

**Reception Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the Adoption of the
UNESCO Constitution, the 75th Anniversary of Japan's Accession to
UNESCO, and the 20th Anniversary of JFIT's support to Education for
Sustainable Development (ESD)
Speech by H.E. Mr. KANO Takehiro**

H.E. Mr MATSUURA Koichiro, 9th Director-General of UNESCO,
H.E. Prof. Khaled El-Enany, 12th Director-General of UNESCO,
Mr President and former Presidents of the General Conference of UNESCO,
Mr Chairperson and former Chairpersons of the Executive Board of UNESCO,
Ms HIBINO Junko, Chairperson of the Japanese National Commission of
UNESCO,

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

It is my great honour to host this reception commemorating several anniversaries, including the 80th Anniversary of the adoption of the UNESCO Constitution, immediately after the successful conclusion of the 43rd session of the General Conference, the 223rd session of the Executive Board, and the full establishment of the new UNESCO team.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the people and the Government of Uzbekistan for their warm hospitality in Samarkand. Many of us have still fresh fond memories there.

Also, I would like to congratulate the new Director-General, Prof Khaled El-Enany, who just started his duty last Saturday. All of us received your message the day one, and I know that your first semi-official function was jogging with us on Sunday morning, the birthday of UNESCO. Welcome to Paris, Mr Director-General. My congratulations also go to Ambassador Khondker Talha of Bangladesh who ably chaired the 43rd session of General Conference

as President, Ambassador Nasser Hamad Hinzab of Qatar, who has been elected today as Chairperson of the Executive Board, and all newly elected and reelected Executive Board members. Good luck to all of you and you can count on Japan's support.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the outstanding achievements of three distinguished ladies. The outgoing Director-General, Ms Audrey Azoulay, who is unfortunately not with us today due to other engagements, but kindly agreed to send the video-message, as well as the outgoing President of the General Conference Ms Simona-Mirela Miculescu, and the outgoing Chairperson of the Executive Board Ms Vera El Khoury Lacoueilhe. It may sound a bit awkward to say to these ladies that they leave big shoes which three gentlemen may find it hard to fill, but I would like to thank them all for their contribution to UNESCO, from the bottom of my heart.

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

You may wonder why Japan is hosting the event commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the UNESCO Constitution. My short answer is that this is one of our voluntary contributions, commemorating it together with our own anniversaries. I understand that UNESCO did organize official commemorative events up to the 70th Anniversary, counting from the year of adoption of the Constitution in 1945, and the 70th anniversary event was held in 2015. But it was not possible to organize the 75th anniversary in 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and so it was deferred in 2021 as the 75th anniversary of the establishment of UNESCO in 1946, the year when the Constitution entered into force. No official plan is being made yet with regard to the 80th Anniversary, as I

understand.

So, in the meantime, we are offering this event as an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the historic event 80 years ago. Such a reflection is useful because the international situation then was equally bleak or much bleaker, compared with the one we are facing today.

As we know, the Constitution of UNESCO was adopted in London on 16 November 1945. Although the Second World War had ended three months earlier, the Cold War was on the horizon and hot wars were breaking out in many parts of the world. The Iron Curtain was being laid across Europe, and many nations were struggling for freedom and independence in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Nonetheless, our predecessors believed in the value of educational, scientific and cultural cooperation among nations, and nations that became free and independent in subsequent years joined UNESCO one after another. Japan was one of them. In December 1950, we submitted the application and Japan became a member of UNESCO in July 1951. We therefore are organizing a series of events this year and 2026 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of our accession to UNESCO. They give us unique opportunities to reflect ourselves and renew our commitment to this Organization.

Education is one of our major commitments to UNESCO. You may recall that Mr MATSUURA as Director-General had put education as a top priority. And Japan has promoted Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) , and this year marks the 20th Anniversary of Japan Funds in Trust's support to ESD. Before this reception, we organized the Award Ceremony of the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD, with participation of 3 laureates of Benin, Brazil, and Panama.

Excellences, Chers Collègues,

Nous avons aujourd'hui avec nous des invités japonais distingués : un Maître de Thé Urasenke, Monsieur Mori Soyu, un artiste céramiste Monsieur Matsubayashi Hosai, et une artiste pratiquant la sumi-e ou peinture à l'encre, Madame Inoue Yoshimi, qui nous présenterons la Cérémonie du Thé et les arts qui y sont liés. Je souhaite également mentionner l'Association Kura-Master, qui organise chaque année depuis 2017 un concours de Saké à Paris, et qui nous offre toute une variété de Sake, boisson dont la fabrication traditionnelle est désormais inscrite sur la Liste représentative du Patrimoine culturel immatériel. J'espère que vous apprécierez tout cela.

Après la célébration de son 80^{ème} anniversaire, l'UNESCO entre cette semaine dans une nouvelle ère. Nous sommes tous dans le même bateau, le bateau UNESCO, avec un nouveau capitaine, Monsieur Director-General El-Enany, et un nouvel équipage.

De grands défis se profilent à l'horizon non seulement au sein de l'Organisation mais aussi en dehors. C'est un moment difficile pour le multilatéralisme, tout comme ça l'était il y a 80 ans. Le bateau UNESCO se trouvera confronté à beaucoup d'aléas, de récifs et de ressac.

Cependant, pour reprendre la devise de la ville de Paris, « *Fluctuat nec mergitur* ». Avec l'espoir et la confiance que nous plaçons dans le nouveau capitaine et dans le nouvel équipage de notre bateau, et grâce à notre foi dans le multilatéralisme, le bateau ne coulera pas.

Je souhaite bonne chance à nous tous et je vous remercie de votre attention.