



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 the official lunch with H.E. Mr Miloš Zeman, President
of the Czech Republic**

UNESCO, 10 September 2014

Excellency Mr President,

Excellency Madam Ambassador,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to welcome you to UNESCO today.

I wish to thank His Excellency President Zeman for paying this historic visit to UNESCO. I believe this reflects the depth of our cooperation and the strength of the values we share.

Our meeting today is an opportunity for me to express UNESCO's commitment to our cooperation and to say that the Organization stands by your side to strengthen our partnership across a range of areas -- from safeguarding cultural heritage to promoting human rights worldwide and helping countries in post conflict situations.

Culture is a flagship of our partnership.

Together, UNESCO and the Czech Republic have done much to harness the full potential of rich and varied cultural traditions of your country, embodied most especially in 12 World Heritage sites of universal significance.

Czech heritage is a synonym of splendour, refinement and knowledge.

Be it the historic centre of Prague, the streets of Český Krumlov or the open range at Lednice-Valtice, one of the largest designed landscapes in Europe -- each reflects the unique wealth of your country's beauty, its traditions, cultural expressions, and art.

Our House witnessed the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the creation of the Prague Conservatory (in 2011).

Last year, UNESCO was proud to draw the attention of the international community to another date important for your country -- the 1150th Anniversary of the arrival of the Patron Saints Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia.

I know that on the Cyril and Methodius Day you were in the ancient village of Velehrad – the former capital of Great Moravia and place of pilgrimage for people across the world.

The Velehrad Monastery stands at the heart of the Czech Republic, reflecting over a thousand years of history and culture.

We must build on the power of such heritage as a source of identity and cohesion at a time of change.

This is why UNESCO is so firmly committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage, in all its forms - tangible, intangible and documentary.

The Czech contribution to the latter is reflected in the documents inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register -- including collections of émigré periodicals from the first half of the 20th Century and those of Czech Samizdat after the War.

Our cooperation is equally strong in developing projects in post conflict or post disaster situations.

UNESCO has benefited greatly from precious Czech contributions to initiatives aimed at safeguarding Iraqi cultural heritage, promoting media development in Afghanistan, helping children in need in Lebanon, and many others.

I recall your country played an active role in UNESCO's commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights some years ago.

This history is a lesson of liberty.

It is also a lesson of democracy in the making, built incrementally, step by step, in institutions, but also in the minds of men and women.

Mr President, you know about this from personal experience.

I wish to pay tribute to your role in the political history of your country.

You have left your mark in the democratic transition of the Czech Republic and the Eastern Europe as a whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this spirit, let me thank once again His Excellency President Zeman and the Permanent Delegation of the Czech Republic to UNESCO for their leadership and support, and express the certainty that our ties will be strengthened further in the years to come.

Tím si buďte jistý. [You can be sure of that].

Thank you.