



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
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 “Pilgrims” concert by the Slovakian Philharmonic  
Choir**

**UNESCO, 6 October 2015**

Excellency Mr Ivan Secik, Deputy Minister and State Secretary for Culture,

Excellency Ms Klara Novotná, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Slovak  
Republic to UNESCO,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you all to UNESCO this evening, for this concert by  
the Slovak Sinfonietta and the Slovak Philharmonic Choir.

I wish to thank the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic for this initiative,  
which takes place on the occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great intellectual,  
linguist, politician and poet, L'udovit Stur.

The truly gifted L'udovit Stur lived a short but very rich, very productive and very  
eventful life – leaving a deep imprint on the history of Slovakia, helping to shape his  
country's identity and culture.

This included the codification of the Slovak language and a prodigious literary  
output of articles and books.

A leading figure in the national revival movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, L'udovit Stur  
defended ideals that are very much in line with UNESCO's mission today – to  
nurture the power of culture as a force for promoting solidarity and dialogue among

peoples, to deepen mutual understanding and respect, to advance human rights and freedom of expression.

This message stands at the heart of all UNESCO's action today.

At a time when all societies are transforming, we must do everything to strengthen the ties that bring humanity together, around shared values and aspirations, around a common sense of destiny.

This is the power of art, and especially music.

This concert reflects the strength of the partnership between Slovakia and UNESCO.

It embodies the values that we share and that we are working to take forward.

Just last month, UNESCO participated in the 2015 edition of the *Bratislava Biennial of Illustrations*, which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, linking artists from over fifty countries all over the world.

This same spirit of unity brings us together this evening, and this has never been so important.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Le concert de soir est une invitation à célébrer l'art et la culture sous leurs formes, à saisir chaque occasion d'éveiller les consciences, de célébrer la beauté, partout où elle est, et de communiquer au-delà des barrières de langues et de frontières.

Cette éthique du dialogue est plus nécessaire que jamais, dans un monde marqué de multiples divisions, et parfois par la tentation du repli.

Le thème du concert de ce soir « Pèlerins », spécialement composée par Egon Krak en hommage à L'udovit Stur et interprété par 80 des meilleurs musiciens et chanteurs de Slovaquie, témoigne du dynamisme de la culture musicale slovaque.

C'est un beau cadeau que vous nous faites à l'occasion du 70ème anniversaire de l'UNESCO.

Je vous souhaite une agréable soirée, et je tiens à remercier les membres de l'orchestre et le chœur de partager leurs talents et leur passion avec nous.

Pekný večer!