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Organización
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para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

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 opening ceremony of the exhibition

“Creative Travel to Japan: Creative Cities and Japanese Cultures”

UNESCO, 17 October 2016

Dear Koïchiro Matsuura, Former Director-General of UNESCO, Chair of the Creative Cities Japan International Cultural Exchange Committee,

Excellency Ms Kuni Sato, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Japan to UNESCO,

Mr. President of the General Conference,

Mr Chair of the Executive Board,

Honourable Mayors and representatives from Japanese Creative Cities,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to welcome you all today to UNESCO, to open this exhibition -- *Creative Travel to Japan: Creative Cities and Japanese Cultures*.

Looking around reminds me of my own travels to Japan, and especially the beautiful celebration in Kyoto for the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, with the active participation of Koïchiro Matsuura. We stand in admiration of Japanese culture and the beauty that it brings to the world.

It is not by chance that Habitat III takes place in Quito this week, where we will showcase how UNESCO contributes to the quality of urban living through culture and heritage. We will be launching a *Report on Culture – Urban Future*, which highlights the power of culture, heritage and creativity to build more inclusive, more resilient and more dynamic urban centres.

The Creative Cities Network was started under you, dear Koïchiro Matsuura. I am grateful to the Creative Cities Japan International Cultural Exchange Committee for this initiative, and I wish to thank Excellency Ms Kuni Sato for her leadership.

In these times of rapid urbanization, cities have become absolutely vital platforms and actors, to craft more inclusive and sustainable development, to promote more peaceful and harmonious societies.

Japan is a long pioneer in tackling these crucial issues, placing culture and creativity at the heart of urban policies.

Drawing on a deeply-anchored respect for tradition and heritage, building on cutting-edge creativity, Japan has opened new horizons in all fields covered by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network -- in design, in crafts, in gastronomy, in film, in literature, in music, and in media arts.

Since the UNESCO Creative Cities Network was created in 2004, 116 cities from 54 countries have joined this global network -- Japan has seven members, including Kobe, Nagoya, Kanazawa, Sapporo, Hamamatsu, Tsuruoka and Sasayama, and has been one of the Network's most active members.

I see this as the spirit underpinning this exhibition – the spirit of sharing, the spirit of innovation, the spirit of leadership.

This is the message we send today -- it is a message of hope and confidence in the power of creativity to transform lives.

Once again, I am honoured by the presence of Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, my predecessor and Chair of the Creative Cities Japan International Cultural Exchange Committee, as well as Ambassador Kuni Sato and the Honourable Mayors from Japanese Creative Cities.

This is a testimony to your commitment towards a network started in 2004 and that we wish to take into the future. Your presence here celebrates the partnership between Japan and UNESCO and our shared vision of how cultural heritage and traditions combine with modernity to create a dynamic future.

I wish you a wonderful journey, and thank you again.