



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 reception to celebrate the Chinese New Year

UNESCO, 1 February 2016

Excellency Ambassador Zhang Xiuqin, Permanent Delegate of the People's Republic of China to UNESCO,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Celebrating the Chinese New Year is always a wonderful moment on the calendar and has become a tradition at UNESCO.

This is moment to rejoice with friends and family, to look on achievements of the year that has passed, to wish success and luck to everyone for the future.

In the Chinese tradition, this is a moment for reunions, fairs, festivals, galas, dragon dances and firecrackers – we may not have them here but can imagine what a wonderful occasion this is.

We all recall the historic visit on 27 March, 2014, of President Xi Jinping to UNESCO.

The President then said:

Just as the sunlight has seven colours, our world is a place of dazzling colours.

The Chinese New Year is a moment, precisely, to celebrate the dazzling colours of Chinese society and history and the world we share.

I am honoured to have this opportunity to thank Ambassador Zhang Xiuqin and, through her, the Government of China, for the strength of its commitment to UNESCO.

We have all seen the leadership China is bringing to UNESCO – one of new opportunities and new strengths.

We see this in the passionate and lifelong advocacy of Professor Peng Liyuan, First Lady of China, for advancing the empowerment of girls and women, including as *UNESCO Special Envoy for Girls' and Women's Education*.

We see this across a wide horizon of initiatives, in all UNESCO fields of competences – not to mention the *UNESCO Confucius Prize*, to promote literacy in rural areas, the establishment of a new Prize for Girls and Women's Education that we will award for the first time in 2016 -- global milestone events we had in Qingdao on ICTs and education, Shanghai, on TVET, in Hangzhou, on culture and development, in Beijing on creative and learning cities, and so many more wonderful initiatives.

Together, we work to strengthen teacher training in Africa, to harness new technologies for learning, to connect universities – making China the first contributor to our Priority Africa.

For two years, UNESCO benefitted from the vision and wisdom of His Excellency Mr Hao Ping, Vice-Minister of Education of the People's Republic of China, as President of the 37th session of the UNESCO General Conference, to whom we remain deeply grateful.

These were turning point years for UNESCO and the world, when all countries came together to agree on the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, a new vision for poverty eradication, for peace, the planet, for the next 15 years.

Thanks to the leadership of China and many other Member States, education, the sciences, culture, communication and information are integrated deeply into the new agenda, as enablers and drivers of sustainable development.

This same spirit underpins our partnership to safeguard and share the beauty and wealth of China's unique tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

As we look forward, I believe we can all draw on the strengths of the Fire Monkey, the zodiacal sign for this New Year.

Intelligent and curious.

Lively, agile, innovative and versatile.

This is what we want UNESCO to be. I think these are precisely the qualities we need, as we take forward UNESCO's mandate and as we implement the 2030 Agenda.

In this spirit, I wish all prosperity and happiness for the year ahead.

Xie xie, thank you.