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Organización
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
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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 launch of the project Recovery and Rehabilitation
of cultural heritage in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal”**

Kathmandu, 17 April 2016

Honourable Ananda Prasad Pokharel, Minister, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and
Civil Aviation,

Honourable Secretary-General of the National Commission for UNESCO,

Dear Ambassador Devi Luintel,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been so looking forward to this visit.

Nepal is very dear to the heart of UNESCO.

I am honoured and deeply moved to join you for the launch of this project, in
support of what UNESCO's mission stands for – to safeguard what belongs to the
Nepalese people, to give strength and resilience, to move forward to build a better
future.

I wish to thank the Government of Nepal for its warm welcome and its assistance in
this crucial initiative.

Almost one year ago today, Nepal experienced two devastating earthquakes.

Over 8,800 people lost their lives and hundreds of thousands were left homeless.

Some 200,000 people were temporarily displaced.

This huge humanitarian disaster was also tragic for heritage.

Nepal's cultural heritage suffered tragic damage -- with extensive damage to the historic monuments and buildings of the Kathmandu Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1979.

This triggered a true global movement of support and sympathy, bringing all nations and peoples together as one family with Nepal – and this says something very powerful about the values we share.

From day one, UNESCO has expressed its solidarity, sending experts and emergency assessment missions, working with the Government to plan and implement its action. We have mobilized resources and partners to accompany the people of Nepal.

Our position is clear.

We must respond through education, and provide access to quality education to all displaced children and youth.

We must respond through science, to strengthen capacities to prevent and anticipate such disasters.

We must respond through culture, because culture and cultural heritage are unparalleled forces of belonging, identity and renewal.

UNESCO works in close partnership with the Department of Archaeology to preserve the outstanding heritage and cultural traditions of the Kathmandu Valley.

This is the importance of this project for the “Recovery and Rehabilitation of Cultural Heritage in the Kathmandu Valley”, supported by the *Hainan Province Cihang Foundation*.

UNESCO and this Foundation have built strong cooperation, notably to promote girl's education and teacher training, in Africa and elsewhere -- and this cultural project is another important step, for which I am deeply grateful.

The Kathmandu valley is known for its exceptional craftsmanship in brick, stone, timber and bronze.

There is unique potential to create new jobs, improve livelihoods and foster economic development and cultural tourism.

There is a unique opportunity to enhance the capacity of national institutions to foster economic development and social inclusion, to support them in research, documentation and conservation measures.

I am convinced all this is an integral part of the recovery process.

In all this, we do not seek to only rebuild heritage, we aim to ensure the continuity of cultural practices, the transmission of local knowledge, the continuity of the identity of communities.

Culture bears the soul of the Nepalese people.

In this regard, I wish to commend the Department of Archaeology for its swift response in the aftermath of the earthquakes, saving cultural objects from further destruction and theft.

This makes me much more optimistic about the future.

This project with *Hainan Province Foundation* is a key step in this direction – and there will be more.

Culture and the protection of heritage is supported by many countries and donors to accompany the Nepalese people in rebuilding on the path to sustainable development and peace.

Many donors and partners are supporting this effort – and allow me to cite Professor Cunningham of Durham University, from where I was so honoured to

receive a *doctor honoris causa* four years ago – who has been conducting leading work in Nepal.

We suffered with the Nepalese people in the aftermath of the earthquake, and we mobilized a broad platform to coordinate an emergency response to safeguard heritage, because it belongs to all humanity.

How we protect this heritage is a marker of how we unite around our common humanity. This is how we will do justice to the Nepalese people and respect their human dignity.

Let me say a little more about how this fits into our work to shape the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

Nine out of the 17 Global Goals have relevance to UNESCO's work, from education to gender equality, to oceans, water management and biodiversity.

We made an incredible effort to include cultural heritage and culture in this agenda, as drivers, as enablers of sustainable development and peace. We see increasingly how important this is for human dignity, for sustainable development and peace.

UNESCO will spare no effort to mobilize more human skills, human spirit and human ingenuity, as a force to heal, to recover and to look forward.

Thank you very much.