

H.E. Mrs. Irina Bokova
Director General
UNESCO
Paris

Athens, June 22, 2017
No: **1168**

Dear Director General,

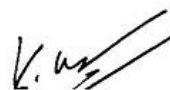
I wish to draw to your attention and ask you to join me in condemning yesterday's provocative and unacceptable events at Agia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey.

With disregard and disrespect to the status of Agia Sophia as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Turkish government not only allowed but also encouraged the holding of prayers and the reading of religious text inside Agia Sophia, in the presence of the Head of Turkey's Directorate for Religious Affairs. And on top of this, that was broadcast by the state television.

At a time when fanatical extremism in the name of faith and acts of hatred are on the rise and every government and more so the Turkish government is expected to promote interfaith dialogue and moderation, we unfortunately became witnesses to a most troubling practice.

I look forward to your resolute intervention to the Turkish government in defense of Agia Sophia as a heritage site for all people and all faiths.

Sincerely,



Kyriakos Mitsotakis