

**Welcome Remarks by the
President of the 34th session of the General Conference
Dr George Anastassopoulos**

On the occasion of the official visit of

**His Excellency the President of the Republic of Paraguay
Mr Nicanor Duarte Frutos and
His Excellency the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea
Mr Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo**

Mr. Chairman of the Executive Board,
Mr. Director-General
Ministers,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

As President of the 34th session of the General Conference, and on behalf of all my colleagues here present today, I wish to welcome to UNESCO-House His Excellency the President of the Republic of Paraguay Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos and His Excellency the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo.

For the past two weeks, and until the 3rd of November, over 3500 delegates have gathered from the four corners of our planet to share our concerns and agree on the best way to address them. As the Conference is in its final days of deliberation, the presence today of our distinguished guests provides us with the opportunity to measure beyond these walls, the significance and implications of our work, in the areas of education, the sciences, culture and communication.

Indeed, as we speak, may I remind you that there are women and men, on all continents, that live below the poverty line, without the means to cover basic necessities, who have to choose between education and survival, freedom of speech and their personal safety. These men and women are counting on us and growing impatient.

Though UNESCO, as we all know, is not a humanitarian organization, its mission remains all the same urgent and set on serving the most fragile and disenfranchised. More than ever before, UNESCO's core mandate "*to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture*" is of the highest importance and key to addressing the basic inequalities that are driving the threats to our global security.

Mr Nicanor Duarte Frutos,

Turning to you sir, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for ratifying, among the first countries to do so, the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage and in the same breath the Convention for the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Both of these decisions are being understood as an expression of your will and determination to join the international community's resolve to nurture global stability through the preservation and promotion of our planet's cultural diversity.

In this matter, your own country has many experiences to share, notably regarding the preservation of linguistic diversity. Indeed, the Guarani language, which is the only indigenous

language of the Americas whose overwhelming majority of speakers are non-indigenous people, is spoken by about 94% of the population of Paraguay, as well as numerous communities in neighboring countries.

Turning to you **Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo** we have had the great pleasure to learn about your many promising initiatives in education through your Minister of Education, Science and Sports. In his statement to our plenary last week, he informed us of your various programmes to promote quality education at all levels of education notably through teacher training, curricula reform and the provision of didactic materials. These efforts coupled with your national literacy campaign are most encouraging and we look very much forward to hearing more about your experience.

My distinguished guests, I will end my remarks here by inviting you both to take the floor in turn, starting with the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. President, you can take the floor. Thank you.

<< Mr Nicanor Duarte Frutos SPEAKS >>

Je vous remercie pour vos idées et vos pensées. Je vous remercie d'avoir autant mis en valeur l'éducation de manière si large, telle que nous l'apprécions à l'UNESCO.

Monsieur Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo vous avez la parole.

<<Mr Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo SPEAKS >>

Señor Presidente,

Le agradezco mucho sus palabras y me congratula que la dimensión universal de la lengua Española se ponga de relieve en el día de hoy.

I declare the session adjourned.