



## **Celebration of the 200th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO**

**04 - 18 October 2016**

### **Message from Sonia Mendieta de Badaroux Chairperson of the Executive Board (1999-2001)**

I must emphasize that I chaired the Executive Board at a crucial turning point for the Organization. In 1999, it was a period of adaptation for the newly elected Director-General Mr. Koichiro Matsuura who launched an extensive programme of reforms. One of the most formidable challenges I have ever been faced with was to try to accomplish the needs and duties of the Board, in view of the urgency and necessity for the Director-General to start work on his reform programmes. Despite certain misgivings the biennium was successfully concluded without too many difficulties. This success was attributed to the climate of confidence and harmony that had been established and thorough consultations between my colleagues the Members of the Executive Board and the Director-General. The lessons that I personally learned from the four sessions held by the Board from 2000-2001, were that the results successfully concluded in the decisions of important subjects, would not have been possible without the spirit of dialogue, openness and transparency constantly exhibited by everybody involved.

In this atmosphere of dialogue instituted among the Representatives of Member States and the Secretariat of UNESCO, I am especially proud of the key role played by the Executive Board in successfully finalizing the draft of the “Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity”. I spared no efforts to encourage discussing on this ethical issue developed by the Board and later adopted unanimously by the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the General Conference on 2 November 2001. The Executive Board was able to translate national needs into international normative policy.

I am particularly pleased, on a personal level, to have been able to insist to include in the title of this Declaration the term “Universal” thus securing UNESCO’s global role in promoting cultural diversity as a means for development and exchange and hoping that it should gain the same force as the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.

The UNESCO “Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity” was adopted in an unusual context. Its adoption happened after the terrible events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. It was an opportunity for the Representatives of Member States in the Executive Board to reaffirm their conviction that intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee for peace. I was able to witness firsthand the capacity of the Executive Board to act and react to current events that have global impact. In the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, and during the 162<sup>nd</sup> session of the UNESCO’s Executive Board, held in October 2001, together with the Director-General, and the Secretariat, I was able to ensure that UNESCO responded promptly to the world’s needs. The Executive Board drafted a Resolution against Terrorism, which was endorsed later by the 31<sup>st</sup> General

Conference, calling all acts of terrorism as “attacks against humanity as a whole”. Sadly, this sentiment rings true even to this day.

From the bottom of my heart, allow me to congratulate all Members of the Executive Board continued success as you celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> session. May you all continue to act as the representatives of the entire UNESCO family of Nations as you strive continuously to ensure that our beloved Organization truly benefits the needs of each of its Member States, in particular as you examine its future Programme and Budget, to secure international peace, harmony and sustainable development through education, culture, science and communication.