

UNACOM PARTNERS' FORUM AND FELLOWSHIP

*“Reimagining Sustainability: Safeguarding Culture, Protecting the Environment and
Advancing Quality Education in a Changing World”*

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WELCOME REMARKS

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To our colleagues from the government, the academe, non-governmental organizations, private sector, friends, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It is especially true to say that today, we live in *interesting* times. Events are happening so rapidly, and with devastating effect, that we find ourselves, oftentimes, at a loss for perspective much less answers.

But as ancient seafarers knew, that no matter the storm, the vastness of oceans, nor the blackness of night, they would eventually find their way – by looking for their true North. Their purpose. The reason why they made their journey in the first place, and thereby *re-calibrate* their path.

UNESCO was founded on just such a search – the quest for humanity’s true North.

After two devastating world wars, it became clear that political and economic agreements are not enough to build lasting peace. It can only be established “**on the basis of humanity’s moral and intellectual solidarity.**”

In a world racked by “inequality, exclusion, violence and sectarianism” we see today our very own humanity being ripped apart. But it is in recognizing that in our common humanity do we find common ground that UNESCO increasingly plays a vital role in the future story of Sapiens.

“the role of UNESCO to be accomplished every day in its fundamental humanist mission, to support people in understanding each other and working together to build lasting peace is at the heart of the quest to make a safer world for diversity and future generations.”

Be it through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information, the role of UNESCO is to help build peace – just, peaceful and joyful communities living together.

The breadth and depth of UNESCO’s work and achievements at the global level would not be possible without its Member States working full force at the national level. This is where the National Commissions (or NatComs) for UNESCO come in. The NatComs play a pivotal role in fostering cooperation and establishing partnerships at the national level. (Acknowledge Commissioners)

Here in the Philippines, the UNACOM serves as the link between UNESCO and the government; and between and among concerned agencies at the local level on all matters pertaining to UNESCO.

- *to bring quality education closer to children and women, and help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance.*
- *To promote the preservation of cultural heritage and the recognition of the equal dignity of cultures, by highlighting cultural diversity and its role in achieving true and inclusive sustainable development*
- *Through scientific programmes and evidence-based policies, thereby demonstrate the importance of productive knowledge and technology as the real drivers of economic growth and advancement.*
- *Advocating for freedom of expression and freedom of information, to protect the inherent dignity in every human being, and humanity's role in building knowledge societies.*

In the last seventy years, UNESCO and its Member States have

- opened greater access to education for developing countries, small-island states, and the African region;
- prevented the degradation of important cultural monuments and landscapes;

- utilized science and research in providing expertise on climate change;
- and placed men and women at the center of development programs, among others.

For UNESCO to succeed, strong and sustained partnerships and cooperation at all levels—grassroots, national, regional, and international—are crucial.

We are here today to recognize, celebrate, rekindle and birth new partnerships. These relationships are best built on mutual trust and confidence, and not merely short-term collaborations, but vital partnerships that can sustain our vision through the coming years.

Through this Partners' Forum and Fellowship, we want to thank and honor you as our allies and better yet, as our friends. You have stayed with us, you believed in our cause, and you shared all of your resources generously, not to mention doing all of these with contagious (dangerous word these days) enthusiasm and relentless dedication.

Without your full participation, UNACOM alone cannot fully support and uphold the Philippines' commitments as a Member State. Your assistance, either technically or financially or both, has greatly contributed to our existence and success.

It is our hope that we will continue to work together, amidst all uncertainties and the constant changing of tides. We have come this far, and we can go further, together.

Paraphrasing the words of Cavafy, the great Greek poet,

“do not be afraid of monsters along the way, as long as you keep your thoughts raised high, as long as a rare excitement stirs your spirit and your body, you will not encounter them, unless your soul sets them up in front of you.”

In other words, there is nothing to fear. If humanity comes together, we can actually build a peaceable world – a world worthy of humans and humans worthy of this world...a world worthy of “us”, an “us” worthy of this world.

Thank you and let’s enjoy the rest of our program.