

PRESS RELEASE

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Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands designated UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development

Paris, 26 March – UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura has designated HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands as UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development in recognition of her “outstanding commitment to the promotion of education and her profound dedication to the Organization’s ideals and objectives”.

The nomination ceremony was held at UNESCO’s Paris Headquarters on Tuesday, 24 March.

“HRH Princess Laurentien has a long record of fighting against illiteracy in the Netherlands, where it is now recognized as a problem that has been neglected,” Mr Matsuura said. “As UNESCO Special Envoy, she will act as a spokesperson for the Organization and advocate for the cause of literacy as one of the building blocks for economic growth and development, and essential for the health and well-being of people everywhere.”

At the nomination ceremony HRH Princess Laurentien also emphasised the importance of working with developed nations to address the “uncomfortable truth” that a high proportion of adults in those countries do not have the skills required to meet the demands of daily life and work.

HRH has already worked closely with the Organization to promote reading among children and young people. She participated in the UNESCO Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy in Europe, held in Azerbaijan in May 2008 and was a keynote speaker at a literacy event held at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2006.

In The Netherlands, HRH Princess Laurentien serves as Chair of the Dutch Reading and Writing Foundation and Honorary Chair of the Dutch Association of Public Libraries. She is the patron of the Dutch language society and of the Netherlands Listening and Braille Library.

In May, HRH will travel to Belem (Brazil) to participate in Confintea VI, a global conference organized by UNESCO on adult education.

More information on UNESCO’s literacy programmes and celebrity advocates at: www.unesco.org