

**Discours de l'ex-Président de la conférence Générale de l'UNESCO et  
Délégué permanent de la Grèce auprès de l'UNESCO, Ambassadeur D.  
Georges Anastassopoulos à la 35 Conférence Générale**

**Paris, 08 octobre 2009**

-----

**«Αιέν αριστεύειν και υπείροχον έμμεναι άλλων». («Always to be the best and to be distinguished above the rest», was saying Homer in the Iliad).**

30 Centuries have passed since then, but the Homeric dictum has lost none of its significance. As Greeks, we still and strongly believe that the search for excellence should be a most important trait to characterize UNESCO. In all its activities, in all its programs, in all the persons to serve the middle aged world Organization.

The goal of excellence should, indeed, guide us in the new period we are now entering, after Koichiro Matsuura's decade. Our Japanese Director-General tried hard during this difficult period and brought UNESCO notable administrative and financial order. But he may have embarked a bit late on the reforms that had been so badly required and has not had the time to conclude them.

Still, even in his last, the actual 35<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference, he did present us with significal proposals to change its structure and allow the ministerial messages to play a bigger role in

shaping UNESCO'S future. The recommendations of a working group of 40 Ambassadors, under your present speaker's leadership had prepared the around. And we earnestly hope that they will bring the first remarkable results.

Greece is, however, not only backing this radical effort. It does not participate in a politics of cynicism and does espouse a politics of change in every possible direction. More than ever, we believe, the world needs a strong and vibrant UNESCO, that defends and promotes the highest ethical values.

In the past, UNESCO has launched the first international programme that conducted a scientific study on the environment, 23 years before the Stockholm Conference. It forged the ground – breaking concepts of “World heritage” and the “common heritage of humanity”. It was around UNESCO that the concept of “lifelong education for all” emerged, with the Edgar Faure report in 1972. It was UNESCO that has played a pioneering role in bioethics and published the first world report towards knowledge societies.

However strong, these elements may not suffice to cover the title of the ethical and moral conscience of humanity, as UNESCO has often been called. The Organization cannot merely be the curator of the fine values of yesteryear. UNESCO's ethical conscience must be forward

looking and must represent “ethics in action”, the ethics of today and those of tomorrow.

We must also care about the serious matter of funding. Member States may crowd UNESCO with new demands; new mandates, new meetings, new Conventions and new Centers, but unfortunately they are not providing it with the resources commensurate with these ambitions. UNESCO is suffering with chronic under funding and needs more funding if it is to remain the first port of call in its field of competence.

Let us be absolutely clear: disinvestment in the U.N. is a disinvestment in multilateralism and it weakens the instruments which are necessary to respond to the global challenges which confront us today.

Increasing the core funding of UNESCO must therefore become a very high priority for the new administration. We must stop the descent into the no-growth paradigm that disembowels us all.

Having just formulated some of our basic demands from our Director General Designate, I have become conscious that we are may be running the danger of associating Irina Bokova with too high expectations. Because, we would also add reforms and innovations, the need for UNESCO to impose its presence when it is asked to lead alliances with other much more wealthy organizations, as it happens on

education, or the problem to ensure respect to the Conventions it is shaping etc, etc.

I believe that we must be fair to Irina Bokova. She has fought a long and finally successful battle to succeed Koichiro Matsuura and she has thus become the first ever woman to get a most important job. We salute and congratulate her on this achievement. But we have to make urgently clear that we can't expect everything from her strong will and her good appetite for work. We also have to stand next to her, to help her and substantially to contribute, in order to make this new period more refreshing and more fruitful.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Fidèle à son Acte Constitutif, l'UNESCO est activement engagée depuis de longues années dans la promotion d'un dialogue interculturel durable au niveau international.

Comme M.M. Barbosa l'a récemment souligné à l'ouverture de la Conférence Internationale "Rencontres Interculturelles dans l'orient hellénisé", nous considérons en effet un tel dialogue nécessaire pour promouvoir la cohésion sociale, la réconciliation et la paix.

On pourrait s'apercevoir que toutes les initiatives relatives de l'UNESCO poursuivaient un même objectif : favoriser une lecture d'histoire qui soit ouverte, diversifiée, pluraliste, mettant l'accent sur les échanges et les transferts culturels.

Le Directeur Général adjoint de l'UNESCO a été heureux de constater que la Conférence, à laquelle il s'exprimait, propose une lecture interculturelle de l'orient hellénisé, autour de la figure d'Alexandre le Grand.

A travers l'hellénisation de l'orient, portée par les guerres de conquête d'Alexandre le Grand, se développent en effet des syncrétismes religieux et artistiques très féconds, incarnés notamment dans l'art gréco-bouddhique.

Est-ce que cette Conférence ne s'inscrit pas pleinement dans les préparatifs de 2010, année internationale du rapprochement des Cultures ? Et est-ce que l'UNESCO n'est pas le gardien du Temple de l'intégrité intellectuelle et politique de l'histoire ? Nous souhaitons qu'elle reste et que son rôle soit toujours assuré !

-----