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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the first Conference of Parties to
the Convention on the Protection and Promotion
of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**

UNESCO, 18 June 2007

Mr President of the General Conference,
Mr Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, former Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Mr Kader Asmal, Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on the
preliminary draft of the Convention,
Ministers and Heads of Delegations,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The first Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which opens today, is a source of great satisfaction to me, as I believe it must be to you all. It launches the second major stage in the life of the Convention, that of its implementation.

With me today are eminent personalities whose efforts and commitment helped move forward rapidly the debates and action needed to bring the Convention into being. I would like to pay tribute to them.

Professor Kader Asmal, former Minister of Education of South Africa and champion of the humanist approach to development, presided with great talent over the intergovernmental meeting of experts whose work led to the drawing up of the Convention. His tireless efforts to reconcile points of view and stimulate new ideas had more than a little to do with the success we are celebrating today.

Mr Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, was the driving force behind the World Commission on Culture and Development and spent four years working on the groundbreaking report which has become a key reference in the cultural diversity debate: *Our Creative Diversity*.

Mr Musa bin Jaafar bin Hassan, President of the General Conference and Permanent Delegate of the Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO, who presided over the adoption of the Convention by the General Conference at its 33rd session, demonstrates by being here at my side the unfailing interest he has always had for this matter.

But beyond this rostrum, I should like to welcome all of you in this hall and, in particular, the many ministers who wished to be with us today.

I should also like to welcome Ms Odile Quintin, Director General of Education and Culture of the European Commission. I welcome too the recent publication by the Commission of its communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world, which demonstrates its firm and clear commitment in support of this decisive stage in the Convention's implementation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Convention has beaten all the records for entry into force in the field of culture. The principal reason for this is most likely the relevance of the ideas. By adopting this Convention, the Member States wished to recognize creative diversity as an essential element of development. It is indeed the first standard-setting instrument that ties culture and development together in such a clear-cut way by directly addressing what is turning out to be one of the key issues of the twenty-first century: the place of cultural expressions in development, in view of the transformation of the ways in which culture is created, produced and distributed.

Another reason for its success is undoubtedly that the Convention is one of the first, and one of the only, international instruments that both recognizes the existence of globalization and strives to guide it and master its processes so that they will ensure not only the protection but also the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.

It is not by chance that UNESCO was entrusted with the task of drawing up the Convention. The point is to ensure sounder management of the cultural, and not just the economic, aspects of cultural activities, goods and services. The aim of the Convention is not so much to "regulate" exchanges, that is, to impose a set of rules on them, as to develop, encourage and facilitate them, which is precisely UNESCO's mission.

The finishing touch to the standard-setting foundation built by UNESCO in the field of culture over the last few decades, the Convention consolidates the legal framework formed by the seven conventions which now embrace cultural diversity's founding principles: the heritage and contemporary creation.

Together with two other instruments – the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage – it is a key element of that framework.

In view of the importance that the international community as a whole attaches to cultural diversity, I am particularly proud that UNESCO is now equipped with a solid and complementary standard-setting framework covering all aspects of cultural diversity. The Convention which brings you here today, and that of 2003 on the intangible heritage, will in particular have to function harmoniously and synergistically.

Today, 57 of you are Parties to the Convention: 56 States and the European Community as a regional economic integration organization. These are the States among you that deposited their instrument of ratification with UNESCO before 20 March 2007, or three months before the closure of the present meeting. They are therefore participating in the meeting as Parties, with full voting rights.

States which deposited their instrument of ratification later on, and there are six of them, are naturally present as observers.

A total of 62 States and one regional economic integration organization, the European Community, have thus deposited their instrument of ratification with UNESCO.

As I have just said, the rate of ratification was exceptionally rapid, a fact which gives me great satisfaction. Nevertheless, the geographical distribution of the States Parties is unfortunately not yet entirely balanced.

In order to achieve the Convention's aims in full, it is vital that the various regions of the world be represented by the States Parties in a balanced manner. At present, only three States from the Asia and Pacific region and three States from the Arab region have ratified the Convention. I hope therefore that other countries from these two regions will be joining you shortly.

International solidarity, which is at the heart of the Convention, will be fully developed when that objective is attained.

The implementation of the Convention also implies defining a role for civil society. Diverse, fragmented and stimulating, civil society has enthusiastically endorsed the Convention and endeavoured to have it ratified on all continents. Your task will be to outline the shape of future cooperation, define criteria for obtaining observer status and decide on the structures that should be set up to facilitate exchanges.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The first Conference's agenda is full.

After having elected your Chairperson and your Bureau, and adopted the agenda for this session, your first task will be to adopt the rules of procedure and to decide on the dates and place of the next session of the Conference of Parties.

You will also have the weighty task of electing the 24 members of the Intergovernmental Committee, which will operate under your authority and guidance. You will also have to decide on the dates and place of the Committee's first meeting.

In the light of the debates at the General Assembly of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and after having analysed the distribution of States Parties by regional groups at this first Conference, the Secretariat is submitting to you a proposal regarding the voting procedure.

Bearing in mind the requirement of equitable geographical representation set out in Article 23, paragraph 5 of the Convention, which stipulates that the election of Members of the Intergovernmental Committee shall be based on the principles of equitable geographical representation as well as rotation, a procedure might be envisaged whereby the seats to be filled would be distributed among the six electoral groups in proportion to the number of States Parties, with a minimum of three seats per group. It seems to me that this double calculation would ensure equitable geographical representation.

The Parties will certainly have already addressed among themselves the question of the maximum number of seats per region. In any event I hope that the

serene atmosphere that must prevail in the Committee will not in any way be disturbed by possible divergences of opinion in that regard.

Lastly, you will have to determine the operational procedures of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, which will be funded by voluntary contributions. It is important to decide as soon as possible on the ways in which you would like to see the Fund's resources used in the future in order to develop a genuine strategy for collecting funds.

The Fund will be at the centre of a cluster of international cooperation mechanisms, for it is important to bind the different forms of cooperation together, whether bilateral, regional or international and whether publicly or privately funded.

It will be necessary to devise innovative mechanisms to complement the existing structures and respond to clearly identified needs.

I can foresee two priority activities. First of all, the drawing up of national and sectoral cultural policies which will include all the different kinds of measures described in Articles 6, 7 and 8. And, of course, capacity-building.

Other international organizations such as the International Organization of the Francophonie and the Council of Europe have solid experience with specific activities and programmes in this area and that experience will certainly be valuable. The Convention Secretariat has entered into constructive dialogue with these organizations with a view to establishing synergies.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

All of you here are aware of it: you are experiencing today an important moment in the history of the Convention. You are going to launch its implementation so that its aims of international cooperation, sustainable development, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equal dignity of cultures, equitable access and openness to the cultures of the world can be wholly realized.

The programme ahead is therefore full. The tasks and responsibilities of the Intergovernmental Committee will be numerous and important. It will have to draw up the operational guidelines that will bring the Convention to life in spirit and in letter.

In addition to the conditions governing the use of the resources of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, the Committee will also have to determine the format of the reports on the measures taken by each Party to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions on its territory. It will therefore be necessary to define the information fields and to identify existing data and data which can be gathered reliably and by a deadline acceptable to all.

The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee could be held in December 2007. The meeting will be particularly important because the Committee will have the vital task of laying a solid and lasting foundation for the drawing up of operational guidelines that are clear and likely to be implemented by all the Parties.

We might then think of holding an extraordinary session of the Committee in May 2008 and another ordinary session in autumn 2008 followed, if necessary, by a further extraordinary session in spring 2009. The second Conference of Parties could then be held, two years after the first, in June 2009, at which time all of the texts drawn up by the Committee would be adopted. There would be, therefore, between the two Conferences of Parties, two ordinary sessions and two extraordinary sessions of the Committee. This is, of course, merely a preliminary outline, which will be made more specific as the actual work progresses and in response to any needs that may arise.

I wish you, then, as you may imagine, every success in your work.