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Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتنمية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Mrs Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the 27th session of

the Intergovernmental Council

of the International Programme

for the Development of Communication (IPDC)

delivered on her behalf by Mr Abdul Waheed Khan,

Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information

UNESCO, 24 March 2010

Chairperson,

Members of the Council and observes,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I greatly regret that I have not been able to reschedule my participation in part of the 27th session of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication.

You have just held the election of the new chairperson, so I am pleased to have this chance to transmit my congratulations to Reghu Menon of India, with my warm wishes for every success in this important function.

As the new Director-General of UNESCO, I am glad to have this opportunity to meet you and to let you know how much importance I attach to your efforts to reinforce the role that UNESCO plays in supporting the media.

The relationship between the media and democracy, between the media and development, has always held enormous potential - never more so than in this globalised world where information and communication play such a pivotal role. For the media to be able to fulfill their democratic potential, it is necessary to create an enabling environment that ensures media pluralism and freedom of expression. IPDC seeks to do this.

IPDC also works to provide the media with the means of making use of this environment through human and institutional capacity building. The third IPDC

priority - the development of community media - is a fundamental complement to the first two: it is the best way of ensuring truly inclusive and participatory communication that involves and empowers traditionally marginalized and disempowered groups.

I personally believe that community broadcasting plays a particularly vital role in developing countries where literacy levels are often low and I commend IPDC's efforts in this area. Earlier this month, I met with Haitian journalists from local radio stations taking part in a workshop in Port-au-Prince on post-disaster communication. I saw for myself just how much impact quite modest support, in financial terms, can have. IPDC's support for Haiti's media, will, I am sure, play a part in the recovery of this traumatized and devastated country.

IPDC, as well as providing financial support to projects, principally in developing countries, has also reinforced its programmatic approach. I welcome this fact. Let me here mention three initiatives launched which target specific issues of particular importance to media development.

Firstly, there is the report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity which, as Director-General, I am submitting to the Council at this session. This monitoring of the safety of journalists is an important new role for IPDC, and one that raises greater awareness of crimes committed against media professionals.

Attacks on the right of journalists to work free from the threat of violence are attacks on everyone's right to freedom of opinion and expression. The report requested by the Council, includes an overview of the killings that were condemned by the Organization in 2008-2009 and information about the responses received from Member States on judicial enquiries conducted into the killings of journalists during the previous biennium, in 2006-2007.

15 Member States provided us with detailed accounts of judicial follow up. This is a significant first step and it is my hope that this initiative will contribute to ending impunity in such cases, by encouraging and publicising judicial action each and every time a journalist is targeted.

Another recent initiative is the development and application of a comprehensive set of indicators of media development, endorsed by the IPDC Intergovernmental

Council at its 26th session in 2008. IPDC has launched a series of studies using these indicators in selected pilot countries. I applaud this essential step in the production of evidence-based recommendations to guide the formulation of national media-related policies. Such indicators also help to improve the targeting of media development interventions by both state and non-state actors.

Finally, IPDC has pursued its efforts to develop centres of excellence in journalism education throughout Africa. After a comprehensive mapping of 90 journalism institutions, IPDC identified eight with the potential to become centres of excellence. Collaboration has started with them through UNESCO's Regular Programme. In parallel to this, IPDC is seeking to mobilize extra-budgetary sources to transform the eight identified institutions into centres of excellence over a period of four years.

Distinguished delegates,

Before ending, I would like to remind you that IPDC relies entirely on the voluntary contributions made each year by Member States.

At the last Council session, it was suggested that all members of the Council should make at least a symbolic contribution to IPDC to demonstrate their commitment to the Programme. I sincerely hope that this suggestion will be given serious consideration by Council members.

Before concluding, let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the main IPDC donors in the 2007-2009 period for their generous contributions, namely Spain, Switzerland, Finland, the United States of America, Norway and Denmark

In the difficult context of the financial crisis, I am pleased to sound a note of optimism. Not only have contributions to the IPDC not decreased but there has actually been a slight increase in the total funds received by the Programme for 2010, which reached almost 2 million US dollars.

I hope this positive trend will continue and that the IPDC will be able to count on your unfailing support to continue expanding opportunities for free, independent and pluralistic media in developing countries worldwide.

Thank you for your attention.