



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
des Nations Unies
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للثقافة والعلم والتربية

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The Director-General

Mr Kenneth Roth
Executive Director
Human Rights Watch
350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
USA

Ref.: DG/2/2010/1934

- 5 MAY 2010

Dear Mr Roth,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 26 March 2010, by which you reiterate your concerns about the UNESCO-Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences. Let me share with you the perspective of the UNESCO Secretariat, with regard to the Prize.

The proposal to create the Prize was announced by the President of Equatorial Guinea, Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, in his speech at the Plenary Session of the UNESCO's 34th General Conference in 2007. Having heard the strong support of the African Member States of the Executive Board, the formal decision to establish the UNESCO-Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences was taken by the Executive Board of UNESCO by consensus at its 180th session in September 2008 (Document 180 EX/57). It is thus an obligation of the Secretariat to implement the Executive Board's decision, and my duty is to ensure credibility, integrity and professionalism of this process. That means, among other, that I am to ensure openness and transparency in the way in which the candidates are proposed, and that no external influence or vested interests can be brought to the selection of laureate(s).

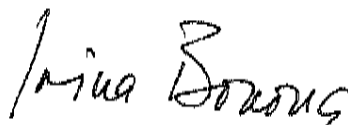
The purpose of the Prize is to reward projects and activities of an individual, individuals, institutions, other entities or non-governmental organizations for scientific research in the life sciences relating to the programmatic activities of UNESCO's Natural Sciences Programme. The Prize is consonant with UNESCO's approaches to mobilize science knowledge and policy for sustainable development and to foster capacity-building in science.

I have done my best, as Director-General, to fulfill my role, as regards the credibility of the process. Without sufficient candidates, this process would be seriously flawed and, as you know, the deadline was extended for this reason. As any changes to this, or to any other UNESCO prize, can only be effected by a decision of the Executive Board, you may appreciate that I am bound by the decision taken by the Executive Board in creating the Prize and approving its statutes.

J.

I have taken note of your concern which I understand you have also shared with several Member States represented on UNESCO's Executive Board. In my opening speech to the general debate of the 184th Session of UNESCO's Executive Board, on 6 April 2010, I informed the Board of the criticism received about the Prize, as decisions about prizes are the prerogative of Member States of the Executive Board. However, no Member of the Executive Board took the floor to express a negative opinion, or to raise a critical question about the Prize. Rather, I was urged by some Members to proceed without delay to implement the Board's decision in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irina Bokova". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Irina Bokova