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Cultural Organization

Organisation
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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
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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 event “Support crafts to save local cultural
industries and to create sustainable livelihood opportunities” by Bibi
Russell, UNESCO Artist for Peace**

UNESCO, 26 June 2013

Excellency Ms Dipu Moni, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh,

Director-General of ISESCO,

Madam President of the General Conference,

Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Delegates,

UNESCO Honorary and Goodwill Ambassadors,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am so pleased that we meet like this after such a full day – a day when we have discussed in depth the importance of culture for peace, for belonging and identity, for social cohesion and for inclusion, for the renewal of societies and their reconstruction after disasters and conflicts.

We have heard the experience of so many of UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassadors and Artists for Peace, from Ali Mahdi Nouri, from Michaëlle Jean and many others -- all working in exemplary ways to harness the power of culture and diversity for lasting peace and sustainable development.

This is a message of solidarity we are sending, a message of hope, a message of not giving up.

I am delighted to welcome you all to UNESCO for this special event.

... a special event for fashion.

...a special event for development.

It was in this very same building, in 1996, that Bibi Russell launched the concept of *Fashion for Development*.

Her collection was called “Weavers of Bangladesh,” and it said everything you need to know.

It was colourful...vibrant...and natural.

It came straight from the looms of villages across Bangladesh, drawing on ancient textile art of unequalled mastery.

More than anything, that collection expressed a powerful vision of culture.

As Bibi herself said:

“Everyone thinks Bangladesh is a poor country. For me, it's rich in culture and everything.”

We know Bangladesh is growing quickly, thanks to the determination and commitment of the Prime Minister, and the successful efforts taken to overcome poverty, to reach gender equality, to promote inclusive development – Bangladesh shows what political will can achieve, and I often cite this country and her Prime Minister as powerful examples.

UNESCO shares the same vision of culture.

True wealth is more than money.

It is about human dignity – a principle that lies at the heart of all Bibi’s work.

It is about the capacity of women and men to live lives of their own choosing.

It is about the freedom each of us has to express ourselves, to voice our dreams and share our aspirations.

This is culture, and true wealth, and what makes us who we are.

A single community, one family, humanity...

...brought together by a common heritage, by a great diversity of languages and expressions, by a sense of solidarity and shared destiny.

This is an important year for this message.

Last month, we organised with China the Hangzhou International Congress on *Culture – A Key for Sustainable Development*, and, earlier this month, we held the United Nations General Assembly *High-Level Thematic Debate on Culture and Development*, and I wish to thank you, Minister, for your strong participation.

I have just returned from Viet Nam, from celebrating the 10th anniversary of the *Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

Before that, I opened the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee, in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap (Cambodia).

All of these draw from the same vision of culture as a wellspring of belonging...

...as a source of cohesion in a time of change.

....as a source of creativity in a new age of limits.

Culture is more than monuments, songs and cloth – it is who we are.

No society can flourish without culture.

No development can be sustainable without it.

This is the message Bibi Russell has always carried, and that we send today, by supporting local cultural industries to create sustainable livelihoods.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Tout le monde ici connaît Bibi Russel, « *femme du Bangladesh, et citoyenne du monde* » selon ses propres mots.

Une icône de la mode

Une révolutionnaire de l'entrepreneuriat social.

Vous dites passer 99.99% de votre temps dans les villages, à soutenir la culture locale et les artisans.

Vous avez commencé au Bangladesh, et très vite vous vous êtes investi au Sri Lanka, en Inde, en Afrique, en Amérique Latine...

Citoyenne du monde, en effet, et Artiste de l'UNESCO pour la paix.

L'UNESCO est heureuse et fière d'avoir soutenu plusieurs de vos défilés et je suis ravie de vous retrouver pour cette manifestation de ce soir, en présence de nos Ambassadeurs de bonne volonté.

Je voudrais remercier M. Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, Ambassadeur de bonne volonté de l'UNESCO, pour son soutien à cet événement.

Et en notre nom à tous, merci Bibi Russel, merci de votre lutte pour la culture et le développement durable, merci de nous inspirer, merci de nous rappeler que l'autonomie est le socle de la réduction de la pauvreté et de la dignité humaine.