



**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of
the first session of the Intergovernmental Committee
for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
Ottawa, Canada, 10-13 December 2007**

Although I am at this very moment in Dakar for the meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All, I wanted to transmit to you, through this message, all my wishes for success on the occasion of the first session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

The promotion of cultural diversity is, as you know, one of the main priority objectives of the Organization, and has been ever since it was founded. The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the most recent instrument adopted by UNESCO in the field of culture, has completed the standard-setting foundation enabling the Organization to attain that objective.

The first Conference of Parties, which was held at UNESCO Headquarters from 18 to 20 June 2007, was an important breakthrough. Through its rigour and resolve, flexibility and realism, it showed the way forward to implementing the Convention. Its main characteristic – in the opinion of all – was its desire to be effective through consensus. I am sure that this spirit will continue to guide your work.

It is a source of great satisfaction to me to note the sustained and regular rate at which we are recording ratifications of the Convention, constantly improving its geographical representativeness. Since those first, pioneering ratifications – by Canada and Mauritius – there are now 76 Parties to the Convention. This serves as additional encouragement for us all.

The Convention was eagerly anticipated; the tools that, through you, it will offer to support cultural expressions are even more so.

This first session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions will have to deal with many issues in just four days. You will have to determine working methods, draw up a timetable, engage in an initial exchange of views on the innovative arrangements that will enable the development of international cooperation in the field of culture, and strengthen the position of civil society; you will also have to agree on the use of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity. Under the direction of the Intergovernmental Committee, clear, pragmatic guidance will have to be developed in all these fields.

The challenge will be to successfully assist the emergence of a dynamic cultural sector. It will also be to encourage the construction and development of flourishing cultural and creative industries for sustainable development, poverty reduction and social cohesion. Through this instrument, we aspire to enrich every citizen of the world, nurtured, through fruitful dialogue, by all the world's cultural expressions.

The gaze of the international community is turned towards you today in expectation of the decisions you will take, which will be a commitment for the future. I wish you then every success in your work, whose results I will follow with great attention.

Koïchiro Matsuura