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11 June 2010

Statement on the UNESCO-Obiang Prize from Desmond Tutu

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization is a beacon for hope and development around the world. I am appalled that this organization, which holds such promise, is allowing itself to burnish the unsavory reputation of a dictator.

The UNESCO-Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences was created to recognize "scientific achievements that improve the quality of human life." Yet the rule of President Obiang—the prize's namesake—has been marked by corruption and abuse.

The UNESCO-Obiang prize's \$3 million endowment should be used to benefit the people of Equatorial Guinea—from whom these funds have been taken—rather than to glorify their president.

The people of Equatorial Guinea should share in the wealth generated by their country's huge oil reserves. Instead, they endure poverty and oppression. Their president and his associates enjoy lavish homes and trips abroad, and money that should go to the people winds its way to private bank accounts.

I join with human rights groups, press freedom organizations, public health professionals, and esteemed scientists from Africa and around the world, in solidarity with the people of Equatorial Guinea.

I call on members of UNESCO's executive board to reconsider this prize, and restore our trust

God bless you

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu