



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

DG/2006/179
Original: French

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the ceremony held by the European Commission
to celebrate the ratification by the European Community
and its Member States of the Convention on the Protection
and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**

Brussels, 19 December 2006

Mr Commissioner,
Distinguished Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me genuine pleasure to have UNESCO associated with the ceremony celebrating the ratification by the European Community and 13 of its Member States (or future members) of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted by UNESCO in October 2005.

As of last Friday, 22 instruments had already been deposited. With the addition of 13 instruments, deposited yesterday at UNESCO Headquarters, the 30 ratifications needed for the Convention's entry into force has been achieved, and even exceeded since we now have 35 ratifications. The Convention will enter into force on 18 March 2007. And I shall make every effort to ensure that the first Assembly of States Parties takes place as soon as possible.

This ceremony represents an important milestone in the European Community's commitment.

Since 2001 and the unanimous adoption of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the steadfast commitment of the European Community and its Member States to a convention that seeks to garner international support for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions does great credit to the European Union countries.

You have particularly welcomed the fact that the Convention seeks to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; recognizes the specific nature of cultural goods and services as vectors of identity, values and meaning; reaffirms the importance of policies and measures that foster creative diversity; and stresses the need for international cooperation to respond to situations in which cultural expressions may be threatened.

All these concerns reflect great expectations in terms of sustainable development, social cohesion and peace.

At a time when the European Commission is proposing to proclaim the year 2008 as European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, I can only stress the primary aim of this Convention, a timely supplement to those intended to safeguard the diversity of our heritages.

As we are well aware, cultural diversity can take various forms: within our intangible, movable and immovable cultural heritage, including traditional cultural expressions, and within all aspects of contemporary creation.

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, together with the 2005 Convention, are thus the main pillars of the promotion and protection of cultural diversity.

UNESCO has an array of other standard-setting instruments that reinforce this protection, including the Universal Copyright Convention, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2001 but unfortunately still not in force.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ratification of the 2005 Convention commits each Party to both a legal and operational process involving many partners – States and regional economic integration organizations as well as civil society.

I would like to believe that we will continue to jointly exercise this shared responsibility, which consists in placing cultural diversity, the leaven of harmonious coexistence, at the top of the political agenda.

I am delighted by the commitment demonstrated so far by the Community and its Member States, which today has again found an excellent way to express its solidarity. I hope that many other States will display the same commitment, especially in Asia and in the Arab region, since, with the exception of India, the States in these regions have yet to ratify the Convention.

I will shortly be restructuring the Culture Sector in such a way that its four Divisions can ensure the effective implementation of all the conventions, which should henceforth be managed in a consistent and complementary fashion. This is one of the major challenges that must be met by my new Assistant Director-General for Culture, Françoise Rivière, here beside me, and by the four Directors who will be working with her on this task. The secretariat for the 2005 Convention will be placed within the Division of Arts and Cultural Enterprise.

I wish to conclude by paying special tribute to Ms Katérina Sténou, Director of the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue in the Culture Sector, who contributed her best efforts to the lengthy and complex task of drawing up the Convention. Today, her efforts have been rewarded.

Thank you for your attention.