture and Education**

Hotel Four Seasons, Paris, 12 November 2015

Excellency Sheikh Ali Al Jarrah Al Sabah, Vice-Minister of Amiri Diwan Diwan Affairs, representing His Highness Cheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait,

Excellency Dr Sami Al Sulaiman, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to France, representing Dr Bader Hamad Al-Essa, Minister of Education,

Sheikha Mona Jabir Al-Abdullah Al-Jabir Al Sabah, Chairperson of the Al Diwan Al Amiri Historical Documents and Libraries Center,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Salam Aleikum.

I am deeply honoured to be with you today for this event under the patronage of HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, to pay tribute to the legacy of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

It is an honour, indeed, to pay tribute to the legacy of a great man and to recall his achievements across the fields of education and culture, as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of UNESCO, during the 38 session of our General Conference.

The vision and leadership of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah left a profound impact on the development of Kuwait.

In more ways than one, he was a pioneer of Kuwait as it stands today.

He was an educational reformer -- as a Minister of Education, he succeeded in modernizing the education system – and the exhibition we have just seen outside gives a glimpse of what he achieved.

His focus fell on inclusion in education -- opening the way for girls to go to school.

He was a great believer in culture and education as forces for innovation and development, supporting heritage as a source of identity and belonging, as well as creativity and innovation.

He was first also to encourage cultural exchanges, along with seminars and lectures, to deepen knowledge and mutual understanding, to strengthen bridges of dialogue across borders.

All of this helped shape the country, its society, its young women and men, as well as its relationship with the world, on the basis of dignity, equality and mutual respect.

These principles stand today at the heart of Kuwait's action on the global stage.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has commended HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, for championing a global response to the crisis in Syria, hosting three conferences of donors – and you are on the frontline of the next conference for Syria to be held in London.

I was privileged to participate in one of these conferences -- I have seen how generous the Emir and the people of Kuwait are, and how deeply culture and education matter for Kuwait, how much education and culture are placed at the heart of any sustainable response by the State of Kuwait.

This resonates powerfully with UNESCO's mandate and action and belief that education can heal the wounds of war, and bring people back on their feet.

I am deeply grateful for the contribution of 5.5 million US dollars by Kuwait in 2015 to UNESCO's emergency response to the Syria crisis – helping refugees and internally displaced persons inside Syria, providing quality education, psycho-social support and skills for a better life.

I will always remember, when I spoke in 2014 of “cultural cleansing” for the first time, and when I made an appeal to integrate the cultural dimension in security and humanitarian strategies -- it was the State of Kuwait that stood up and funded the *High Level International Conference on Cultural Heritage at risk in Iraq and Syria*, held at UNESCO on 3 December 2014, with the contribution also from Saudi Arabia.

This was three months before the United Nations Security Council resolution 2199 that made the link between the protection of culture and security in Syria.

This paved the way for UNESCO's strategy today.

In all this, I believe we can see the spirit and the legacy of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and this is why it is so important that UNESCO is associated with this commemoration.

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of UNESCO, together, we must renew our commitment to the values and objectives we share, to this “soft power” – this has never been so urgent.

In this spirit, I thank the Government of Kuwait for its leadership and all of you for supporting UNESCO's ideals.