

KEO : memory of the past and the future

On January 20, 2009 Martin Luther King's dream of peace, liberty, equality and full human solidarity was embodied in the serene and smiling face of Barak Obama, the 44th president of the United States of America. I am convinced that similarly the KEO program will be carried out, this program conceived and perfected during almost twenty years by Jean-marc Philippe who left the Earth on November 12, 2009. Fortunately the project seeds have been sowed.

I elected KEO as "project of the 21st century" from its first presentation at UNESCO in Paris in May 1997 because, as I declared at the time, "*the idea of making a gift to our far-away descendants, by sending a probe through space carrying messages providing an authentic image of what human beings are like today, seems to me bright and appropriate*".

The second exhibition on December 19, 2000 at UNESCO organized by KEO, the FIPC (the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture), ESA (European Space Agency) and the Post Office of Paris-Sud, brought alive the imaginary of KEO as it meant "*to save some 6000 to 7000 presently existing languages, half of which are threatened with extinction before the end of the 21st century*" by "*simply and concretely collecting a lively poem in each of these languages*".

In this sense KEO is the epitome of successful mutual enrichment of material and immaterial legacy, bridging the sciences and the arts, the future and the past, the culture of peace, intercultural diversity and the alliance of civilizations, the memory of the future and that of the past.

It is up to public and private enterprise, the States, the Citizens or our planetary village to make this dream of Jean-Marc Philippe come true as soon as possible. It has to become an ardent aspiration for all the Nations of the world : maintaining the universal values of those who preceded us so that their contribution to humanism will continue to grow.

As the great poet Aimé Césaire wrote: "*The work of Man has only just begun*".

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