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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the designation of The China Disabled People's  
Performing Art Troupe as UNESCO Artist for Peace**

**Beijing, China, 31 July 2007**

Honourable First Ladies of Mongolia and Indonesia,  
Distinguished Minister of Education of China,  
Mr Chairman of UNESCO's Executive Board,  
Mr Vice President of the All China Federation of Disabled Persons,  
Ms Tai Lihua, President of the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe,  
Members of the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you today to celebrate the designation of the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe as UNESCO Artist for Peace. It is particularly symbolic that our celebration coincides with the Troupe's twentieth anniversary.

First of all, let me thank all the artists for their marvellous performance. I remember that when you came to UNESCO earlier this June, I was on an official visit abroad and unfortunately unable to attend your performance. I am therefore very grateful that I could be here today to enjoy your spectacular art.

For many in this audience, the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe needs no introduction. After twenty years of performances in over 40 countries and on all five continents, the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe has become a symbol of the hopes and dreams of disabled people world wide. Its masterpiece of Special Art, entitled My Dream, a new art form performed by people with disabilities, is an inspiration to us all.

Through their determination and creativity, the Troupe has acquired international recognition, appearing in such world-renown venues as the Scala in Milan, the Carnegie Hall in New York and the Sydney Opera House, as well as in the closing ceremony of the Paralympics in Athens in 2004. I am also delighted to learn that the Troupe will perform during the opening of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, this time as UNESCO Artist for Peace.

In this new capacity, the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe will support UNESCO's activities in the field of Inclusion and Quality Learning Enhancement. We cannot achieve the Education for All Goals or the MDGs without taking into account the special needs of the estimated 650 million persons – 10% of the world's population – with disabilities.

Today, at the UNESCO Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy being held in Beijing, Ministers of Education have been holding very important discussions on how to achieve the EFA goals, especially the goal of improving adult literacy levels by 50 % by 2015. If I may, I would like to quote some statistics that show how important it is in these efforts to reach persons with disabilities.

About 97% of adults with disabilities do not have basic literacy skills. Estimates of the number of disabled children attending school in developing countries range from less than 1% to 5%. Disabled children count for over one third of all out-of-school children.

This Troupe can play a vital role in helping UNESCO raise awareness and promote effective policies to put an end to this intolerable situation.

It is, therefore, my great honour and privilege to officially designate the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe as UNESCO Artist for Peace, and to bestow this diploma to Ms Tai Lihua, President and lead dancer of the Troupe.

I once again wish you every success in your new mission and congratulate you on having joined forces with UNESCO to disseminate our message of peace and inclusion.

Thank you.