



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

Draft

**Address by Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of the visit to Kyoto University**

***“Kyoto and UNESCO – a Partnership for Learning and
Cultural Heritage”***

Kyoto, 6 November 2012

Professor Hiroshi Matsumoto, President of Kyoto University,

Dear Professors and Students,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to be at Kyoto University.

I wish to start with the words of Professor Hiroshi Matsumoto,
President of the University, speaking last April at the ceremony
for entering undergraduates:

*“My hope is for you to acquire a broad education and knowledge,
so you are able to see the essence of things and make decisions
based on considerations from many perspectives.”*

This, he declared, is how we can cultivate *“a global mind to meet
the requirements of today's world.”*

This is the spirit of Kyoto University.

This is one of the world's leading institutions of higher learning, a university for Nobel Prize winners and Fields medallists.

In this respect, allow me to congratulate Professor Shinya Yamanaka for jointly receiving the 2012 Nobel Prize in Medicine.

This is a University dedicated to opening young minds, to deepening and sharing knowledge, in order to build harmony between the "*human and ecological community on this planet*" – in the words of your Mission Statement.

UNESCO stands with you in this mission.

Our Constitution opens with the following words:

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

Written after the devastation of World War Two, the Constitution reflected a conviction that peace had to be built in new ways.

To quote again from our Constitution:

"Peace must be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."

In the turmoil of reconstruction, these words offered hope and a new belief in humanity. They pointed to our potential to rebuild on new foundations, through the strength of solidarity.

These ideas have deep roots in Japan.

The world's first UNESCO Club was created here, in July 1947.

This paved the way for Japan to join UNESCO in 1951, five years before its formal admission to the United Nations.

Indeed, we celebrated last year the 60th anniversary of Japan's membership of UNESCO.

For sixty-one years, Japan's engagement with UNESCO has been guided by a deep commitment to build solidarity in adversity.

This engagement has reflected what I see as an essential humanism – a belief in the possibility of positive change through the will to work, to join forces, to build bridges.

We need this spirit more than ever today.

It is especially moving to say this some eighteen months after the Great East Japan Tsunami and Earthquake.

On behalf of UNESCO, I wish to express once again my deep condolences for all victims of the Earthquake and Tsunami and to convey my heartfelt sympathy to all affected by its devastating impact.

These disasters sum up the complexity of the challenges we face today.

What is the meaning of 'progress' in this time of rapid change and rising uncertainty?

What are the foundations for peace and sustainability in the 21st century?

These are the questions we must address together.

These questions are being raised by women and men across the world calling for opportunities to live in dignity.

They lay at the heart of the *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* held last June in Rio de Janeiro.

They are especially important as we approach the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals and shape a new global development agenda.

I am convinced we need fresh thinking about development.

This is what I mean by calling for a new humanism in my vision for UNESCO today.

This is really an appeal, to invest in the dignity and capabilities of every woman and man.

Human imagination is the ultimate renewable energy – but so much of it today is untapped or stymied.

We live in a new age of limits -- in terms of resources, in terms of our planet.

This means we must make far more of the boundless energy of human ingenuity.

We must release the full powers of innovation and creativity, to craft new solutions that are inclusive, just and sustainable.

Culture, Ladies and Gentlemen, is our first platform for action.

2012 is a special year for both UNESCO and Japan.

The World Heritage Convention turns 40 years old this year, and this is also the 20th anniversary of Japan's ratification of this legal instrument.

Our joint vision is clear.

Cultural heritage and cultural diversity are sources of identity and solidarity. They are wellsprings of innovation and creativity.

UNESCO works to promote culture as a dynamic force that renews societies and enlarges opportunities.

The World Heritage Convention is a global flagship for safeguarding sites of "*outstanding universal value*."

Japan is a champion here -- with sixteen sites, cultural and natural, inscribed on the World Heritage List.

These include the Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area, Shirakami-Sanchi, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome) and Yakushima.

Last February, I had the honour to present the certificate for the inscription of Hiraizumi on the World Heritage List and to visit this extraordinary site, which embodies the aspiration of the Japanese people for harmony between humanity and nature.

This showed the power of culture as a force for solidarity.

The 40th anniversary focuses on the role of local communities, and it is not a coincidence that the official closing celebrations are being held in Kyoto.

I take this opportunity to thank once again the Government of Japan and Japanese society for their leadership.

The Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994 -- in recognition of the outstanding illustration they provide of the development of Japanese wooden architecture, especially religious architecture, and the art of Japanese gardens, which has influenced landscape gardening across the world.

Founded in the 8th century and an imperial capital for over a thousand years, Kyoto carries special meaning for Japanese identity.

This city is also woven into the wider history of humanity – it belongs to all of us.

Kyoto has always been a leading partner for UNESCO.

The 22nd session of the World Heritage Committee was held here in 1998 – chaired by the then-Japanese Ambassador to France, Excellency Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, who went on to serve as Director-General of UNESCO from 1999 to 2009.

Kyoto helped to build the *League of Historical Cities* -- a global network of some 100 historical cities committed to cooperation for peace.

In 2006, UNESCO agreed with the *Research Centre for Disaster Mitigation of Urban Cultural Heritage* at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto to establish a *UNESCO Chair on Cultural Heritage and Risk Management*.

This Chair works to promote an integrated system of research and training and to facilitate collaboration between researchers across the world.

In 2003, let me also mention, UNESCO established with Kyoto University an *International Consortium on Landslides Mitigation for Society and Environment Cooperation*, as part of our university networking programme.

To make the most of cultural heritage, we must start with young women and men.

They are already changing the world. We must help them develop new skills for civic engagement and ensure they are part of decisions taken today that will affect them tomorrow.

This is the goal of UNESCO's *World Heritage Education Programme* -- to empower young women and men to participate in heritage conservation and respond to threats facing our monuments, sites and natural treasures.

Just a few days ago, in Kyoto, a youth programme was held on "*World Heritage -- the roles of local communities and youth for the next decade*" that brought together young women and men from across the world.

I was encouraged -- and not at all surprised -- to hear the voices of so many young Japanese women and men.

In ever more diverse societies, we need stronger public policies to harness culture and diversity as positive forces.

We need new skills, new forms of what I call 'cultural literacy.'

Culture is a force that renews humanity and enlarges opportunities, provided it is not instrumentalised against human rights.

Eleven years ago, UNESCO adopted the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* which declares that the defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We must be clear -- no one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights, nor to limit their scope.

Heritage is not only about stones -- it is living, and it gains meaning when it is inscribed in the lives of local communities.

In Syria and in Mali, we see culture on the frontline of conflicts.

Attacks against cultural heritage are blows against the very identity of communities. Protecting heritage is not a luxury we can leave for better days.

Often the first victim of war, culture can restore ties that have been broken.

The rebuilding of the Old Bridge of Mostar under UNESCO's stewardship illustrates this power.

Over the past ten years, we have been developing 'cultural corridors' in South East Europe, through an annual regional forum involving Heads of State and Government, whose 8th summit was held two weeks ago in Sofia.

A force for peace, culture is also a wellspring of innovation.

Cultural industries are growing across the world, but they need our support.

This is the purpose of UNESCO's *2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* and our work to support cultural industries in developing countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Releasing the power of human ingenuity must start also with education.

Education is a basic human right, essential for individual dignity.

It is also a breakthrough strategy for peace and sustainable development.

On a planet under pressure, education is the best way to shape new ways of thinking and acting, to build resilient societies able to adapt to change and mitigate its impact.

This idea underpins the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* that Japan sponsored and which UNESCO leads.

Our aim is to equip individuals with the knowledge, attitudes and skills to allow them to make informed choices and responsible decisions.

With Japan's support, we are working to reorient educational programmes, to train teachers in education for sustainable development, and to raise awareness with young people and adults.

Following Japan's example, after 2004, Indonesia and Thailand have accelerated risk reduction education with UNESCO's support.

Our idea is to empower all citizens to act for positive environmental and social change.

We are actively preparing with Japan the 2014 *Conference on Education for Sustainable Development* that will close the United Nations Decade.

This conference must take stock of the outcomes of the Decade and look forward to a new global agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In all of this, UNESCO works shoulder to shoulder with Japan.

I wish to thank the Japanese Government for its support, and I wish to thank *you* especially.

Japan's commitment to UNESCO reflects values that are deeply held in this society, that are taken forward in universities by professors, researchers and students, by each of you.

This is why I am so pleased to have signed an agreement on an internship programme with Kyoto University.

This opens UNESCO's doors to the talent and passion of young women and men, to strengthen our shared values.

These values reflect a vision of humanity and of the world that is inspired by a sense of solidarity and unity.

As you know, the unity of the self and the world was one of the concerns of the philosopher Professor Kitaro Nishida, who did so much to marry Western and Eastern thinking and who founded the Kyoto School of Philosophy

Professor Nishida once wrote:

“Over time I came to realize that it is not that experience exists because there is an individual, but that an individual exists because there is experience.”

These are inspiring words.

We are who we are, not only because of what we do, but because of *how* we live. Each of us is part of the world, we carry it with us and have a responsibility to it

I am convinced we need today a new harmony and a new sense of community, with our peers, with all cultures, with the planet.

For me, this is the essence of a new humanism to guide us today and tomorrow, to lay the foundations for a more just and sustainable century ahead.

Thank you.