



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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Organisation  
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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,  
науки и культуры

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 event organized by the USA-Israel Binational  
Science Foundation**

**Israel Embassy, Washington, 10 February 2016**

H. E. Mr Ofir Akunis, Minister of Science, Technology and Space of Israel,  
Professor Albert Teich, Chair of the *Binational Scientific Foundation*,  
Dr France Cordova, Director of the *U.S. National Science Foundation*,  
Mr Reuven Azar, Deputy Ambassador of Israel to the United States,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply grateful for the invitation to participate in this Dialogue on Science, in your presence Mr Minister, to join you in honouring these young scientists.

The *US-Israel Binational Science Foundation* is a beacon of scientific collaboration, a leading institution for global science diplomacy.

Israel tops the world in terms of scientific excellence.

In fact, UNESCO explored this leadership in our latest *World Science Report*.

This shows Israel is the first country in the world for research and development intensity.

This shows 34% of Israeli bachelor's degrees are in science & technology.

This shows Israel is a leader in robotics and electronics, as well as clean energy – 85% of Israeli households use solar energy to heat water.

This excellence is embedded in a society that thrives on creativity and innovation.

Tel Aviv, a vibrant centre of culture and breakthrough technology, has been designated a *UNESCO Creative City*, and this is just one example of its world class recognition.

All of this resonates with the core of UNESCO's mandate.

UNESCO benefits greatly from the expertise from both Israel and the United States across many of our programmes.

We work with Professor Elizabeth Blackburn and Professor Ada Yonath, who were both awarded the *L'Oréal UNESCO Prize for Women in Science* before they received the Nobel Prize.

Together with Israel and the United States, we have built a network of 50 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in both countries.

We work together to bolster the Tsunami early warning system.

UNESCO and the *Academy of Sciences and Humanities of Israel* are mapping research and innovation across Israel, collecting data to strengthen national policy.

We do all this, and I strongly believe we can do more, to share this expertise with the world.

Take our cooperation with the *Weizmann Institute of Science*.

Take Israeli know-how in water management and irrigation, which UNESCO is sharing with other Member States.

I believe the platform we have to offer is unique in terms of cooperation and outreach, enabling American and Israeli scientists to work with colleagues from around the globe.

This is why I am convinced UNESCO matters so much for the United States and for Israel – as Israel and the United States matter for UNESCO.

Let me give just one more example – that of the *UNESCO-SESAME synchrotron light source*, in Jordan, bringing together Israeli experts with scientists from across the Middle East.

This project shows the power of science to build peace.

This is a concrete way to fight prejudice, to respond to all those who disseminate biased and hateful images of Israel.

Science can foster mutual understanding, and combat ignorance and hatred, including antisemitism.

UNESCO is committed to fight against all forms of antisemitism; we lead the only programme in the United Nations for Holocaust education – and I believe it was an extraordinary symbol the President of the United States came here, to this Embassy, on January 27th, of the *International Day for Holocaust Remembrance*, established by the United Nations.

I will be tomorrow at the *US Memorial Museum of the Holocaust* in Washington, a strong partner of UNESCO, to deepen this programme even more.

These values inspire all of our work, and I know they are shared by the peoples of the United States and Israel.

To succeed, we need everyone on board.

I feel inspired today, by these young scientists and so many talented people – I cannot end without a tribute to Ms France Cordova, astrophysicist, who is a role model for so many young girls and boys across the world.

This is the inspiration we need to move forward.

Thank you.