



NCLIS

U.S. National Commission on  
Libraries and Information Science

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October 21, 2003

Mr. Koichiro Matsuura  
Director-General  
UNESCO  
7, Place de Fontenoy  
75007 Paris  
France

Dear Mr. Matsuura,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairperson of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS).

More than two years has passed since my Executive Director, Robert S. Willard, first wrote to you to propose that UNESCO, with the collaboration of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and the National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL), co-sponsor and organize an international leadership conference on information literacy (exchange of correspondence attached).

Unfortunately, because of the events of September 11, 2001, just a few months following our proposal to you, and the attendant emergency re-prioritizing of U.S. Government resources to respond to the terrorist threats, we were required to postpone the information literacy meeting twice.

However, I'm now extremely pleased to be able to report to you that the preliminary meeting of experts did take place in Prague, The Czech Republic, September 20-23, 2003, and was an outstanding success! Forty experts and facilitators from 23 different countries, representing all of the major geographic regions of the world, convened to help refine the information literacy concept, and reach a working consensus on how that key idea, so essential to the fulfillment of the information society and civil society dreams, can be

harnessed in practical ways in the service of all nations, both developed and developing, and in socio-cultural, economic, and public policy contexts.

I want to thank you for your personal leadership in the international literacy arena, as manifested so effectively by the United Nations Literacy Decade, the Education for All and the Information for All initiatives. I want also to thank Sir John Daniel and Abdul Khan, who both gave unstintingly of their time and expertise, and that of key staffers assigned to their sectors, notably Shigeru Aoyagi and John Rose, to help make the meeting of experts in Prague a success. If they have not already done so, I'm confident Sir John and Dr. Khan will brief you on the details of the meeting, and discuss possible next steps which the Prague expert group recommended.

Various agencies of the U.S. Government, notably the Department of State, the Department of Education, the Department of Commerce and the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science will now discuss ways in which we can work with UNESCO, and possibly other organizers and partners, to implement recommendations made by the Prague expert group, including convening an International Congress on Information Literacy that could be held in the Spring of 2005.

A new NCLIS Chairperson, Beth D. Fitzsimmons, and a full complement of new Commissioners have just recently been nominated by President Bush. The U.S. Senate is currently considering the President's nominations and it is hoped that they will act soon to approve the nominations. I am recommending to my successor, Dr. Fitzsimmons, that she continue the NCLIS partnering arrangements we now have with UNESCO in support of whatever future information literacy initiatives we may agree to pursue.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Joan R. Challinor, Ph.D.  
Chairperson  
United States National Commission on Libraries and Information  
Science

Attachments a/s