

January 21, 2010

Ms. Irina Bokova  
Director-General of UNESCO  
UNESCO Headquarters  
7, place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris 07 SP  
France

cc. The Executive Board of UNESCO

RE: UNESCO-Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences

Dear Ms. Bokova,

We write to you regarding the future of the UNESCO-Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences. As you are aware, the prize was established in 2008 and is named for President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, who provided a US\$3 million grant to fund the prize. During his thirty-year rule, President Obiang has become notorious for his corruption and contempt for human rights.

Following upon expressions of concern about the creation of the UNESCO-Obiang Prize, we welcome the decision by UNESCO to take some initial steps to address the controversies raised. We very much appreciate the public statement by UNESCO's spokesperson on January 7, 2010, that the organization will carry out a review of all UNESCO prizes. We are also pleased to note that the UNESCO-Obiang Prize is on hold pending this review.

While recognizing this recent progress, we want to make clear that more must be done if UNESCO is to fully address the very serious issues raised in this case and past controversies of a similar nature. It is essential that the planned review process lead to a genuine change in the way UNESCO prizes are created and awarded, such that prizes that are inconsistent with UNESCO's mission—including its work to promote human rights—cannot be considered in the future.

Moreover, forward-looking reforms, by themselves, will not be enough to fully remedy the problem. There remains the pressing issue of the future of the UNESCO-Obiang prize itself. UNESCO's reputation and ability to fulfill its mission will continue to be compromised unless the review includes a thorough examination of the UNESCO-Obiang prize and an appropriate decision to cancel this prize. We urge UNESCO to address this situation without delay.

Finally, we call on UNESCO to ensure that the planned review be carried out transparently and that it incorporate dialogue with relevant civil society organizations. We look forward to further communications and invite you to remain in contact with the undersigned via Tutu Alicante, executive director of EG Justice, at [tutu@egjustice.org](mailto:tutu@egjustice.org).

Yours,

Renji George Joseph, Director  
**Alliance for Holistic and Sustainable Development of Communities** (India)

Manuel Ollé Sesé, President  
**Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de España** (Spain)

William Bourdon, President  
**Association Sherpa** (France)

Oliveri Thimonier, Secretary General  
**Association Survie** (France)

Isabella Nyangule Dolphine Wandati, Director  
**Butere Focused Women in Development** (Kenya)

Guy Aurenche, President  
**CCFD-Terre Solidaire** (France)

Ignacio Saiz, Executive Director  
**Center for Economic and Social Rights** (International)

Bubelwa Kaiza, Executive Director  
**Concern for Development Initiatives in Africa** (Tanzania)

Ka Hsaw Wa, Co-Founder and Executive Director  
**EarthRights International** (Thailand and United States)

Tutu Alicante, Executive Director  
**EG Justice** (United States)

Emira Woods, Co-Director  
**Foreign Policy In Focus** (United States)

Jennifer Windsor, Executive Director  
**Freedom House** (International)

Maria Koulouris, Director of Natural Resources and Human Rights Initiative  
**Global Rights** (International)

Simon Taylor, Director

**Global Witness** (International)

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director  
**Human Rights Watch** (International)

Laura Livoti, Founder  
**Justice in Nigeria Now** (United States)

Abu A. Brima, Executive Director  
**Network Movement for Justice and Development** (Sierra Leone)

James A. Goldston, Executive Director  
**Open Society Justice Initiative** (International)

Bernard Taylor, Executive Director  
**Partnership Africa Canada - Partenariat Afrique Canada** (Canada and Ethiopia)

Richard Mugisha , Director  
**People With Disabilities Uganda** (Uganda)

Christian Mounzeo, President  
**Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme** (Congo Republic)

Karin Lissakers, Director  
**Revenue Watch Institute** (International)

Paul Cook, Advocacy Director  
**Tearfund** (United Kingdom)

Maya Sharma, Program Director  
**Vikalp Women's Group** (India)

**Zi Teng** (Hong Kong)