



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

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
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

International Conference
Media and Information Literacy for Knowledge Societies
25 June 2012, Moscow, Russian Federation

Video message

By

Jānis Kārklīš

Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am particularly honoured to welcome the participants of the international Conference on “Media and Information Literacy in Knowledge Societies” in Moscow. The theme of the Conference is fully in line with UNESCO’s mandate as it aims to raise awareness of the significance, role and scale of media and information literacy and improve policies and professional strategies at international, regional and national levels.

For several decades, UNESCO has been advocating and promoting the fact that literacy is an inherent part of the right to education, where information, ICTs and media play a crucial role in the creation of literate societies.

This year, the outcomes of the Literacy Decade which was launched in 2003 will be evaluated, and the final report will be presented to the UN General Assembly at its 2013 session. We observe at a global level that literacy rates have indeed increased during this period, but this increase is at a very slow rate in some regions, such as South and West Asia, and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Looking even further ahead, it is evident that without considerable efforts many countries will not achieve the 2015 targets of the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, including primary education and literacy.

At the same time, other regions, such as Eastern Europe and Central Asia, have achieved significant results in basic literacy. However, I would like to emphasize that these regions still need to pick up on new types of literacies and application of ICTs.

Therefore, UNESCO welcomes and thanks the host of this Conference for organizing this important event. I express my sincere appreciation to the efforts of Mr Evgeni Kuzmin, Chairperson of UNESCO Information for All Programme and his team from the Russian IFAP Committee for the promotion and implementation of the strategic IFAP objectives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The notion of literacy is constantly changing. We are undergoing a technological revolution and witnessing important demographic, economic and socio-political changes occurring throughout the world. Physical and virtual mobility is on the increase, and climate changes are already affecting our water resources, agriculture, land resources, and biodiversity. The impact of globalization around the world influences us in a way we never could have imagined. What was an issue for a small community yesterday is a global concern for everyone today. Many countries are therefore now more diverse, more multicultural, more interlinked than ever before. This creates the challenge of helping people from diverse social and economic backgrounds to succeed and participate in an ever more complex world. As a result, broader concepts and aspects have evolved in response to these changes in society.

At UNESCO, we recognize that today’s society needs to apply a new notion of literacy which is **plural, dynamic and situational**, relating not only to basic writing and numeracy skills in one language, but also the ability to identify, understand, create, communicate and compute information in various languages. It is also equally necessary to critically engage with media messages, and produce content to be shared through diverse communication and information tools. It also means that literacy involves **a continuum of learning** for individuals to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge potentially and participate fully in community and wider society.

UNESCO promotes Media and Information Literacy as a composite concept that reflects and addresses current changes, emerging issues and challenges that we all face nowadays. We believe that **Media and Information Literacy** is one of the prerequisites for building inclusive, open, participatory and pluralistic knowledge societies.

Firstly, we experience a shift of paradigms which occur due to the constantly evolving environment. All of us need to obtain a critical mass of new competencies composed of new skills, attitudes and knowledge to make best of new opportunities, tools and resources. Therefore, it is essential for us to **become more self-aware, self-directed and self-acting throughout our life time.**

Secondly, there are **a number of technological developments that already change our societies and which can no longer be ignored speaking in the context of literacy.** The trends are closely linked to the theme of the conference - Media and Information Literacy.

1. The **exponential growth of data and information creates new challenges** on how to store and preserve the data properly, access, analyse, use information and create knowledge in a most meaningful and ethical way. Altogether, it requires for new competencies to live and work together.
2. Digital divide between countries is aggravated by a **growing divide between generations.** From passive users of information, users, often children and youth, became active producers of information and media products. In 2011 the number of people using the Internet reached 2.1 billion worldwide and 45 per cent of those Internet users are under the age of 25.
3. Content is no longer produced by specialized institutions or professional communities. The **user generated content is increasing and new platforms to accommodate this demand are growing.** For example, 1 trillion of video playbacks on YouTube shows just how fast and widely content is distributed and observed by viewers. It means that content that was previously produced by professional content producers whether writers, journalists or other category of professionals, now can be produced and widely shared by everyone.

The world is changing but educational institutions, libraries, media, educators and other information providers will remain key players as long as they keep reassessing and re-evaluating their own role and functions in finding new and innovative ways to be more adaptive and valuable for social, political, economic and of course technological development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me briefly highlight the major activities of UNESCO in the area of Media and Information Literacy:

- Taking the literacy concept further, UNESCO formulated a **concept of Media and Information Literacy**, to define the ability of people to interpret and make informed judgements on the information that they consume. It also helps them to become skilful creators and producers of information and media messages in their own right.
- UNESCO encourages the development of national information and media literacy policies of the Member States, including in education. UNESCO published "**Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers**" last year which serves for wider discussions and capacity building of teachers to apply MIL in education.
- UNESCO is preparing a model **Guidelines for Articulating MIL Policies and Strategies.**
- With a group of world leading experts, we are currently developing **Media and Information Literacy Indicators** for education specialists to assess the level of media and information literacy in society. This Conference will contribute to this process as a special parallel session is organized during your event.
- UNESCO, together with United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, established a **University Network on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID)** which met in Barcelona, Spain in May 2012 to celebrate a MILID Week. I invite universities from Eastern European and Central Asian region to manifest their interest in joining the network.
- UNESCO is working on an interactive **online course on Media and Information Literacy.**
- Last year in Fez (Morocco), UNESCO, in cooperation with a number of strategic partners, organized the first **Forum on Media and Information Literacy** and in 2013, UNESCO will organize a **Global Forum for Partnerships on MIL and a Pan-African International Conference on MIL.**

These are just a few examples of the areas which UNESCO views as important elements in building media and information literate societies, and areas where cooperation can be facilitated to work towards literacy goals.

In conclusion,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish you successful deliberations at the Conference and hope that its results will foster common understanding on MIL and joint actions on its promotion.

Thank you.