UNITED STATES MISSION
TO UNESCO

June 14, 2010

THE AMBASSADOR

H.E. Mrs. Irina Bokova
Director-General
UNESCO
7, place de Fontenoy
F-F5352 Paris 07 SP

Dear Director-General Bokova:

I am writing to you with concerns regarding the UNESCO Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences.

The United States was one of the countries that lent its voice in opposition to the Obiang Prize in 2008. Since then, the prize has become highly controversial and has elicited a negative reaction among UNESCO's usual friends, including the United States Congress, the scientific community, human rights leaders, advocates of press freedom, past prize winners and the broader public.

The United States supports a strong and effective UNESCO. To carry out its mandate, UNESCO must maintain public support, but I fear it is now in danger of losing it. My government asks that you suspend plans for awarding the prize in order to give time for quiet consultations among Member States to find a way forward that is consistent with UNESCO's commitment to its basic values.

We are aware of the serious consultations you have already undertaken with the President of the Executive Board and Member States, and we would like to express our support for your dedicated efforts to resolve the issue and encourage you to address all questions and concerns surrounding the Prize that are before you. The United States stands ready to support you in your efforts to find a solution that will restore UNESCO's credibility and leave no doubt that the values of this Organization are revered in the eyes of the international community.

Sincerely,

David T. Killion

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12, AVENUE RAPHAEL, 75016 PARIS, FRANCE
MAILING ADDRESS: 2, AVENUE GABRIEL, 75008 PARIS, FRANCE
PHONE: (33) (1) 45.24.74.56. FAX: (33) (1) 45.24.74.88