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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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联合国教育、
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Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the Opening Ceremony of
the Third Edition of the Master in Arts
Management and Administration (MAMA)**

*“UNESCO’s soft power today: forging new ways
for peace and sustainable development”*

Bocconi University, Milan, 29 September 2017

Mr Gianmario Verona, Rector, Università Bocconi,

Ms Ilaria Borletti Buitoni, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Cultural
Heritage and Activities,

Mr Andrea Rurale, Director of the Master in Arts Management and
Administration, SDA Bocconi School of Management,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Students,

I am very honoured to be here, in Milan, for the opening ceremony of the
third edition of the Master in Arts Management and Administration.

I wish to thank you all for your invitation, and to commend the dynamism
and enthusiasm of your institution.

I was at the Bocconi University a few days ago, to participate in the Global Consortium for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, co-chaired by the University of Yale, and I see this event today as further testimony of the dynamism of your institution.

The Master in Arts Management and Administration seeks to respond to the needs of a world where arts and culture have now more than ever a key role in economy, development and peace.

This captures also the mission of higher education today – to empower women and men to meet the tests of their times, to find innovative solutions for a world rich in diversity and experiences.

Arts, culture, education are not separate from civil and social life – they are the “software” of any sustainable development, and this message is deeply rooted in the history and spirit of Italy.

I came here 7 years ago, at the very beginning of my mandate, to speak about New Humanism at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, and it is deeply moving to be back here as I am about to step down as Director General.

I came here in 2015, in the framework of the Expo 2015, to participate in the International Conference of Ministers of Culture titled “Culture as a Tool to Improve the Dialogue among Peoples” – a very relevant and timely event opened by Minister Dario Franceschini.

I remember equally, on the same occasion, the lecture by the late great humanist and intellectual Umberto Eco. I wish, as a tribute to this major thinker, to quote him: “In a world dominated by military conflicts, the spread

of culture and mutual understanding of the cultural assets of countries can be an element of safety for an ever more globalized planet”. Professore Eco also stated that “it is not true that culture cannot be eaten; in many nations, cultural assets are a precious economic resource and a key point for coexistence and mutual understanding”.

These words and this vision echo perfectly your Masters’ programme, and our topic today.

Coming back to the profound symbolic dimension of the city of Milan, I cannot but emphasize the overall inspiring presence of the Italian Renaissance, of Leonardo da Vinci, whose talent and vision of the human condition are so powerfully captured in the painting of the *Ultima Cena* at the *Cenacolo Vinciano* – the whole site of *Santa Maria delle Grazie* being inscribed since 1980 on the World Heritage List.

This painting, as you are well aware, is in itself a strong symbol of resilience of the arts and culture through times and conflict.

In my speech today about the role “soft power” to forge new ways for peace and sustainable development, I will focus on two key principles of humanism.

One of the first principles of European humanism is the faith in the richness of human potential – the conviction that human beings have no assigned fate, but are free to become what they dream to be, if they mobilize the power of knowledge, philosophy, engineering and the arts.

This quest is associated with another idea that all human beings belong to the same human family, regardless of their origins, culture or religion, and

that intercultural dialogue helps us become part of a single human community.

From a distance, these two principles may appear only to be as lofty ideals, crafted by intellectuals in an ivory tower, far from the turbulences of the world – a luxury in a time of peace.

You know the truth – humanists lived in a time of war and uncertainty. Leonardo da Vinci himself was a skilled engineer in the design of weapons and passionate about military strategy.

He was not simply idealistic, but he believed in the power of culture.

They had to respond to the political turmoil and violence of their time – and this is a lesson for us as well, in response to our modern conflicts and our own uncertainty.

Their experience and ideas are an inspiration for us all, to renew the humanist ideal, and the key role of ideas and knowledge to build a better world.

This echoes deeply with the story of UNESCO.

In 1945, in a world destroyed physically and morally, facing the imperatives of reconstruction and reconciliation, the founders of UNESCO decided to renew and rethink their strategy for peace.

After two world wars in less than 40 years, they realized that economic and political arrangements are not enough to secure lasting peace, and that this peace must be built, if it is not to fail, upon the moral and

intellectual solidarity of humanity. This is the Preamble of our Constitution, which we are never tired to repeat.

Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed, through education, through the dialogue of cultures, through scientific cooperation, through freedom of expression.

It took a lot of courage to speak about moral and intellectual solidarity in the midst of devastation and famine, after a Genocide, and threats of endless revenge and anger.

Today, we have again steep challenges to face, and we need the same courage, the same audacity, the same vision.

In the face of violent extremism, fuelled by ignorance and hatred of the other, we must combat intolerance with education, cultural literacy, and mutual understanding.

In the face of climate change, we must unleash the full power of human ingenuity, creativity and scientific cooperation.

In times of limits – limits of our planet, limits of our natural resources – human ingenuity, innovation and creativity are the ultimate source of renewable energy that humanity has.

We need a new humanism, to weave technical, economic and financial progress with a firm commitment to universal values.

This is UNESCO's mandate.

This is what I call the “soft power agenda”.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear students,

Our vision is clear, but we still need to understand the specificities of the challenges we face, how they differ from those of previous generations.

Globalization is opening vast opportunities for positive change, for trade and prosperity for economic growth, for social inclusion. New technologies are a symbol of universal communication, cooperation and dialogue.

At the same time, oddly enough, we live in an increasingly fragmented world.

We see minorities in Syria, Iraq and Myanmar being the target of cultural cleansing, through persecutions based on ethnic and religious grounds and the destruction of the cultural diversity of humanity. We see the rise of xenophobia and populism.

This calls for new strategies for peace and coexistence - and this cannot be limited to a general call for mutual understanding among nations.

It is not enough to call for tolerance towards migrants and organize concerts for peace and tolerance – we need public policies, strategies at the local, national and global level.

In this new age of diversity, with need to equip people with the tools they need to speak in different languages, to live together in diverse cities, to deal with multi-layered identities and affiliations.

We need to promote, at the same time, the diversity that enriches us along with the universal principles binding us together.

This is extremely difficult and challenging.

I believe the arts and the transmission of cultural heritage play a crucial role here.

It is not by coincidence that culture has become a target for terrorists in modern conflicts, and the deliberate destruction of heritage has become a tactic of war to undermine societies and crush any sense of belonging.

In response, we know that hard power and military action sometimes are indispensable, but will not be enough to defeat threats based on the distortion of history and the manipulation of faith.

We need to counter the globalization of hatred through the Internet and social media. We need to spread the language of empathy and solidarity.

We need to curb the looting and illicit trafficking of cultural property used as a source of financing by terrorist groups.

We need to share new narratives about cultures and religions and highlight tangible evidences of dialogue among cultures.

We need to build a new intellectual and moral shield against those who disseminate cultures of intolerance.

This is why the protection of cultural heritage is more than simply a cultural issue - it is a security imperative, inseparable from that of defending human lives.

Italy is an invaluable partner in this global effort.

Just last March, I participated in the first ever Meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the G7 Countries, hosted by Minister Dario Franceschini, dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage, and the prevention of illicit traffic.

Under the initiative again of Italy, and France, the Security Council adopted the historical and landmark resolution 2347 in March this year, reflecting a new, clear and broad vision of the role of heritage to foster peace and security.

This follows the adoption of Security Council resolution 2199, two years ago, to fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property as a source of financing for terrorism, implemented by UNESCO.

I made this a priority of my mandate, and I can say I am proud of the progress we have made in this area.

Together, we have built many coalitions: a coalition for the protection of heritage, under UNESCO's #Unite4Heritage global movement – a campaign I launched two years ago in the University of Baghdad.

We created a new Emergency Fund for the protection of heritage, conducting training workshops for cultural experts, building capacity, providing expertise.

We have dispatched emergency missions to Nimrud, Ashur, Palmyra, Aleppo, to assess damage, to protect objects most at risk, to fence off and guard sites.

We have adopted a new strategy, supported by all 195 Member States, to strengthen our action with a clear understanding of our responsibility.

I created an international platform to fight against illicit trafficking, sharing information on trafficking routes and seized objects, bringing together UNODC, the World Customs Organization, ICOMOS, ICOM and other partners.

We are strengthening like never before the linkages between peacebuilding operations, humanitarian emergency responses and the protection of heritage.

This is the spirit of the Agreement I signed in early 2016 with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Paolo Gentiloni to create the world's first special unit to protect cultural heritage in emergency, the Task Force Unite4Heritage led by the Italian Carabinieri, in cooperation with UNESCO.

These Agreements and political commitments must translate into much stronger tools and concepts, in the hands of global citizens of tomorrow.

This is the importance of promoting cultural literacy.

The need to bridge cultures through dialogue has never been so capital.

The World Heritage site of Palmyra, for example, now severely damaged by extremists, was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, where Greco-Roman techniques merge with local traditions and Persian influences. It was a symbol of dialogue of cultures, and this is why it was targeted.

In response, we certainly need to protect the stones and buildings of our shared heritage but even more importantly, we need to transmit the message and the values they carry. We need to change the narratives.

This is a battle for the hearts and minds and we need to share a different narrative at the global level, and the idea that there is no pure culture – cultures permeates with each other.

This stands at the heart of UNESCO's work on education for global citizenship – in order to provide young women and men with a renewed sense of belonging to the global community, promoting dialogue and mutual understanding.

This is also the spirit of UNESCO's action to teach the history of the Slave Route, the history of the Holocaust and other genocides, to fight hatred, racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia today.

It all starts on the benches of schools – promoting a spirit of “togetherness”, working to develop human potential and creativity.

This is why UNESCO's role was so important in the run-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for the recognition and inclusion, as a pillar within the new Agenda, of culture and sustainable development.

Culture is not just an investment. It can lead to economic growth, to social inclusion. This is the very spirit of all UNESCO's work to put culture at the heart of sustainable development.

Culture has been marginalized from international development strategies for too long – it was almost absent from the Millennium Development Goals.

This is changing – and fast.

UNESCO led the effort to acknowledge culture as a driver and enabler of sustainable development and this is now integrated in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

All societies are searching for transformative strategies to foster sustainability, social inclusion and green growth.

Culture stands precisely at the crossroads of these dimensions.

This combination is what I call a development multiplier.

Cultural goods and services represent 30 million jobs worldwide and drive economic growth - they also represent a wellspring of identity and collective strength.

Now more than ever, countries are investing in culture, in creative industries to become players in the growing knowledge economy, driven by innovation, knowledge sharing and creativity.

In Europe, the Cultural Sector is the third most important one in terms of number of jobs, well above the automobile industry or telecommunications.

This approach is a core feature of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions that has become the leading platform to strengthen cultural policies, with innovative examples from around the world, accessible to everyone, from policy-makers, to artists and citizens.

Creative industries have become a driver of what has been termed the fourth industrial revolution, which is bringing the internet of things and the internet of services to industry.

As students of the Masters in Arts Management and Administration, you have a major role to play in this revolution, and I wish you all the best for the future.

As I have tried to highlight, this is not a development and political issue only.

This is about renewing the core ideals of humanism, for human dignity and human community.

Leopoldo Sabbatini, Bocconi's first Rector and President, sought to "promote harmony between school and life." I believe if we truly invest on the soft power of culture, education, the sciences, communication and information, we can succeed.

UNESCO is honoured to have Italy as such a longstanding and strong partner, with so many sites inscribed on the World Heritage List.

I am equally very pleased to conclude my speech knowing that a concert will follow, paying tribute to the "Traditional violin craftsmanship in Cremona", inscribed in 2012 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Thank you for your attention.