

Homage to Ms Irina Bokova, Outgoing Director-General of UNESCO,
by Chairperson of the Asia and Pacific Countries (ASPAC),
H.E Dato' Mohd Zulkifli Mohammed, Ambassador Permanent Delegate
of Malaysia

Mr. President

Honorable Ministers

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of my esteemed colleagues from the ASPAC Group, I am deeply honored to be called upon amongst others to pay a much-deserved homage to our out-going Director-General, Ms. Irina Bokova. Over the eight years as Director-General and an earlier period of service to her Government as Ambassador Permanent Delegate of Bulgaria to UNESCO, "Irina" as most of us call her, has inevitably become so much part of our working lives in UNESCO that at hindsight, it is going to be difficult to imagine UNESCO without her!

Mr. President,

Eight years of stewardship of this great organization may seem to be a comparatively short period. But to her singular credit, Ms. Bokova has to our

mind accomplished a great deal of success in every single major programme despite the monetary turbulence that stormed the UNESCO ship whether it was in the high seas or docked at a safe harbor. Ms Bokova did her level best to maintain UNESCO's programmes that continue to see so much support from Member States especially when these programmes are often replicated by different Ministries and Agencies at the country-level. Thus, we see a steady growth of Category II Centres in all our regions.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Among the many accomplishments of the Bokova era, history will no doubt take kindly to the specific efforts of Ms. Bokova to master-mind the Education 2030 Inchon Declaration at the World Education Forum held in the Republic of Korea from 19-22 May 2015. This Declaration re-affirmed the vision to continue the movement started with the second millennium's Grand Design on Education for All unveiled at Jomtien by Ms. Bokova's immediate predecessor, Mr. Matsuura, to the milestone event of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Further, through the force of her personality backed-up by an array of technical know-how, Ms. Bokova had worked relentlessly within the UN System-with the full support of Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon- to

eventually get the U.N General Assembly to recognize that Culture is a renewable resource par excellence and should thus constitute a major dimension within the Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, we wish to place on record our deeply-felt gratitude as well as the affection that we have for Ms. Bokova. We wish her and her family the very best for the future.

Thank you.

Dato' Mohd Zulkifli Mohammed