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UNESCO: Cancel Dictator Prize ***Equatorial Guinea Leader's Corruption and Abuse Taint Award***

UNESCO should use this month's executive board meeting to cancel its prize named after and funded by Teodoro Obiang, the president of Equatorial Guinea, said Global Witness and partner groups today.

"President Obiang's record of gross human rights violations and large-scale corruption is antithetical to UNESCO's mission and values," said Tutu Alicante, executive director of the organization EG Justice. "This is money that should be benefiting the people of Equatorial Guinea, not endorsing a dictator who has trampled on their liberties and livelihoods."

The \$3 million UNESCO Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences was set up in 2008 but suspended in June after a global outcry. African notables, public health professionals, Nobel laureates, past UNESCO award winners, and rights groups from around the world have raised serious concerns about the prize, as have several governments.

"Investigations in Spain, France, and the US have all connected the Obiang family to serious allegations of corruption," said Ken Hurwitz, senior legal officer with the Open Society Justice Initiative. "There is a significant risk that UNESCO is accepting tainted funds with this prize."

UNESCO has admitted that it lacks anti-money laundering safeguards and does not investigate the integrity of individual donors. This gap in oversight could leave the organization entangled in corruption.

Campaigners have pressed UNESCO to adopt international standards to prevent money laundering.

The UNESCO Executive Board is set to meet in Paris from October 5 to 21, 2010.

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Contact: Robert Palmer +44 207 492 5860, +44 7545 645406 rpalmer@globalwitness.org

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[The Center for Economic and Social Rights](#) is an independent nongovernmental human rights organization that works to promote social justice through human rights

[EG Justice](#) promotes human rights and the rule of law, transparency, and civil society participation to build a just Equatorial Guinea.

[Freedom House](#) is an independent watchdog organization that supports the expansion of freedom around the world. Freedom House supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights.

[Human Rights Watch](#) is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. We stand with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice.

The [Open Society Justice Initiative](#) uses law to protect and empower people around the world. Through litigation, advocacy, research, and technical assistance, the Justice Initiative promotes human rights and builds legal capacity for open societies.

Global Witness investigates and campaigns to prevent natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses