Dear Dr Karan Singh,

Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Permanent Delegate of India to UNESCO,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here to celebrate a great humanist, and I approach this moment with a particular sense of emotion.

Over the past 8 years, I have been so privileged to journey with Dr Karan Singh, to benefit from his wisdom, his vision, his advice – to listen to him.

I know we have all been influenced by his commitment to UNESCO; his belief that peace and sustainable human development should be based on education, science and culture.

If one person embodies the Constitution of UNESCO, it is Dr Karan Singh.

Another reason that I approach this moment with special emotion is that over the years I have been privileged to have Dr Karan Singh’s support and friendship.

We have inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development together; the new premises of the UNESCO Delhi office; and you have so kindly invited me to your home.
India was one of the first destinations of my mandate. I paid my first visit there in 2010, to pay tribute to this great country that was a founding member of UNESCO. We all recall that Jawaharlal Nehru had described our Organization as the “conscience of humanity”.

On this first trip, I went to Auroville, such a unique place that stands for one humanity united around common values and respect for diversity. I know Dr Karan Singh will be staying at the helm of the Auroville Foundation and continue to inspire its development.

Dr Karan Singh has carried strong impact across our Organization.

I could recall many moments.

Last August, at the opening of the new UNESCO House in New Delhi, I recall your words then, Dr Karan Singh, when you spoke of the creation of UNESCO as “an act of faith.” This is so true.

Dr Singh, you have long shared with this House your great passion for ideas.

I recall the speech you gave in 2013 on the *Universal Message of Swami Vivekananda*, when you spoke of his humanist message of solidarity, human rights and dignity.

I recall your words in 2014 to inaugurate the statue of the great sage Sri Aurobindo, when you reminded us “true knowledge is not attained by thinking -- It is what you are and it is what you become.”

I know also the great contribution you made intellectually as a member of the ground-breaking *Delors International Commission on Education for the 21st century*, whose conclusions still resonate today, and on many occasions, we have asked you to give your views on the state of education in the world.

With ideas, you have also brought will and action.

This Organisation has benefited from your leadership at so many levels… in the reform efforts we have led, for which I am personally deeply grateful…
Allow me to single out the creation of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development -- this is a unique institution, at the cutting-edge of research and policy development in building new forms of youth empowerment through education and skills for global citizenship… and I recall the Talking across Generations workshop we participated in last August… your ability to speak with young people is simply inspiring…

So, it can be difficult to describe Dr Karan Singh – a prominent political personality, a philosopher, a renowned intellectual, a diplomat….

I think today we about all pay tribute to a great humanist.

We will miss you sorely, but we know you will always stand with UNESCO, for the values we share and for the peace we seek together to make lasting every day.

Thank you.