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Organización
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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 Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the High-level Discussion Panel

The National Mineral Resources University &

Honorary Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences

Saint-Petersburg, 14 December 2015

Professor Vladimir Fortov, President of the Russian Academy of Sciences,

Professor Vladimir Litvinenko, Rector of the National Mineral Resources University,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Professor,

Thank you for this invitation.

I am honoured by this opportunity to speak before the *National Mineral Resources University*.

I know the long and distinguished history of this University – first, as an ambition of Peter the Great and Mikhail Lomonosov, then realised by Catherine the Great, in 1773.

Russia's oldest technical university, the *National Mineral Resources University* stands today at the cutting-edge of global research and teaching in science, technology and innovation.

I am deeply honoured to be granted the title of Honorary Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Created by Peter the Great in 1724, here in the city of St Petersburg, the Russian Academy of Sciences is an institution that has changed the way we see the world.

I am thinking of Mikhail Lomonossov.

I am thinking of Dmitri Mendeleev.

Nikolai Vavilov.

Vladimir Vernadsky

This list is long.

This includes not only Russian names, but many leading foreign scientists, who came to this city, to the stimulating environment of the Academy, to profit from the exchange of ideas.

Here again the list is long, including Leonhard Euler, Charles Darwin, André-Marie Ampère.

The Russian Academy of Sciences counts 14 Nobel Prizes, from physics to economics to peace.

I am humbled to join such a distinguished community.

I am honoured to accept this title as a sign of the values and goals shared by UNESCO and the Russian Academy of Science, to build the defences of peace through cooperation in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

I thank the Russian Academy of Sciences, especially its President, Professor Vladimir Fortov, for this honour.

I believe cooperation has never been so important.

We are living in times of deep change across the world.

Opportunities have never been so vast, for dialogue, for exchange.

At the same time, challenges are steep.

These are times of turbulence, when poverty and inequalities remain deep, when societies are undergoing transformation, when the planet faces rising pressure from the impacts of climate change.

In this picture of complexity, one point emerges clearly.

The world is calling out for science.

It is calling for innovative approaches across disciplines.

It is calling for stronger linkages between science and policy.

I believe we have entered a new age of limits – limits in resources, limits of the planet.

This means we must make far more of the greatest renewable energy we have.

This is human ingenuity.

This is creativity and innovation.

This is why science is so vital today, to craft new solutions that are inclusive, just and sustainable.

Science is the way to link the economic, the environmental and the social dimensions of sustainability.

Science is about knowledge, about making progress in understanding the world around us.

It is also – and this is a lesson of the history of this University -- about making knowledge available *to all*, to maximise benefits *for everyone*.

I have just come from the *Paris Climate Change Conference*, where UNESCO worked to place science at the heart of the discussions on mitigating and adapting to the impact of global change.

The COP21 took place two months after world leaders agreed on the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

I see these as the same agenda.

An agenda for human rights and dignity, for poverty eradication, for sustainability.

Science is essential to taking this agenda forward.

Not just any science.

Stronger science, more connected science.

Science that is integrated into policy-making.

Science that is bold and ambitious.

We need a new focus on the sciences, to promote equitable and inclusive growth, to eradicate poverty, to bolster energy, water and food security, to control disease, to mitigate disasters, to build sustainable cities.

Last month, UNESCO launched its *UNESCO World Science Report*.

The Report shines light on the new landscape of science emerging.

New hubs are rising.

A new geography of science and technology is taking shape.

Science is more mobile than ever before.

More and more Governments and companies are investing in sustainable technologies and science, to power commerce, to craft new solutions.

We must accompany and support these trends.

The same message was sent during the *World Science Forum*, on 7 November, 2015, organised by the Government of Hungary and UNESCO.

Let us look at the challenge of climate change.

For UNESCO, responding to climate change requires action across the board.

First, to advance climate science.

This starts with UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme, to help States manage water resources and address needs through science.

UNESCO's 'water family' represents a global network of 28 water-related centres, including the *IHE-Institute for Water Education*, 30 water-related Chairs, and the *World Water Assessment Programme*, which leads the annual *World Water Development Report*.

This includes the leading role of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, for essential ocean science and observation, for early warning systems

This involves the activities of the *Man and the Biosphere Programme*, in safeguarding biodiversity, as well as the *Management of Social Transformations Programme*, to support societies in transformation.

UNESCO's second level of action is climate change education.

This was the inspiration that underpinned the *United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)*, sponsored by Japan and led by UNESCO.

This was the message of the *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development*, organised by Japan, last year, in Aichi-Nagoya -- embodied in the follow-up *Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development* that UNESCO is taking forward.

Sustainability must begin on the benches of schools, in the auditoria of universities such as this one.

I believe we all know why.

Because education is the best way to craft new ways of seeing the world, new ways of thinking, new ways of behaving, as global citizens.

Science cooperation is the guiding principle to all UNESCO's action.

Think of the *European Organization for Nuclear Research* (CERN), which has pushed forward the boundaries of fundamental science on the origins of matter.

CERN was founded in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1954, under the auspices of UNESCO, to foster peaceful scientific exchanges, for the benefit of all societies.

Cooperation is the deepest tradition of science, built on the values of openness and integrity, to advance the borderless quest of new knowledge.

As the great scientist Louis Pasteur once said:

Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world.

I would say the same spirit guides the *Scientific Advisory Board of the United Nations Secretary-General*, hosted by UNESCO, which is now convening in St Petersburg.

The Scientific Advisory Board is made up of 26 eminent scientists from different countries and cultural backgrounds, who join forces to advise the United Nations

Secretary-General on issues with global impact – including the essential role of science in implementing the new *2030 Agenda*.

Along with cooperation, I believe we also need audacity today.

It was audacity that built this great city.

Audacity inspired great scientific discoveries in these halls.

Audacity is the foundation stone for the Russian Academy of Science.

I believe a similar audacity led to the creation of UNESCO seventy years ago, after a devastating war, when the world was rebuilding, guided by a new vision of peace.

This reminds me of the words of Leo Tolstoy on the importance of freethinking:

Freethinkers are those who are willing to use their minds without prejudice and without fearing to understand things that clash with their own customs, privileges, or beliefs. This state of mind is not common, but it is essential for right thinking.

So, I end with an appeal to everyone here today, to think freely and to act together, to craft a better future for all.

This has never been so important.

In this spirit, I thank you again for the title of Honorary Member.

Thank you.