

September 29, 2011

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

cc: Members of the Executive Board of UNESCO

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

Dear Ms. Bokova:

We are concerned to learn that UNESCO may be considering reinstating the UNESCO-Obiang Nguema Mbasongo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences. We understand that the matter is on the agenda for discussion at the current 187th session of the executive board. We join the many global voices who spoke out last year to condemn this prize, which is named for and funded by Equatorial Guinean President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Africa's longest-serving leader. We are deeply troubled by the well-documented record of human rights abuse, repression of press freedom, and official corruption that have marked his rule.

We write to you as individuals who firmly believe that UNESCO should not lend its prestige to a prize in President Obiang's name.

We urge you to block this effort to reinstate the UNESCO-Obiang prize and to instead cancel it definitively.

Sincerely,

Chinua Achebe

Novelist and Poet

Winner of 2007 Man Booker Prize, among other honors

(Nigeria)

Kwame Anthony Appiah

President, PEN-American Center

1992 Winner of Herskovitz Prize for African Studies in English, among other honors

Professor of Philosophy, Princeton University

(Ghana/United Kingdom)

Homero Aridjis

Poet and Novelist

Former Ambassador of Mexico to UNESCO

PEN International President Emeritus

(Mexico)

Alhaji Abdul-Rahman Harruna Attah

Editor of *The Mail*

Secretary General, International PEN Pan African Network

(Ghana)

Lydia Cacho

2008 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize Laureate

(Mexico)

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Poet

2003 Winner of Author's Guild Lifetime Achievement Award, among other honors

Co-founder of City Lights Booksellers & Publishers

(United States)

Mónica González

2010 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize Laureate

(Chile)

Gloria Guardia de Alfaro

Winner of 1966 Ricardo Miro Prize, among other honors

International Vice President, International PEN

(Panama/Colombia)

Tom Hayden

Author and Activist

Founder and Director, Peace and Justice Resource Center

(United States)

Edward Hirsch

Poet

Winner of 1998 American Academy of Arts and Letters Award for Literature, among other honors
(United States)

Kwame Karikari

Executive Director, Media Foundation for West Africa
(Ghana)

Fred M'membe

Senior Journalist and Editor-in-Chief of *The Post*
(Zambia)

Andrew Mwenda

Founding Managing Editor of *The Independent*
(Uganda)

Sergio Ramírez

Author

Winner of 1998 Premio Alfaguara de Novela, among other honors
Former Vice President (1985-1990)
(Nicaragua)

Raúl Rivero Castañeda

2004 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize Laureate
(Cuba)

John Ralston Saul

President of PEN International

Winner of 2010 Manhae Grand Prize for Literature, among other honors
(Canada)

Desmond M. Tutu

Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town
1984 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate
(South Africa)

Sonali Samarasinghe Wickrematunge

Widow of Lasantha Wickrematunge

2009 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize Laureate
(Sri Lanka)

Additional Signatories (Updated October 3, 2011)

Arjuna Aluwihare

Surgeon and Professor

President-elect, National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka

Member, Human Rights Commission, Sri Lanka (1997-current)

(Sri Lanka)

Margaret Atwood

Novelist and Poet

2000 Booker Prize, 2008 Prince of Asturias Award for Literature, 2010 Nelly Sachs

Prize (Germany), among other honors

(Canada)

Calvin Baker

Author

Hurston/Wright Legacy Award Finalist

(United States)

Yves Bonnefoy

Poet and Essayist

1971 Prix des Critiques, 1995 International Balzan Prize, Del Duca Prize, 2011

Griffin Lifetime Recognition Award, among other honors

(France)

Abdallah S. Daar

Scientist and Professor

2005 UNESCO Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science, Chair, Advisory Board, UN
University International Institute for Global Health, Member, UNESCO International

Bioethics Committee, Chief Science and Ethics Officer, Grand Challenges Canada

(Oman, Canada)

Ariel Dorfman

Writer

Member, L'Académie Universelle des Cultures (France)

Professor of literature and Latin American Studies, Duke University

(Chile)

Felton Earls

Professor of Social Medicine

Harvard Medical School

Member, Committee on Human Rights, National Academy of Sciences

(United States)

Graeme Gibson

Writer

Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 1993 Harbourfront Festival Prize, Chairman, Writer's Union of Canada (1974-75)
(Canada)

Jessica Hagedorn

Author and Professor

2001 Guggenheim Fiction Fellow, among other honors
Former Vice-President, PEN American Center; Board member, National Book Foundation
(United States)

Belita Koiller

Physicist and Professor

2002 Comendador da Ordem Nacional do Mérito Científico, 2005 L'Oréal UNESCO Laureate for Women in Physical Sciences (Latin America), among other honors
(Brazil)

J. M. G. Le Clézio

Author and Professor

2008 Nobel Prize in Literature, 1963 Prix Renaudot (France), among other honors
(France)

Norman Manea

Writer and Professor

1992 MacArthur Fellow, 2002 Nonino International Literary Prize (Italy), 2006 Prix Medicis (France), among other honors
(Romania)

Kumi Naidoo

Anti-Apartheid and Human Rights Activist
(South Africa)

Ida Nicolaisen

Anthropologist

Expert, United Nations Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues
Senior Research Fellow, Nordic institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen University
(Denmark)

Elena Poniatowska

Writer and Journalist

2007 Romulo Gallegos Prize, 2006 International Women's Media Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award, 2001 Premio Alfaguara de Novela, among other honors
(Mexico)

José Manuel Prieto

Novelist

2004-2005 Margaret and Herman Sokol Fellow at The Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers in The New York Public Library, among other honors
(Cuba, Mexico)

Alan Riding

Writer and Journalist

1980 Maria Moors Cabot Prize, 2003 Orden del Águila Azteca (Order of the Mexican Eagle)
(United Kingdom)

Quincy Troupe

Poet

1980, 2010 American Book Award (Lifetime Achievement Award, 2010), among other honors
Editor, *Black Renaissance Noire*, Africana Studies, New York University
(United States)