

## On World Day, UNESCO urges preservation of audiovisual heritage



Vinegar effects on film material © Austrian Film Archives

27 October 2010 – Warning that the world’s audiovisual heritage is endangered, the head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**) today called for stepped up efforts to reverse the neglect and decay of these “ephemeral” documents.

In a message marking the fourth annual World Day for Audiovisual Heritage, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova **said** that audiovisual records – film, video, radio and recorded sound material – capture human creativity and are a testimony of human history.

But she cautioned that the world’s audiovisual heritage is endangered, with too much already having been lost through neglect, chemical decay or technological obsolescence. “Its disappearance would represent an irremediable impoverishment of the memory of the world.”

Ms. Bokova cautioned that future generations may not have the opportunity to experience seminal moments in human history, such as the first moon landing in 1969 or former South African president Nelson Mandela’s walk to freedom following his release from prison in 1990.

With audiovisual heritage fragile by nature, UNESCO, in coordination with other organizations, has taken the lead in preserving and sharing these documents.

“To safeguard the world’s audiovisual heritage is to preserve our collective memory, and to ensure its transmission to future generations,” Ms. Bokova emphasized. “We must understand the past to shape a common future founded on dialogue and understanding.”

In Nepal, UNESCO is marking the day with a roundtable discussion on preserving the country’s audiovisual memory, followed by a concert featuring traditional Nepali music.

“Making the audiovisual heritage available would give the Nepali people the possibility to learn about their own history, but it can also contribute to building the sense of being one nation,” said Axel Plathe, UNESCO Representative to Nepal, where the Government and the Maoists signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006, ending a decade-long civil war which claimed some 13,000 lives.

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