



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,
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 inauguration of the 'UNESCO Corner' in the National
Library of Tajikistan**

Dushanbe, 20 August 2013

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to be here with you today, to inaugurate the *UNESCO Corner* in the National Library of Tajikistan.

The great Argentinian writer, Jorge Luis Borges, once said:

I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library.

Libraries are places of learning.

They are places of wonder and imagination – place for creativity and innovation.

They are essential to the health of societies.

They stand at the heart of the process of building inclusive and sustainable development, where every woman and man has the ability to access, create and share knowledge and information.

In a world that is changing quickly, that is facing new pressures, we need to build strong foundations for inclusive, knowledge societies.

All of this is why the National Library of Tajikistan is so important.

This is important for Tajikistan and for the entire region.

Opened in March 2012 by President Rahmon, I see this library as a symbol of the Government's determination to protect and to share knowledge throughout the region, through electronic and physical books, including rare and old manuscripts.

I am also pleased, because this library is very much "in the making". At UNESCO, we have followed the campaign to enrich this national collection and its capacity for 10 million books.

It is a special honour for me to be in Tajikistan today, during the 20th anniversary of its membership in UNESCO.

In the course of the last two decades, our cooperation has become deep and wide.

This starts with support to education reform -- with two UNESCO Chairs, at the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University and the Khujand State University, and with the six active members of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network.

This includes a strong partnership in the natural sciences, in promoting water cooperation, where Tajikistan has crafted strong international leadership -- exemplified in Tajikistan's sponsorship of the *International Year of Water Cooperation*, which UNESCO is leading, and the *High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation*.

This is reflected also in Tajikistan's engagement with UNESCO to safeguard and promote this country's unique natural and cultural heritage.

The *Proto-urban Site of Sarazm* and the *Tajikistan National Park – Mountains of the Pamir*, both inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, have outstanding universal value – for the Tajik people, reflecting the rich and ancient history of this land, as well as for all of humanity, as part of our shared heritage.

These must be protected for the benefit of all peoples, today and tomorrow.

UNESCO's Constitution calls on us to work for "*the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science.*"

This is the objective of our Memory of the World programme, whose 20th anniversary we celebrated last year.

Our vision is clear – the world's documentary heritage belongs to all, it should be preserved for all, protected for all, accessible to all.

So much of this heritage is lost in the tides of time.

Our goal is to put fortune on our side.

We must not stand by while time and the speed of technological progress erase our history.

Our documentary heritage carries the memory of human experience.

This memory is embodied in Ubayd Zakoni's *Kulliyat* and Hafez Sherozi's *Gazalliyt*, from the 14th century, inscribed on to the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register.

It is comforting to know this manuscript can be found not far from here, in the *Institute of the Written Heritage of the Academy of Sciences*.

I believe the same spirit guides this National Library – it is built into the very walls of this impressive building.

This is the spirit of sharing knowledge for the benefit of all, for the health of all societies.

I wish to thank once again the Government of Tajikistan for its commitment to the values and goals we share.

It is an honour to inaugurate this *UNESCO Corner* – this will allow us to spread our messages more widely, to reach new audiences, and to stimulate new thinking.

I wish to thank the National Commission and the Clubs of UNESCO for their engagement.

...It is a great pleasure to be in this small part of “*paradise*”!