



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
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  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

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 Ceremony  
for UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi  
Research Fellowships Programme.**

**UNESCO, 8 June 2009**

Madam Obuchi,  
Mr Ambassador,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address this ceremony, which marks five successful editions of the UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi Research Fellowships Programme.

Allow me to extend special greetings to Mrs Chizuko Obuchi, who has strongly supported the programme from its inception and who joined us at the first such ceremony held here at UNESCO Headquarters in April 2004. Let me also welcome 16 UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi fellows, many of whom have travelled far to attend this special event today.

I would like to share with you the memory of the great statesman and humanist, former Japanese Prime Minister, Mr Keizo Obuchi, who tragically left us in May 2000, at the height of his distinguished career. After meeting as classmates at secondary school in Japan in the early 1950's, Keizo Obuchi and I became lifelong friends. As Prime Minister of Japan, he strongly supported my candidature for the post of Director-General of UNESCO and his premature death, just six months after I took up that office, was not only a national loss for Japan – it was a personal loss for me.

As a public figure, Mr Obuchi will always be remembered for his faith in the power of people to shape the world and forge a better future.

In his first policy speech to the Japanese Diet he said:

“To ensure that the new era brings a bright world rich in hope for ourselves and future generations, I am resolved to bring together the wisdom of the people to build the next era, based on the creed of hard hands and a soft heart”.

He believed that the key to success for every country lay in developing the capacity of human resources, especially by investing through education in the younger generation. I shared and continue to share this conviction.

Nine years after he passed away, Keizo Obuchi's beliefs are more important today than ever. His priorities remain ours:

- Reforming education systems with a view to developing what Mr Obuchi called the “education of the heart”;
- Achieving gender equality;
- Safeguarding the global environment;
- Preventing disaster through enhancing human capacity for crisis management.
- Making the 21st century a “century of peace” through dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution;

These objectives still resonate strongly today, in particular here at UNESCO.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to commemorate and honour this great man and his noble vision, I established the UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi research fellowships in 2001 with the financial support of the Japanese Government. Through this programme, 20 Fellowships are granted to exceptional candidates from developing countries and countries in transition every year.

This programme has supported innovative and imaginative post-graduate research in areas of development to which former Prime Minister Obuchi was committed: the environment – especially the water sciences; intercultural dialogue; information and communication technologies; and peaceful conflict resolution. The programme has

made a significant contribution to boosting human capacity in developing countries. By allowing selected candidates to take up research in any academic host institution anywhere in the world, the fellowships have also helped expand knowledge exchange and transfer between developed and developing countries. Up to 2008, 160 students from 82 countries have benefited from these fellowships, with the support of academic host institutions in 52 Member States. Candidatures for the 2009 awards are currently being evaluated and 20 more students will be awarded Fellowships in 2010, thus bringing the total number of students to 200.

I wish to reiterate my thanks to these institutions for their support. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Japan, without whose generous financial assistance this very popular initiative would not have been possible. Allow me also to express my hope that it will maintain its funding for the programme long into the future so that the UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi Fellowships may continue to extend help to gifted young researchers from developing countries. As Keizo Obuchi argued, and as UNESCO firmly believes, strengthening human capacity is the surest means to greater freedom, peace and prosperity.

Thank you