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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 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano Prize Ceremony

Helsinki, 3 May 2016

His Excellency Mr Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland,

Ms Ana María Busquets de Cano, *Guillermo Cano Foundation*,

Mr Kaius Niemi, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the *Helsingin Sanomat Foundation*,

Ms Ljiljana Zurovac, Chair of the Independent Jury of the *UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize*,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank His Excellency President Sauli Niinistö for Finland's outstanding leadership in defending freedom of expression and freedom of information.

I thank the Government of Finland for its partnership with UNESCO in promoting fundamental freedoms across the world.

I thank the *Helsingin Sanomat Foundation* for its support to UNESCO and the World Press Freedom Day Prize.

Allow me to express special thanks to Ms Ana María Busquets de Cano for being with us today.

Her presence reminds us of the stakes we are fighting for.

Thirty years ago, on 17 December, 1986, Guillermo Cano was killed in front of the offices of *El Espectador* – the newspaper he edited – in Bogotá, Colombia.

Guillermo Cano was killed, because of his campaign against drug violence.

He was killed, because of his commitment to freedom of expression.

We are here today, to pay tribute to his legacy.

We are here to defend the rights of every journalist and media worker.

We are here to stand up for the fundamental freedoms we all cherish.

These freedoms face steep challenges today... from weak pluralism... from censorship... from restrictions and barriers.

No challenge is more tragic than that of violence.

The figures are staggering.

On average, one journalist is killed every five days – while less than six percent of killings have been resolved.

Many more journalists suffer intimidation and harassment, death threats and violence.

Sexual violence is increasing, especially for women journalists.

This simply cannot be allowed to go on.

As Director-General, I stand up every time a media worker is killed and call for justice.

I appeal today once again to Member States for their deep engagement in ending impunity.

This is why the *United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity* is so vital.

UNESCO is acting on the ground – through training and campaigns -- in Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan, and South Sudan... in Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Liberia, Nigeria, Jordan and Somalia.

We are building capacity – in investigative journalism, on elections reporting, for youth media engagement – in Libya, for instance, in Lebanon and Jordan to benefit displaced Syrian young people, and I thank Finland once again for its support, along with Sweden, as well as Japan and the European Union.

UNESCO is leading the fight against impunity -- spearheading the *International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists*, on 2 November, every year, across the world.

Only together can we stop the violence.

This is why UNESCO works so closely with judiciaries, with security and law enforcement agencies... in Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile, in Tunisia, Cote d'Ivoire.

This work is essential for human rights and dignity.

It is vital for the success of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

This is the message at the heart of the world's first Freedom of Information Law that saw light 250 years ago, covering modern-day Sweden and Finland, drafted with the help of Anders Chydenius.

The same message stands at the heart of the 1991 *Windhoek Declaration*, and it has never been so important.

Defending fundamental freedoms calls for determination and courage – it calls for fearless advocates, and I thank Ms Ljiljana Zurovac, Chair of the Independent Jury, and all its Members, for their support.

Created by the UNESCO Executive Board in 1997, the *UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize* is designed to honour a person, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and, or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, and especially when this has been achieved in the face of danger.

Ms Khadija Ismayilova is a freelance journalist and contributor to *Radio Free Europe* in her home country of Azerbaijan.

She has always shown tremendous bravery in her work.

She has always fearlessly gone the extra mile to cover a story.

She is deeply committed to press freedoms, as essential to the exercise of freedom of expression and freedom of information.

No matter how difficult the circumstances, Ms Khadija Ismayilova has never wavered from her commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This is why the *2016 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize* is awarded to Ms Khadija Ismayilova upon recommendation of the International Jury.

Unfortunately, she cannot be with us in person tonight – we are honoured to welcome her mother on her behalf -- we stand with her, just as we stand for the rights of every journalist and media worker across the world.

In this respect, I am pleased to see Mr Mazen Darwish, President of the *Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression*, Laureate of the 2015 Prize, with us tonight.

This is the legacy of Guillermo Cano -- this the message we send together today.

Thank you.