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la science et la culture

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de las Naciones Unidas  
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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 Ms Lynne Patchett,**

**on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the**

**Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB), (Gala opening)**

**Slovak National Theatre, 4 September 2015**

· Excellency Mr Marek Mad'arič, Minister of Culture of Slovakia,

· Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of UNESCO, I am very pleased to be here today for this celebration of illustrations for children's literature from all over the world. I am particularly delighted to join for the 2015 edition, which marks 50 years of cooperation between the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava and UNESCO. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Ministry of Culture of Slovakia for its kind invitation to participate in this biennial.

UNESCO is proud to have been a partner of the Biennial since its creation. If we hope to build the "defences of peace in the minds of men and women" as stated in the Organization's Constitution, we must start with our children. Moreover, the recognition of the value of art for children corresponds to UNESCO's mission to support creativity, arts education and to safeguard the world's extraordinary diversity.

This is very much in the spirit of the UNESCO Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted in 2005. This landmark international legal instrument was conceived to encourage countries worldwide to introduce national policies to nurture creativity, to provide access to creators to participate in domestic and international marketplaces and to ensure that artistic works are accessible to the widest possible public.

Moreover, in keeping with its mandate to defend freedom of expression, UNESCO is also committed to fostering the universal language of art among the world's

young people so that their ideas will not be limited by national and linguistic boundaries. For all of these reasons, we consider this Biennial to be a moving tribute to creativity, freedom of expression and cultural diversity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Bratislava Biennial has featured over 9,000 children's books over the past fifty years; among which can be found a "big bad wolf", a pretentious princess, a fire-breathing dragon and other memorable figures to delight and mesmerize children and adults alike. But they are also 9,000 tales that transmit universal values and emotions. In our contemporary world marked by instability, conflict and intolerance, it is easy to lose sight of the simpler narratives, the basic lessons about solidarity and living together that we learn as children.

The Biennial has evolved over the years to reach a wider public: it now includes workshops for artists, exhibitions of their work, theatre performances and animated films. These international workshops have welcomed young illustrators from over 50 countries, serving as a forum to share ideas and develop skills. We consider that the artists who participate in this competition and attend the workshops are ambassadors for their countries: they bring to Bratislava their unique perspectives and traditions, and return to their home countries with a fresh understanding of their counterparts from other corners of the world. After attending a workshop, one artist commented that he "learnt to draw with an open heart". This is a very revealing testimony.

I would like to thank the International Board on Books for Young People and the Ministry of Culture of Slovakia for their support in organizing this competition, and for their work throughout the year in promoting the joy of reading. Allow me to briefly mention a few of the International Board's most commendable initiatives: International Children's Book Day; its collection of books for young people with disabilities; and its Children in Crisis Fund, which uses storytelling as a form of therapy in places affected by war or natural disaster.

I would also like to take this opportunity to applaud the achievements of the Albín Brunovsky workshop for young illustrators from developing countries.

Over the years, the BIB workshops have produced a number of impressive books with universal appeal, such as: *Traditional Things in a Non-Traditional Manner*, *The Encyclopedia of Fairy Tale Creatures*, and *The International Picture Dictionary*, as well as revisiting classics like *The Jungle Book* and *Alice in Wonderland*. As society becomes more and more absorbed by the Internet, smartphones and e-books, we are compelled to join forces with non-governmental organizations such as the International Board on Books for Young People and national Culture Ministries to ensure that this most enchanting art form remains for future generations.

In closing, I would like to congratulate all of the participants in this competition for their outstanding work, and I wish them continued success and creativity. On behalf of UNESCO, I am delighted to reaffirm our close ties with the Bratislava Biennial of Illustrations, and I hope that it will continue to flourish.

I wish you all a very successful and inspiring Biennial.

Thank you.