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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 first extraordinary session
of the Intergovernmental Committee
for the Protection and Promotion
of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**

UNESCO, 24 June 2008

Mr Chair of the Executive Board,
Mr Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Committee,
Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegation,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be with you today for the first extraordinary session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, six months after your first ordinary session in Ottawa.

Regrettably, I was unable to join you at that session for it coincided with another important event which it was my duty to attend – the mid-term review of the Dakar Forum on Education for All.

First of all, allow me to thank the representatives of the Parties, whose presence today is testimony to the interest that their countries hold in the progress of the work of the Convention and in the implementation thereof.

I also wish to welcome the observers from civil society, whose commitment to the goals of the Convention is widely acknowledged. Yesterday, they had the opportunity to exchange points of view with the Parties on three important themes: the role of civil society in the promotion and implementation of the Convention; its contribution to the work of the organs of the Convention; and the relationship it can maintain with the International Fund for Cultural Diversity as contributor, beneficiary and service provider. I am certain that the Committee will be keen to draw upon this in its discussions.

Lastly, I should like to pay a particular tribute to your Chairperson, Ambassador Gilbert Laurin, who was able to create a favourable working environment for handling the complex and somewhat difficult agenda during your first session. He is among those who spare no effort in a wholehearted commitment to achieve consensus and reconcile disagreements. I am delighted that the first operational guidelines will be examined under his guidance and that he will continue as Chairperson until the end of the second ordinary session in December 2008.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your first session was widely acclaimed as a success. It laid the groundwork for discussions on the draft operational guidelines, which shall be continued during this extraordinary session.

The particularly rapid entry into force of the Convention, in March 2007, and the sustained pace of its ratification – two and a half years after its adoption, it has been signed by 84 Parties – bear witness to the significant interest and hopes that the international community places in this Convention.

It is therefore vital that we establish the guidelines that will enable us to deliver all the promises of this Convention.

The geographical distribution of Parties is steadily improving, which is a good sign: there are now eight Parties in the Asia and the Pacific region and six in the Arab region.

This is a true reflection of the efforts of the international community, particularly of the International Organization of the Francophonie, the Commonwealth and, of course, the International Network on Cultural Policy, as well as a number of other civil society coalitions.

This session's agenda is again a heavy one. You will be asked to examine five substantive documents, four of which concern the operational guidelines to be submitted in their final version to the Committee at its second ordinary session in December 2008.

The first document deals with the measures to promote and protect cultural expressions and international cooperation in situations where these are under serious threat (Articles 7, 8 and 17 of the Convention). Two information documents

on the Latin American and European approaches in this respect will undeniably provide you with food for thought.

The second substantive document focuses on partnerships. We are all aware of the strategic importance of synergies between and within the public and private sectors and non-profit organizations. We must now learn to better understand how these synergies can help towards attaining the aims of the Convention. I trust that the information document on the UNESCO Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity will also be a source of inspiration for you.

The third document focuses on the role and participation of civil society, whose importance is explicitly outlined in the Convention. As I mentioned earlier, the session of exchange held yesterday will certainly have given you an idea of the best approaches possible.

The fourth document concerns the International Fund for Cultural Diversity. It is an interim report based on the Parties' contributions with regard to the priorities and the use of the resources of the Fund. An essential tool for the implementation of the Convention, the Fund consists of voluntary contributions specifically intended to support cultural industries in developing countries.

For 2007-2008, the contributions paid by Andorra, Brazil, Finland, France, Monaco, Saint Lucia and Quebec amount to approximately \$440,000 and pledged contributions – from Cameroon, Canada, China, Germany, India, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, South Africa, Spain and Uruguay – should exceed \$1 million.

Lastly, you will be asked to examine an interim report on the selection of experts and terms of reference for the reports on preferential treatment, presented by the Chairperson.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last six months, the Secretariat has worked tirelessly despite the modest human resources at its disposal. I must, in this respect, thank France for having kindly made available an expert for two years; Spain, which already funds an Associate Expert post; and Germany, which has opened recruitment for an Associate Expert post. With this added expertise, the Section will better be able to fulfil its far-reaching mandate.

I should also like to announce that I shall soon be able to appoint the Director of the Division of Cultural Expressions and Creative Industries – a post which was advertised twice – who shall be responsible for the Secretariat of the Convention. In this respect, I should like to extend warm thanks to our colleague, Mr Indrasen Vencatachellum, who acted as Director with competence and vigour for close to two years. He will now embark on a well-deserved retirement and I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

This Convention is an innovative instrument, which will require a great deal of imagination and creativity for everyone to benefit fully from its implementation. You will surely have noticed that this year, World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development was celebrated with particular splendour and that the creators were in the limelight.

I am certain that all the Parties to the Convention will be eager to translate its principles into reality and to “encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world”, as invited to in Article 1. You will therefore have the weighty but thrilling task of developing a common understanding of these principles and providing the guidelines for the Convention that meet with the approval of all.

It remains only for me to wish you every success in your work.

Thank you.