



World Society for the Protection of Animals

Reference: DG/3000/GB

*Major General*  
Peter Davies CB  
CCMI, FCIPD, FRSA  
Director General

Mr Koïchiro Matsuura  
Director General  
UNESCO  
7, place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris 07 SP  
France

16<sup>th</sup> May 2007

Dear Mr Matsuura

**Re: REJECTING BULLFIGHTING AS AN 'INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE'**

As Director General of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), I am extremely concerned about reports that the Platform for the Defence of the Fiesta Nacional is seeking UNESCO recognition of bullfighting as an 'intangible cultural heritage'. Bullfighting glorifies the systematic torture of a sentient animal in the name of public entertainment. During a bullfight, the bull is tormented, weakened and brought to its knees by up to eight men wielding a variety of weapons including barbed spikes, spears, swords and daggers – thus raising serious doubts over claims of a fair fight. Following twenty minutes of pain and suffering, death through chronic blood loss and/or suffocation is often a final release for the bull.

We hope you will agree with our opposition to the use of animals in sport or for entertainment when such use is contrary to the animals' nature, or may involve suffering or adversely affect the animals' welfare. We also look to your support to jointly oppose 'sports' that involve pitting animals or humans against animals. Culture is not an excuse for cruelty and such 'traditions' should be relegated to the past, as has been the case with many other such cruel practices. Scientific findings tell us that bulls are sentient, that they feel pain and suffer - WSPA believes that these findings point to an ethical responsibility to recognise the welfare of such animals at an international level.

Support for bullfighting has been in sharp decline in recent years. In Spain, a recent Gallup poll has shown that 72.1% of the Spanish public have no interest in bullfighting. This provides us with a clear picture from the majority of Spanish people who do not consider bullfighting an integral part of modern culture. This statistic rises in the Spanish region of Catalonia, where 80.7% of the public show no interest in bullfighting. A bill banning this outdated practice is soon to be voted on in the regional Parliament and is supported by Spanish and international advocates and celebrities across the

89 Albert Embankment London SE1 7TP United Kingdom Phone +44 (0)20 7587 5000

Fax +44 (0)20 7793 0208 Email: [wspa@wspa.org.uk](mailto:wspa@wspa.org.uk) Website: [\[international.org\]\(http://international.org\)](http://www.wspa-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Registered UK charity 1081849



globe. WSPA is encouraging this bill along with its member society Asociación Defensa Derechos Animal (ADDA), as part of a collaboration to achieve a ban on bullfighting in the region.

I sincerely hope that your decision in this matter will compliment the recent endorsement by the regional office of UNESCO for Latin America and the Caribbean of WSPA's Humane Education Programme. Endorsement of this initiative represents modern scientific and cultural recognition of the positive interdependency between humans, animals and the environment. This in turn acknowledges that animal welfare has a role to play in the 'UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development' and in social development programmes worldwide.

We are honoured to work with UNESCO in many areas from disaster risk reduction to education. UNESCO's policy of sharing best education practice worldwide in addition to stimulating experimentation, innovation and policy dialogue is important to WSPA; it is through raising awareness, promoting dialogue, critical thinking, legislative and policy changes that a constructive change in people's attitudes towards animals is brought about. The violence and inhumane nature of bullfighting contradicts the fostering of such attitudes, and because of this, I believe that UNESCO cannot endorse the proposal put forward to defend this practice as 'intangible cultural heritage'.

WSPA stands ready to support you on this effort with whatever scientific evidence you require. We are the world's largest alliance of animal welfare organisations, with a growing network of over 770 member societies in 147 countries. We have thirteen regional offices and hundreds of thousands of supporters worldwide. With consultative status within the United Nations and observer status at the Council of Europe, WSPA is building a united global animal welfare movement to further our vision of a world where animal welfare matters, and animal cruelty ends.

I would request kindly therefore, on behalf of the global animal welfare movement, for UNESCO's compliance on this issue in the interests of upholding progressive animal welfare attitudes. I look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours Sincerely,



Cc:

Mr Riëks Smeets, Chief of Section for Intangible Heritage, UNESCO  
Mr Gadi Mgonezulu, Director, Division of Cultural Heritage, UNESCO  
Mrs. Beatriz Macedo, UNESCO Regional specialist in secondary scientific, technical and professional education & education for sustainable development  
Carlos Chacón, Education Manager, World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)  
Asociación Defensa Derechos Animal (ADDA)