



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO LEADERS' FORUM

UNESCO General Conference, 36th session

How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?

26-27 October 2011
UNESCO Headquarters
Paris, France



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An international platform for reflection and discussion, UNESCO has created the Leaders' Forum within the 36th session of UNESCO's General Conference to inject from the highest level of governments new inspiration and forward-looking directions. The Leaders' Forum is a major opportunity to explore in an open manner innovative, even provocative ideas and new ways of promoting peace and prosperity in a globalized world through UNESCO's fields of competence and thereby help chart the programmatic activities of the Organization in the future. Discussions at this edition of the Forum were focused on "How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?"

Held from 26 to 27 October 2011 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, the Leaders' Forum was opened by **Katalin Bogyay**, President of the 36th session of the General Conference, **Eleonora Mitrofanova**, Chairperson of the Executive Board, and **Irina Bokova**, Director-General of UNESCO.

Keynote addresses were made on the opening day by **Pal Schmitt**, President of the Republic of Hungary, **Ali Bongo Ondimba**, President of the Republic of Gabon, **Alassane Ouattara**, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, **Tillman Thomas**, Prime Minister of Grenada, **Pascal Irenée Koupaki**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Benin, **Raila A. Odinga**, Prime Minister of Kenya, and **Boris Tadić**, President of the Republic of Serbia. A special address was also made by **Mehriban Aliyeva**, First Lady of the Republic of Azerbaijan and **Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez**, First Lady of the Dominican Republic.

On the second day, the Forum was addressed by **Johnson Toribiong**, President of the Republic of Palau with a special address from **Kris Peeters**, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders (Belgium).

The sessions were moderated by **Zeinab Badawi**, Presenter of World News Today on both BBC Four and BBC World News and **Stephen Cole**, Senior Presenter Al Jazeera English, Doha and London.

AIMING AT A BETTER FUTURE

Foreword by Irina Bokova

Director-General of UNESCO

Leaders are never more important than in crises. These are times for action – but also reflection, to review where we stand and consider where we need to go and how to get there. This is why the Leaders' Forum of the 36th session of the UNESCO General Conference was so important. The Heads of State and Government explored the theme of “How UNESCO can contribute to building a culture of peace and sustainable development.” During the debate, leaders reaffirmed the inextricable link that exists between lasting peace and sustainable development and they highlighted UNESCO's key role in supporting both objectives.

At a time of global crisis, leaders cannot afford to let emergencies dictate the agenda. Financial and economic downturns are constraining fiscal revenues and the capacity to invest in infrastructures, education, health and social services. This situation calls for proactive policies by all governments. Mitigating the threats of climate change, the loss of biodiversity losses and the degradation of the ocean requires more than preventive measures. It calls for fundamental changes in the way economies and societies function. This is all the more important in situations of conflict between States and within them, impacting on countless women and children and hitting the most vulnerable hardest. The United Nations was founded on the ambition to foster global peace and prosperity. This goal remains before us today.

As a laboratory of ideas and platform for cooperation, UNESCO supports world leaders in reflecting on how to build a culture of peace and sustainable development in a world buffeted by change. Peace and prosperity must go together. The debate during the Leaders' Forum saw lively exchanges, but all leaders agreed that they are two sides of the same coin. For peace to be lasting,

societies must be inspired by a culture of tolerance, non-violence and respect for human rights and diversity. Sustainability must guide development, as both the goal and the means to attain it.

The debate during in the Forum reaffirmed the universal and humanist ideals at the heart of UNESCO. It put forward concrete ideas to sharpen the action of the Organization in all of its areas of competence. These will inspire our strategies and help us prepare for the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio. They will inform our work to renew the international agendas relating to the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All objectives and define new roadmaps after 2015.

The Leaders' Forum showed the will that exists to look head-on at challenges across the world. The discussion was underpinned by a strong sense of resolution that positive change can happen and that UNESCO must ensure it does. This resolution builds on a wide consensus that the levers to build lasting peace and sustainable development today lie precisely in education, culture, the sciences, communication and information. Peace and sustainable development are not abstract concepts, whose success can be decreed. They concern women and men, girls and boys. Their dignity, human rights, and capacity must be the compass guiding national policy and international action. Everyone must have the right to imagine a better future and the tools to shape reality. These are the stakes of a culture of peace and sustainable development for the century ahead. This is UNESCO's mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Irina" and the last name "Bokova" clearly distinguishable.

Irina Bokova

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SUMMARY OF THE DEBATE

“There is no route to peace, peace is the route”

(M. Gandhi)

On 26 and 27 October 2011, nine Heads of State and Government and 56 Ministers and Heads of Delegation participated in the UNESCO Leaders' Forum of the General Conference together with addresses by the President of the General Conference, the Chairperson of the Executive Board and the Director-General. In a lively debate, participants expressed their views, shared their countries' experiences and made recommendations on the importance of building a culture of peace and promoting sustainable development and UNESCO's role in these areas. Emphasizing the timeliness of the Leaders' Forum and the relevance of UNESCO's mandate, the speakers identified a number of relevant issues that should be taken into account when preparing the next C/4 and C/5 documents. These are summarized below along a number of cross-cutting thematic axes:

THE GLOBAL SETTING: EMERGING CHALLENGES TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

→ **An era of multiple global crises aggravated by a crisis of values**

Globalization has placed humanity into a global village. It has created an unprecedented rapprochement of cultures and peoples, and has been accompanied in recent years with significant and welcome improvements. Many countries have experienced sustained growth and trade in recent decades; science, technology, and innovation have progressed apace; populations have made giant strides towards quality education; and communications have become a driving force of globalization. However, progress remains incomplete,

fragile and unequal – risking serious divides. The world is affected by a series of global crises, including the economic and financial crisis, the environmental crisis, and most notably climate change, and the food crisis. Above all, progress is hampered by the persistence of poverty, the steady growth of inequalities, the erosion of social cohesion in many countries, and the growing degradation in the world's environment. Migration of people has become a common feature of contemporary life, creating fluid cultural settings worldwide and the need to reconcile cultural diversity and social cohesion within more and more diversified societies. The rich potential of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue remains largely unexploited. In many countries, societies have witnessed the development of various forms of exclusion, discrimination and marginalization that can lead to violence and extremist acts. The world remains far from the ideal of social cohesion based on shared global ethics. Indeed, while material considerations dominate the international discourse, there is a need to acknowledge that the present crises are aggravated by a crisis of values that can be solved only if the world sets itself firmly on the path to a culture of peace and sustainable development.

→ **Two sides of the same coin**

As human-centred approaches to address current global challenges, a culture of peace and sustainable development are intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing, peace cannot be realized lastingly without sustainable development and vice versa. Those two intertwined paths are indispensable to respond to today's complex multiple crises. They also influence good governance, neither repressive nor corrupted, based on human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles. In fact, peace must not be considered as the mere absence of war, but as an environment where human rights are observed and where every person has the possibility to realize his or her potential. For its part, sustainable development must be seen as a dynamic and complex process with immediate and long-term needs to fulfil. Both the culture of peace and sustainable development are profoundly ethical challenges. Core elements of peace and sustainable development are respect of life, human rights, dignity, freedom, stability, social harmony, duty of forgiveness, justice,

tolerance, mutual respect, solidarity, gender equality, and lasting and sincere dialogue.

→ **Peace is sacred, but cannot be taken for granted**

Peace – as a right and as a duty – is a political, civic, ethical and pedagogical imperative, indeed a basis for moral solidarity of humankind. As such, it contributes to harmonious coexistence, social cohesion, and a strong sense of belonging locally and globally. But peace is always fragile. It can disappear at once, even in countries where it has a long tradition. Peace should not be taken for granted. It is an ongoing process requiring constant engineering, vigilance and active participation by all. It also encompasses a long-term vision, which necessitates a permanent and firm commitment and entails a blend of traditional and contemporary modalities to understand the roots of conflicts and the ways to mitigate violence. Peace is under threat owing to poverty, inequity and inequalities, injustice, unemployment, lack of opportunities, and young people's vulnerability, especially in urban settings. A certain "romanticization" of violence through new media and games can be a particular threat to peace for youth. Humanity will not gain peace if we are blind to future gains and only conscious of immediate benefits. The proposition by the late President of Côte d'Ivoire, Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1971 on the situation of African countries remains valid for all regions and countries: "Peace within the African States should be based on justice, tolerance, dialogue, respect for human dignity and the respect for freedom, equality between men."

→ **Prosperity as dignity: poverty is a violation of human rights**

Poverty eradication and the promotion of equitable socio-economic growth are strategic paths on the road to a culture of peace and achieving sustainable development. People in dire economic situations are easily prey to polarization, extremism, violence and conflicts. In many developing and developed countries where young people constitute a significant proportion of the population, it has become crucial to foster environments where people can seize economic opportunities and seek dignity through employment. At the global level, both peace and sustainable development are indispensable for nations to work towards shared prosperity.

→ **Gender equality – an imperative for peace and sustainable development**

Gender equality is a paramount foundation for peace. There is a need to foster a non-violent struggle for women's rights, empowerment and political participation at all levels. Gender equality should not be developed only at the level of national or international leadership, but also at the local level, where the most difficult challenges to women's and girls' access to basic services, such as education and health are to be found. Women and girls are still denied the same opportunities as those afforded their male counterparts. Women and girls worldwide need to be empowered to develop their full potential, as a human right, a question of social justice, and as a precondition to genuine sustainable development. Attention to gender equality means also that the situation of young men should equally be addressed, especially when they come from disadvantaged backgrounds where they are exposed to violence and criminality.

→ **Youth – the democratic pulse of contemporary societies**

Youth, the democratic pulse of today's world, must be empowered as actors for peace and inclusive sustainable development. Young women and men are agents for peace and benefit from it. Likewise, their role in development is strategic as they have a potential and energy that are near limitless. Youth want their critical voice to be heard. Too often, indeed, their potential is stifled as they bear the brunt of poverty, unemployment and exclusion. It is telling that the aspirations expressed by youth during the Arab Spring entail both a call for democracy and a claim to social dignity. Sustainability cannot be achieved when societies are unable to fulfil the socio-economic aspirations of the young women and men whom they have nonetheless educated at a huge cost. Youth education and employment should thus be given due attention – this will be one of the most pressing challenges for Africa, where 60% of the population is under 30. National strategies should prepare young people for actively participating and contributing to the improvement of their socio-economic environment in a sustainable way, notably through youth entrepreneurship skills programmes. A Special Youth Fund could also be created so as to help

curb violence, discrimination and extremism through dialogue and knowledge sharing.

→ **Pluralism, inclusive participation and social cohesion – foundations of democracy**

A culture of peace and sustainable development rest on a common set of principles including democratic participation, social cohesion, the rule of law, justice, equity and human rights. Good governance is a key component of both. Supporting democratic processes and strengthening good governance require commitment from all stakeholders. To avoid social or generational conflicts, it is crucial to develop future-oriented approaches that take into account the needs and aspirations of all segments of societies, especially women, youth, and vulnerable populations. This endeavour should be supported with the development of specific indicators capturing social cohesion.

→ **The need for sustainable global governance**

While globalization offers opportunities to an increasing number of countries and individuals, a number of countries, both in the developed and the developing world, are exposed to the negative and adverse effects of unsustainable forms of development. In this context, there is a need for strategies to address the despair of peoples who find themselves isolated and without prospects for advancement, jobs and prosperity. Today's great challenge is to rethink global governance in an inclusive manner. Governance in the era of globalization should have a diverse and human face and prove capable of reducing economic, social, technological, cultural as well as knowledge and digital divides. This would be best achieved through projects arising from cooperation between developed, emerging and developing countries. As for the most vulnerable countries, that are those most affected by the various crises, their development requires adapting the present structures and mechanisms of the multilateral system. It is a responsibility for all.

→ Dialogue, solidarity and creativity – a humanist approach for the twenty-first century

Despite the current context of global crises, we should look towards the future with optimism and commit to address challenges by means of genuine dialogue. The multiple crises are a symptom of the fact that we are experiencing the emergence of a new world that is more interconnected, complex and diverse. Problems must be approached from a humanist perspective based on the respect for human rights and cultural diversity and on the practice of non-violence, tolerance and dialogue. It is only with such a moral compass that the ties of solidarity between peoples and within societies can be created, and the lasting conditions for peace and sustainable development be laid. The challenge is to enlarge the common denominator of values and principles that bind us all together as human beings, while guarding against the pressures of uniformity. In that light, humanism in the twenty-first century should rest upon a broad conception of tolerance, pertaining not only to social and intercultural relations but also to openness with respect to creative ideas – affecting ethical attitudes, consumption patterns, business models and ground-breaking technologies. This humanism based on dialogue, solidarity and creativity has the potential to greatly facilitate the invention of unprecedented solutions to the current world's problems.

FOCUS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

Participants in the Leaders' Forum reaffirmed that UNESCO's mandate and expertise in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information give the Organization the most valuable and appropriate means to enhance international cooperation and work with Member States towards building a culture of peace and ensuring sustainable development. With an intersectoral and interdisciplinary perspective that cuts across its five sectors, UNESCO can support its Member States in developing holistic strategies to strike a harmonious balance between the interrelated requirements of the economy, society and environmental stewardship:

→ **Quality education – a key lever for peace and development**

Education is perhaps the most effective lever to building a culture of peace and sustainable development. Education should be seen as a comprehensive framework resting on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. Education must be accessible to all, of high quality and relevance and must contribute to changing the way we think and behave in order to achieve a more just, peaceful and sustainable future. In that sense, peace education and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are corollaries. Literacy is a prerequisite for peace and human, as well as socio-economic, development. In the context of the global financial crisis, special attention must be paid to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations and of countries in conflict or post-conflict and post-disaster situations. Community ownership of education could be achieved by empowering populations from the grassroots level, by reaching out to the marginalized, paying special attention to women and girls. More generally, education and lifelong learning are key to empowering youth and adults to become responsible citizens actively contributing to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development. To this effect, Member States should develop and apply guidelines, teaching and training materials, including for teachers, designed to mainstream the respect for human rights, solidarity, honesty, peace and democracy.

→ **Education for sustainable development – a key component of values education**

Progress towards the Education for All (EFA) goals and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) must be complemented with UNESCO's strong leadership by expanding the scope and outreach of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which focuses on the knowledge and the attitudes needed in a world marked by an array of new economic, social and environmental challenges. Education systems and policies, school curricula, teacher education and training programmes, literacy and adult education programmes must be founded on the principles of solidarity, inclusion, respect for human rights, intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, environmental awareness, tolerance, negotiation, entrepreneurship and creativity. The

intersectoral and interdisciplinary dimensions of education for sustainable development, which has deep ties with technical and vocational training and education (TVET) is bound to engender new ways of thinking, new social and ethical attitudes, and innovative responses aimed at fostering sustainable development and low-carbon green practises. Consequently, national capacity in TVET should be reformed and strengthened in order to help young people develop relevant skills. UNESCO should support changes in lifestyles, attitudes, behaviours conducive to sustainable development and ensure coherence of the sustainable development mechanisms and policies at national, regional and international levels.

→ **Civic education @ the crossroads of peace education and ESD**

Education must provide for the acquisition of content and the transmission of values. Civic education can be seen as a means to jointly address the requirements of the culture of peace and sustainable development, which constitute essential components in the moral compass of the citizens of the next century. Learning environments must be conceived so as to foster a culture of non-violence, mutual respect and dialogue. Consideration should be given to arts education and to sport as an educational instrument fostering predispositions to dialogue, to respect for rules and to selflessness. Multilingual education, human rights and peace education, cross-border education and intercultural education at all levels, in formal and informal education, could nurture cross-fertilization of cultures, and thus bolster knowledge on cultural diversity and appreciation of other people's cultures. Comprehensive curriculum reform should be supported so as to integrate education for peace and human rights, civics and intercultural education, as well as remembrance education, also to enhance knowledge about cultural diversity and appreciation of other people's cultures. A "universal" curriculum – expressing universal values spreading across all cultures – could be designed as a cornerstone in educating for peace and tolerance.

→ **Scientific innovation and cooperation for peace and sustainable development**

Science and technology have an important role to play in providing solid responses in the peace-development context. Environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity losses or oceanic degradations will require increased investments into science, research and technology, especially through innovative projects, such as the use of satellite imagery to manage resources, the survey of individual ecosystems and the strengthening of the knowledge base for renewable energies, in particular solar energy. Other key aspects of sustainable development are the effective management of natural resources as well as the connection between cultural and biological diversity, largely illustrated in the rich practices of local and indigenous people on all continents. All those dimensions call for new approaches to involve cross-sectoral coordination, and integration of environmental and social concerns into all development processes. Providing science-based knowledge, building science capacities for research, training and the popularization of science in development-oriented areas, as well as sharing the transfer of scientific information, are collective and ethical responsibilities, bearing in mind, the borderless nature of the global environmental crises. The culture of peace should go hand in hand with a culture of conservation. UNESCO could support governments in the design and formulation of science, technology and innovation policies, which must also include ethical dimensions as well as be geared towards intensifying efforts in the field of disaster management and early warning systems, which are indispensable to the social and economic resilience of countries.

→ **Sustainable development – a necessity for countries with special needs, especially in Africa**

While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Agenda 21 have been recognized as strategic ways to lay the foundations for sustainable development, the current global crises are jeopardizing the capacity of developing countries to attain those objectives. This has dire consequences for priority groups of countries with recognized special needs, such as the Least Developing Countries (LDCs), the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and

most countries in Africa. For instance, Small Island Developing States face ever-increasing challenges resulting from climate change, which devastates crops, habitations and coastlines. As for Africa, its paradox is the extensive wealth of its human and natural resources on the one hand, and the extreme poverty of large parts of its population on the other. In this era of globalization, the world cannot genuinely prosper with profound inequalities between regions, which eventually threaten social justice, stability, security and peace. This is another reason why it is imperative to anchor the principles of sustainable development in all dimensions of international cooperation and collaboration. UNESCO and governments should take advantage of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) to be held in Rio in 2012 to rethink policies and approaches towards sustainable development. This should include addressing issues pertaining to global ocean governance, the critical importance of water management, green economies and green societies, with particular attention to the situations of countries with priority needs.

→ **Facilitating peace and understanding between cultures**

UNESCO is the prime forum for dialogue involving a vibrant and interdependent humanity aiming at shared peace and well-being. Without intercultural and interreligious dialogues, as well as goodwill and mutual understanding, no culture of peace can emerge. Building on its work on global and regional histories or the slave route, UNESCO should encourage individuals and communities to explore their cultures as well as the cultures of other nations. Culture is a major area where society meets itself, where it discovers itself as well as where it connects with Otherness. It is apparent that issues such as cultural citizenship, cultural rights and cultural creation are deeply interlinked. Thus, a culture of peace cannot develop if one's own culture as well as the others' is not known and acknowledged or if other cultures are kept at a distance. This means, in particular, that efforts should be made to highlight the assets of the diversity of cultures that cohabit within a single country. UNESCO could assist countries in exploring what cultural resources they may hold to construct peace, notably domestic peace, on an endogenous basis in line with their past history and their aspirations. Particular attention could be paid to the teaching of wars and violent eras as a catalyst for a remembrance and

reconciliation education intended to disseminate the message “No more war”. Suggestions were made to consider the launching of a Decade of Common Heritage intended to promote the universal values underpinning the diversity of cultural heritages. Member States should develop capacities to translate the normative instruments related to culture into policies and cultural strategies.

→ **Culture for development, culture for peace**

The positive power of culture for development is increasingly acknowledged – but success in this area is possible only if countries can genuinely promote culture in the framework of the market economy, lest it get a mere commercial commodity swallowed by a pure logic of profit maximization. Thus, it is important to clarify the interlinkages between culture, peace and development and support initiatives to bring these to bear. The dialogue between tradition and modernity is constitutive of cultures. It calls for identifying a balance between the past, the present and the future. UNESCO should be called to support Member States in their efforts to promote contemporary art projects and emphasize the role of artistic creation for human rights, sustainable development, dialogue and tolerance. UNESCO's expertise in culture and heritage is a unique asset, notably its extensive normative action related to the different culture conventions. In the long run, the cultural component must be incorporated into national development strategies and cultural policies must be developed, together with advocacy for the inclusion of cultural dimensions in policy-making and public endeavours.

→ **Building peace through reconciliation between and within nations**

Reconciliation should be seen as a key issue that can contribute to a culture of peace between nations, particularly within regions that have been torn by conflicts. Reconciliation is also a necessity to help societies heal the wounds of past and ongoing internecine conflicts. Finally, reconciliation as a plank to everyday peace should be envisaged as a process that goes beyond the resolution of armed conflict, as is the case, for example, when electoral processes have generated distrust in the midst of society and threaten to fragment it. Building peace democratically is a deeply ethical process, which

depends on a balance of forgiveness and justice, and which may be achieved through dialogue and via platforms such as reconciliation commissions. The principles and values of reconciliation could also be disseminated through a global campaign against all forms of discrimination and exclusion at the local, national, regional and international levels.

→ **Media and the social media – vehicle for a culture of peace and sustainable development**

In an era of unprecedented interconnectedness and instantaneous information flows, the media can serve as a bridge between all cultures and societies, if they espouse the principles and values underpinning the culture of peace and sustainable development: the rejection of hateful propaganda, intolerance, discrimination, prejudice and extremism, and the promotion of dialogue, as well as balanced, evidence- and research-based information. The media, including the social media, should be harnessed as part of the education system, safeguarding the past and forging the future. In this regard, the Memory of the World programme, together with the culture-related 1972 and 2003 Conventions constitute a framework for the preservation of our heritage. The free, pluralistic and independent media are crucial in promoting good governance. Media literacy should be mainstreamed in curricula to better prepare future citizens to take an active part in the public life of their societies. The media's role is also crucial in disaster risk reduction and preparedness, as well as for national reconciliation and pluralism. UNESCO should enhance its action in the areas of the promotion of freedom of expression, free and pluralistic media, inclusive knowledge societies, the bridging of digital divides, and access to information. Initiatives should be launched jointly with the relevant stakeholders to harness the new social media.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR UNESCO: WHAT MORE CAN UNESCO AND ITS PARTNERS DO?

A new global commitment to make the best use of its transformative power in order to provide coherent political responses and renew global governance

→ **The quest for everyday peace**

We need a human-centred approach to peace building and prevention of conflicts and violence. UNESCO should mainstream the culture of peace in all its programmes, bearing in mind that a culture of peace must also be effective in the form an everyday peace, a peace of which all the individual and collective members of society are the craftspeople. This is a new humanism, which requires participation and inclusion of all, as well as cultural and intellectual cooperation in a global community fully aware of the transformative power of education, science and culture. Living together in a globalized, complex and diverse village calls for UNESCO to strengthen such values as honesty, solidarity among peoples, mutual benefits and mutual respect.

→ **Solidarity through partnerships for peace and sustainable development**

Partnerships are strategic assets in the global efforts aimed at a culture of peace and sustainable development. These values are integrated into global agendas set by the Member States of the United Nations. Yet, they were never meant to be implemented by governments and intergovernmental organizations alone. Peace and development cannot happen exclusively from the top down: those agendas can be implemented only if they are fully owned by a wide diversity of partners, allowing for the inclusion and participation of all. Consequently, the whole UNESCO community must be mobilized – including civil society organizations, youth organizations, women's organizations, other international organizations – and public-private partnerships must be strengthened and further developed. UNESCO also is invited to use its convening power to

organize events similar to the Leaders' Forum at the global and the regional levels.

→ **Towards a new societal paradigm**

The spirit of rich interventions at the Leaders' Forum could be resumed by pointing to the need for acquiring (i) “green” reflexes and attitudes constituting a global ecological consciousness in the face of unprecedented pace of climate change and environmental and ecological degradations and (ii) intercultural skills such as empathy, spontaneous solidarity and hospitality to reflect the diversity of contemporary societies in an active, honest and lasting dialogue.

There is an imperative need to adopt a holistic approach of policies regarding a culture of peace and sustainable development, best captured by the image of being the “two sides of the same coin”.

Only through an integrated agenda can this relationship be translated into meaningful targets and programmes. UNESCO's fields of competence – education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information – if correctly used, are powerful vectors for human dignity, freedom, equality, mutual trust, shared responsibilities for the planet and for intercultural solidarity, values which are so ardently needed today to address humanity's preoccupations and meet its aspirations.

OPENING ADDRESSES



Katalin Bogyay

President of the 36th session of the General Conference

I would like to reiterate the expression of my heartfelt gratitude to the Member States for having elected me as President of the General Conference. As people have heard me say before, it is an immense honour for me, someone in whose life music is so instrumental, to be trusted with the mission of helping the Member States to speak in tune. Our great virtuoso musician Franz Liszt has said that “The principal task of a conductor is not to put himself in evidence but to disappear behind his functions ...” and I would add – to look for harmony.

Those words resonate harmoniously with the spirit of this room, which was built to host the concert of nations that decided to work together in the awareness “that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.” Albert Einstein expressed the same idea when he stated that: “Peace cannot be kept by force, it can only be achieved by understanding.”

It is a delight to start my mandate with such a major meeting – it is a high-level meeting because we are graced with the presence of high-level personalities. It is a high-level meeting also because it offers an opportunity to discuss fundamental issues, issues that send us back to the very reason why we have UNESCO and even the United Nations in the first place.

Let us remember that the central objective of the United Nations – and UNESCO – was to institute a parliament of humanity dedicated “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

Sixty-six years on, a brief look at the state of the world reveals that for a large part of human population, these objectives remain distant aspirations. Under

our watch, armed conflicts continue to kill, maim, and displace millions of people, especially in poor countries. Conflicts are diverting scarce human and financial resources from key areas such as health care and education to military spending, thereby reinforcing poverty, undermining economic growth and stunting progress of nations on all human development indicators.

In these trying economic times, the talk of budget and fiscal deficits dominates the airwaves. What we rarely, if at all, hear about, and what the recent *EFA Global Monitoring Report* of UNESCO highlighted, is what I would call an acute “peace deficit”, felt in countries big and small, affluent and poor, to the North and South. In 21 developing countries that spend more on tanks than on primary education, there is peace deficit. There is peace deficit in the affluent world where military spending dwarfs the resources available for development aid. It has been calculated that if rich countries were to stop military spending just for six days, the savings would be enough to close the \$16 billion education for all external financing gap. Think of how many people such an act would pull from the grips of poverty, how many children would be able to receive life-sustaining education!

As you very well understand, a genuine peace is not to be found where poverty keeps people in dire need for basic commodities, leaves them unable to fend for themselves and their families, and creates fertile ground for the seed of conflict to grow.

This is the reason why for almost one billion people who will go to sleep hungry tonight – most of them women and 98% living in developing countries – peace is illusive.

For more than 600 million children in developing world that live on less than a dollar a day, and for 200 million malnourished children and their families, there is no meaningful peace to speak of.

For almost 800 million people without basic literacy skills – two thirds of them women, who are barred from meaningful participation in social life and the realization of their full human potential, peace is a fleeting concept.

In other words, under the conditions of structural underdevelopment, where basic elements of human security are missing, a culture of peace can hardly take hold. To advance our peace agenda, therefore, we have to cultivate a myriad of conditions that contribute to sustainable development – human rights and freedoms, inclusive and tolerant societies, reconciliation and intercultural dialogue. The promotion of this positive notion of a “culture of peace”, besides an aim in itself, is a powerful antidote against violence, and as such, an expression of UNESCO’s fundamental mandate.

In pursuing this mandate, UNESCO brings to bear its uniquely multidisciplinary approach, which enables it to deal with complex issues in a holistic manner. This is the real strength of the Organization, because the issues we have to tackle, such as conflict and poverty, are multidimensional social phenomena that are not amenable to simple solutions. It is this uniquely holistic, human-centred approach to sustainable development and peace-building that UNESCO brings to the multilateral efforts in these areas.

Your Excellencies, Heads of States and Governments,

Distinguished Speakers of today,

Your presence gives us a unique opportunity to directly engage world leaders and decision-makers in our brainstorming efforts concerning one of the most fundamental questions for UNESCO: what can the Organization do towards building a culture of peace and sustainable development? We would be naïve to expect you to articulate clear-cut solutions to the world’s most pressing problems. Instead, your willingness to share the insights from your own personal experiences of dealing with these issues as leaders will certainly deepen our understanding of the obstacles to peace and sustainable development in different parts of the world, and the ways to surmount them.

A culture of peace rests on the idea that durable peace requires commitment to building just, open and inclusive societies. Justice, freedom and equality are the shared values at the bedrock of the peaceful global fellowship we must strive for. And nowhere is the lack of justice and equality as pronounced as in the area of gender equality. The latest data indicates that women continue

to suffer from unequal access to education at all levels, with 39 million girls missing from primary and secondary schools. Women are also inadequately represented in leadership positions, occupying only nineteen percent of seats in the houses of parliament worldwide. This is detrimental to all – not just to women, but to the entire societies that do not profit from women's proven potential to contribute significantly to reconciliation, peace-building and social and economic development.

UNESCO's response is to empower women around the world – notably through education, the most effective lever to spread values and skills. That is the aim of UNESCO's Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, launched in this very room one month ago by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Secretary of State Hilary Clinton. As long as the gender inequalities persist, striving for women's empowerment will remain an indispensable attribute to a culture of peace and therefore one of the core aims of UNESCO.

Here, I have to remark that for the first time in the history of UNESCO, its three organs, the General Conference, the Executive Board and the Secretariat are headed by women. By making such choice, the Member States have sent a very powerful message to the world that UNESCO is serious about its commitment to promoting gender equality and recognizing the abilities of women.

Empowering women is one telling example among others of how UNESCO contributes to a culture of peace and to sustainable development – but it must be insisted upon, because it reveals that to cope with the challenges of today and tomorrow, we need to adopt the kind of perspective that UNESCO promotes.

Here I mean that our global problems must be met with holistic and encompassing approaches that take into account the moral and ethical dimensions of problems. Major human challenges always entail moral and ethical dimensions. Technical provisions without a conscience do not touch the cultural and moral fabric of societies – where daily peace and successful development meet their ultimate test.

A similar ethical approach is indispensable for addressing global environmental change and for coping with its social effects. Yesterday, in my acceptance speech I reminded ourselves that with the forthcoming Climate Conferences COP17 in Durban and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio +20, we are forced to come to terms with the fact that our unbridled pursuit of economic growth is bringing ever-increasing strains and irreversible damage to our planet in all areas. It has become an ethical imperative to modify our attitudes and actions towards nature in order to ensure the rights of future generations. We are confronted with the need to pursue new goals such as “sustainability, well-being, solidarity and respect for cultural diversity” in addition to the more traditional aspirations such as “liberty, equality and fraternity” as part of a global mission statement.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ministers and Delegates of the General Conference,

Today, as we set out to chart UNESCO's course of action for the next two years, we invite you to freely and openly reflect on ways that the Organization can realize its commitment to transform the vicious cycle of conflict and structural underdevelopment into a virtuous cycle of durable peace and sustainable development. The Leaders' Forum was conceived precisely to enrich the work of the General Conference with innovative, bold and even provocative ideas stemming from the exchanges at the multilateral platform of the highest level. These ideas have a real chance of being transformed into action, as they find expression in the strategic documents that chart out the course of UNESCO's engagement with the world.

We seek innovative thinking and action not as an option but as a necessity, for the current state of the world attests that business-as-usual approaches to building peace and sustainable development have simply not worked. We need creative peace. Our efforts will come to no avail if we try to develop a “one size fits all” strategy against violence and underdevelopment. Instead, our discussions should illuminate a general framework within which UNESCO can

make a tangible contribution to building peace and sustainable development in various regional and local contexts.

Today is an auspicious day in India. It is Diwali, the Festival of Lights. This evening billions of lamps will be lit to welcome the new year, to pray for peace and prosperity and to celebrate the victory of good over evil. Let us also light a lamp at UNESCO, to banish the darkness of illiteracy and poverty, and to confront the forces of hatred and intolerance.

I am confident that under the roof of UNESCO, the encounter and the open exchange of ideas among the world leaders can significantly advance this aim. Let us all take advantage of the unique space of dialogue offered by the Leaders' Forum.

Eleonora Valentinovna Mitrofanova

Chairperson of the Executive Board

Let me start by insisting on the timeliness of this conference, the Leaders' Forum. As all the other branches of the United Nations family, UNESCO was created with peace in mind, and with a view to building peace in the minds of people, as you all know.

In this endeavour, UNESCO's identity, its special feature, lies in the ardent promotion of international cooperation through actions in the fields of Education, the Sciences, Culture and Communication and Information. Underlying these different avenues is a common thread, the conviction that dialogue should be encouraged everywhere and at all levels. In seeking peace and cooperation, we foster dialogue between cultures, between societies as well as between governments – starting with the Member States, of which you are the leaders and which are the shareholders of the Organization.

The Leaders' Forum is an opportunity for you who represent the Member States at the highest levels, to dialogue directly and to take advantage of UNESCO's functions as a catalyst of intellectual cooperation and an instrument of your will to rethink the present and prepare the future in a spirit of "intellectual and moral solidarity".

As I mentioned earlier, this meeting is timely. It is held at a turning point in the life of our Organization because for the past two years the Organization has been very active in reforming itself.

This effort has mobilized the energy of the Organization as a whole throughout the biennium, so that we can better perform and better respond to our changing environment, so that we can better meet the needs and expectations of the Member States.

I had the honour to chair the Executive Board in one of those exciting periods when an institution questions itself, reviews its proceedings and paves the way forward. I am confident that in attending the Leaders' Forum, you will find that you are contributing to the work of a UNESCO that is rejuvenated and more capable of fulfilling the ideals of its Constitution, which remain relevant more than six decades after its creation.

To all of you leaders present today, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers or Secretaries of State, I want to remind you that, in renewing itself, UNESCO is for you to use as a platform to exchange views and explore the new ideas and perspectives that will infuse the actions of decision-makers tomorrow.

UNESCO was created to help Member States address problems that they cannot apprehend, let alone solve, individually. This is especially true today, in an era when we come to realize that we live in a world of multiple challenges and stress where peaceful relations among peoples and nations are threatened by complex and multiple crises. This impinges on the hopes for global peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

Of course, we are not starting from scratch – many of the current challenges are being targeted by strong and powerful international agendas – the Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 21 or the Education For All goals. But what is needed today is a comprehensive understanding of the world situation – and new approaches to address peace and development holistically.

“How can UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?” This is the holistic question you are going to debate – it is a strategic one on many grounds.

We just need to look around us to realize how dearly we need a culture of peace and non-violence. Only too recently, dramatic and violent acts by fanatics have made dozens of innocent civilian victims in the Arab region, in Africa and Europe. In too many places, violence remains a daily plague, especially in relation to gang and drug violence, as is experienced by various communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Violence is also tangible in the social exclusion of marginalized groups – which too often results in

violence against women, who remain the largest disenfranchised group of humanity as a whole.

All over the world, societies are in turmoil. Youth, who are the future of nations, have decided to confront the inertia of their societies. We think of the Arab uprisings, which are still having tremendous impact in this region. But let's not forget that the phenomenon of youth taking to the streets is worldwide. On every continent, young women and men are demonstrating their commitment to social change. What we must heed is that all of them are heralding such universal principles as democratic participation, fairness, social as well as economic empowerment, access to quality education, and shared prosperity.

These "youth quakes" could probably not have been anticipated as such – what could have been anticipated though is that vivid social eruptions would respond to the impact of the global financial and economic crisis in the countries which have been struck hard – notably in so many exposed industrialized countries. And, as for the developing and least developed countries, the crisis does not date back to yesterday. The endemic crisis of poverty is still affecting the bottom billion. These people, children and adults, women and men, live in hunger; they cannot access the social, health and educational services that could empower them. They are barred from attaining true human development.

All those are signs that we are all in the same boat. All those are signs that we need to rethink development along more rational lines, aiming at social and economic sustainability but also at environmental sustainability.

The planet is going through a crisis that must be met with a resolute commitment to sustainable development. Climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity losses, and pollution – these global environmental crises are mainly human-made. In other words, humanity can and must do something. Humanity must move in the right direction. We need a green economy and green societies underpinned by a vision for peaceful sustainable development that makes the most of the transformative power of education, the sciences, culture and communication and information.

Challenges must be addressed by us, country by country, but above all collectively. The Leaders' Forum is an opportunity to contribute to that responsibility. As Heads of State or Government, Ministers and senior decision-makers, you are going to debate on how best to achieve a culture of peace and sustainable development through the instruments of soft power represented in the fields of competence of UNESCO. As your exchanges can and may shape new models and impact pressing international issues, the results and recommendations of your discussions will be transmitted to the General Conference to inspire the strategies of the Organization in the coming years. This will have been your first – but not, I believe, the last – contribution to a culture of peace and sustainable development.

Thank you very much.

Irina Bokova

Director-General of UNESCO

The Leaders' Forum is one of the major innovations of the 36th session of the General Conference.

It is, in my view, an opportunity to launch an open, frank and direct debate on how UNESCO can contribute to the culture of peace and to sustainable development.

Let's repeat what was said yesterday: ours is an era of great changes.

It is an era of contrasts, where extreme violence goes side by side with the greatest hopes.

You have certainly seen the images of this little 16-day premature baby girl who was just miraculously saved from the rubble of Ergis, the Turkish city that was devastated by an earthquake.

The crowd was emotional when the little girl, Azra Karaduman, was freed under a thunder of applause.

For an instant, the city paused in its toils to salute her rescuers.

As for us, who may never have heard of the city of Ergis, we are filled with a strong feeling of empathy, which is the core of humanism.

We are all connected; we belong to the same human community.

To tackle global challenges efficiently, we must reinforce our ties and remain united.

We have the Rio + 20 Conference next year.

We are closer to the 2015 deadline of the Millennium Development goals and the Education For All objectives.

We stand at a turning point, where decisions can be made which will affect the future of this little girl.

This forum must contribute to that.

The vision within our 1945 Constitution is more relevant than ever.

But it is not enough to simply assert the relevance of UNESCO's message.

We must deliver on it -- in a world faced with rapid changes.

We face today new challenges of unparalleled complexity.

These call on us to bridge the gaps in global governance, to support public goods falling through the cracks of globalization.

We will not tire in repeating: UNESCO's Constitution declares that if wars start in the minds of men and women, then it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be built.

We must reinvent how we work towards these goals.

We must renew our commitment to action in education, culture, the sciences and communication, to lay the foundations for sustainable development and culture of peace.

This starts with history.

History shows the dangers of intolerance, racism, and hatred.

History is one of the bridges we must build between people and cultures.

UNESCO builds such bridges with the Education for Holocaust Remembrance programme.

The launch of the international competition on the Permanent Memorial at the United Nations to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic

Slave Trade, on 23 August, 2011, is a clear symbol of a culture of peace and a strong contribution to the International Year for People of African Descent.

In times of uncertainty, we must build on such initiatives, we must stay true to a moral compass.

In times of complexity, we must stand and act together.

States cannot tackle global challenges alone.

UNESCO acts for education, for freedom of expression, for gender equality, for cultural heritage and diversity, for the sciences.

We do all of this to strengthen the ties of solidarity between peoples and to clear the ground for sustainable development.

This is UNESCO's message, this is our mandate.

The world has perhaps never needed strong ideas as it does today -- ideas that mobilize societies that bring us together.

Over the next day, it may be worth recalling the words of the great humanist and French writer, Victor Hugo,

"An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come."

STATEMENTS



Wednesday, 26 October 2011

Pal Schmitt

President of the Republic of Hungary

Please, let me begin with some personal remarks: it is a great honour for me to present Hungary at this Leaders Forum as it is the first time that the President of Hungary pays tribute to UNESCO during more than sixty years of its membership. Furthermore, this event is very remarkable because the Hungarian Ambassador to UNESCO, Katalin Bogay was elected yesterday President of the General Conference for the next two years.

While preparing for this day, I came across a thought from Albert Einstein, which goes like this:

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.”

You might ask, what is it that captivated me, beside the humour and the well-chosen analogy? It was the link between balance and movement. It is because the calm, the peacefulness of the state of balance is never the result of passivity. Someone who is passive is not in a state of balance, but instead – if you like – has fallen off the bicycle, has fallen out of life. It is possible that this person was never on the bike.

I believe that in the end, the mission of UNESCO and this forum are also about a kind of balance.

A balance between the different forces is a precondition for life, be it individual or the life of a community. This balance will be capable of establishing the harmony, which is the requirement of a healthy, happy and peaceful life.

Because opportunities, capabilities, but sometimes also human attitudes and skills, prove to be too little to secure a balance, thus we have to work with a common will to achieve it. UNESCO is also about this common will to create a balance in the world.

Physical and spiritual strength, inner peace are required for achieving a complete life. Therefore, everything that we can and that we should talk about is concentrated around this balance.

I would like to expand the notion of sustainable development to the society, to human relations. Because when it comes to these, we can be just as wasteful and ill-planning, as we tend to be, unfortunately, with production, energy and the environment.

Sustainable development itself is one of the cardinal life-balance situations that we should achieve together. However, man is a creature who tends to be detrimental to his own destiny. Even if he is aware of its conditions: the requirements of peace, spiritual and physical health, perseverance and vision.

Despite knowing the role of education, culture, arts, science and sport in achieving a complete life, man is only capable of ensuring their role with conscious collaboration.

I would like to concentrate primarily on sports, since even Einstein found essence in movement. As a former Olympic-athlete and sports executive, this topic is also especially close to my heart.

It is common knowledge that people actively engaged in sports are more resistant to physical ailments and lead a much more relaxed life. However the role of sports and a good physical condition in creating balance is not only evident in terms of an individual's life. Let us not forget that sport is also about play. Therefore it is a natural medium in the dialogue between nations, in conflict management and in overcoming discrimination. It is a "language" similar to science and art, but is even more direct and simple, than they are.

Sport is profoundly democratic. Its message: Nobody is an enemy. Anyone actively engaged in sports will grow up in an environment, which would categorically outcast anyone, who does not respect his or her opponent. As the Olympic Charter stipulates:

"Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging

to the Olympic Movement” (6th Fundamental Principle of Olympism, Olympic Charter)

Indeed, the regulated character of sports, its basic values are capable of educating people, getting them back on track, even lifting them from their difficulties, by giving them a sense of purpose.

My commitment with sport has not wavered, however the focus has slightly changed: one of my undertakings as President is to encourage people to practice sport on a more regular basis and to promote “sports for all” hand in hand with the so-called elite sport.

I am convinced that the more people are engaged in sporting activities the more our society turns peaceful because through sport people learn a number of social values such as, among others, respecting the rules and the referees, regard the adversary as a rival and not an enemy, accepting cultural differences, learn tolerance and solidarity.

This is why, I am happy that in my country, the Hungarian government has designated sport as a strategic sector. One of its most prominent endeavours is that even in these troubled financial times which Europe and the whole world are experiencing, the government has significantly increased the funds allocated to sport and is committed to increasing this further.

Apart from this, it is taking steps such as:

- Introduction of daily physical education classes in public education,
- Grants available for “sport for all” movements,
- Tax benefits for sports purposes,
- Sport-friendly legislative environment,
- Opening of sports facilities for community purposes,
- Improved financial remuneration of physical education teachers and trainers,
- More airtime for sports on public service media,

- Personal example set by politicians, Members of the Parliament and other government officials.

If you will permit me, I would like – at this point – to bring in an outstanding Hungarian, what's more, the “greatest Hungarian”, Count István Széchenyi, a prominent thinker, politician and statesman of the 19th century. He once, very objectively said the following:

“...two things required for us to remain healthy: a touch of philosophy and an erect, relaxed posture.”

This substantive statement expresses well, what I wanted to talk about, namely the fact that “an erect, relaxed posture”, meaning good physical condition, is also a fundamental trait of a thinking person. Our future depends on the state that tomorrow's challenges find us in.

Before you might accuse me of excessive bias, let me shortly mention the other “philosophy” mentioned by Széchenyi, which is science. It was him who founded and created the Hungarian Academy of Science. Budapest is currently preparing for the 5th World Science Forum, to be held in November.

We Hungarians consider it a huge success that we have been able to create this series of events dubbed as the “Davos of Science” in collaboration with UNESCO.

This is an opportunity for dialogue, where it is not only the specific details of scientific disciplines that are discussed, but where the dependence of research and our lives can also be made evident. We can address science from the perspective of everyday life, from the point of the most pressing global problems. I am very hopeful that the title of the meeting, “The Changing Landscape of Science: Challenges and Opportunities,” will allow us to gather a lot of good experiences. We look forward to a meeting, where frequently mentioned and repeated expressions will gain content and we can come to agreements that will then yield tangible results.

Also an important achievement of UNESCO is that it not only has important “themes” but also “best practices”. This year, the cultural diversity of the Franz

Liszt-year was the best proof to me of how the same thought can be presented in so many wonderful ways, all of them best suited to individual national characters. I sincerely hope that our cooperation and efforts will bring success and results in all other areas.

Let me thank you, Madame Director-General for your invitation. I am very much looking forward to sharing other experiences and other models of peace building presented by my honourable fellow Heads of States and Governments from different parts of the world.

Ali Bongo Ondimba

President of the Republic of Gabon

This 36th session of UNESCO's General Conference and its Leaders' Forum is the first opportunity we have had to speak before our prestigious International Organization dedicated to Culture and Knowledge.

I am particularly honoured to be invited, and I thank you for this opportunity. Madam, the Director-General, I would also like to congratulate you on being elected as head of this Organization, and also for being the first woman to hold this position. I am especially pleased because we, in Gabon, have always paid particular attention to the place of Women in Gabonese society.

On that note, I would like to pay tribute to the two women who ensured a smooth transition in my country during the delicate period following the death of my predecessor, the late President Omar Bongo Ondimba. One is the President of the Senate, who became acting President of the Republic during the interim period, and the other is the President of the Constitutional Court.

I would also like to pay tribute to Professor Wangari Maathai, who recently passed away. She was a tireless activist for sustainable development who, in 2004, became the first African woman to receive a Nobel Peace Prize.

The theme chosen for this Conference, i.e.: "How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?" is particularly appropriate for us because the identified issues constitute the main focus of our societal programme.

I would like to reaffirm today, before this Assembly, Gabon's adherence to the fundamental values that have been nurtured by our Organization since 1945, and which are centred on the ideals of solidarity, education and culture in the service of peace.

In November 2003, Gabon organized, in conjunction with UNESCO, a major international conference in Libreville on the theme of “Intercultural Dialogue and the Culture of Peace in Central Africa and in the Great Lakes Region”.

This meeting stressed the need to integrate cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and education into strategies to strengthen the culture of peace initiative.

We should remember that this culture of peace, which we inherited from my predecessor, the late President Omar Bongo Ondimba, has been the driving force behind every one of our initiatives.

He always maintained, and rightly so, that Africa must prioritize peace if it is ever going to overcome the excessive number of challenges before it.

The Gabonese people have a duty to preserve this context of peace we live in today.

These ideas, which form the basis of our political culture, underpin all of my actions, particularly in the concretization of my ambition to turn Gabon into an emerging economy.

We have undeniably integrated UNESCO’s noble objectives into our social program, which is structured around three pillars: a Service-Oriented Gabon, an Industrial Gabon and a Green Gabon.

This is why we place particular emphasis on:

On the one hand, human capacity building, by creating an efficient education system in line with the needs of the country and offering varied and decentralized training options, and, on the other hand, a more rational management of our natural resources that is capable of reconciling environmental protection and economic development so that this development can become sustainable.

However, as I have already noted, the development programme that led to my election must rest on the three pillars of peace, democracy and good governance.

We are seeing the world change in response to conflicting trends and dynamics. This means that globalization, despite the opportunities it offers, is transforming our planet every day.

This mutation, as I am sure you will agree, is exposing our countries to negative and adverse development effects that are being expressed through the excessive number of social, economic and environmental crises we have been witnessing recently.

Furthermore, Africa, which has just celebrated fifty years of independence, is still faced with many challenges that are endangering peace and its development.

It should be remembered that, in 1992, the Rio Declaration stated that the eradication of poverty was vital to the achievement of sustainable development for all. As we approach the end of 2011, it is clear that we still have a long way to go to fulfil this commitment, and it is certain that the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved within the given timeframe.

In this context, we have reason to wonder about the strategies we are going to implement to deal with the very real despair of our people, which is being expressed in social and political backlashes around the world.

Faced with this reality, our major challenge is to change global governance. This new governance must give us the tools to influence the course of globalization, making it more human and capable of reducing economic, social, technological, cultural and moral fractures. This is important because these fractures have a tendency to amplify divisions between nations and between people and allow them to take root.

By way of example, just look at the divide that exists in the International Community in negotiations on climate change. And yet everyone agrees that this issue must be treated as a top priority in the safeguarding of our planet.

Gabon, in many respects, feels particularly concerned by these various challenges. But, what can, or what must, our Organization do, against the background I have just described?

At this point, I would like to stress how symbolic and important a moment it was for us newly independent States to adhere to UNESCO.

By welcoming us into its bosom, this Organization made a concrete gesture in its quest for freedom and peace in the world.

This is why, Madam Director-General, I want to assure you of our commitment to the vision you chose for your mandate.

We welcome the emphasis you place on global governance, on a culture of peace, justice and economic and social sustainable development, based on knowledge, science and innovation, against the background of a protected environment.

The development of the most vulnerable countries, i.e. those most affected by the various crises, requires us to overcome the current difficulties in the multilateral system.

To do this, Africa must fully resume its position in the family of nations so that it can focus primarily on training and education, which are still the biggest challenges.

This is why we believe that UNESCO could contribute ever further to the sustainable development of Africa, a continent that can only transform itself by prioritizing and better structuring its training initiatives in education, science and culture.

In the implementation of our societal programme, which began two years ago, Gabon is endeavouring to help our Institution attain its objectives. Thus, in the culture sector, we are working to revive the activities of the International Centre for Bantu Civilisations (CICIBA) and to protect the linguistic heritage of Pygmies.

On that subject, I am launching an appeal for a broad scientific and cultural movement to support and actively participate in this initiative, which is of interest not only in our continent but also on the international field. We fervently hope that this project will contribute to the valorization and the

protection of our cultures and our traditions. There can be no culture of peace without mutual understanding based on the knowledge and recognition of our own cultures and those of others.

Several initiatives have been implemented in the field of training and education, these vehicles of peace and main pillars in the fight against the vulnerabilities that exist in our populations.

By way of illustration, on the occasion of the commemoration of the centenary of Dr Schweitzer's arrival in Gabon, I made the decision to mobilize international energies and skills to breathe new life into the Foundation he left us as his legacy.

Thus, a university hospital will be built in Lambaréné, where he worked and died, to train our doctors and care for our people.

The work of the Youth Forum, recently held in Gabon, gave us a better understanding of the expectations of our young people and the ways and means of empowering them. Only by creating a generation of responsible and well-educated young people can we ensure that the future of our country will be based on a climate of peace, which is a pre-requisite to development.

Bringing together men and women to work towards the development of a country means not excluding anyone.

This is why I want to pay a special tribute to the First Lady of Gabon, who campaigned to make the 23rd June each year Widows and Orphans Day. Their vulnerability calls for our attention and also our protection.

Finally, in the field of sustainable resource management, Gabon has embarked on a programme to combat climate change, the essence of which will be presented at the Conference in Durban in December 2011.

To support this important program, a Space Observation Centre will open in 2012. This Centre will give more than 20 countries around Gabon a modern tool for the acquisition of satellite images in order to implement and monitor land development policies and natural resource exploitation policies.

This project, born from cooperation between developed countries, emerging economies and developing countries, is an example of solidarity between nations and between people, which is the only way to respond effectively to the major issues jeopardising the future of our planet.

I intend to ensure that Gabon actively retains its role within our Organization, so that our cooperation can be mutually beneficial and fruitful.

UNESCO remains a key partner for Gabon in the building work needed for its development.

However, this development can only be achieved against a background of peace and sharing.

I see this as the basis for the development strategy for an Emerging Gabon, which will contribute to the preservation of our environment, such is the link between nature and culture strong in the minds of every Gabonese woman and every Gabonese man.

Alassane Ouattara

President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

It is with great pleasure that I find myself within the walls of this prestigious institution of UNESCO, for the second time in less than two months.

Indeed, after September 14, when UNESCO had welcomed us for the ceremony of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize, I am happy to be here again, as part of 36th session of the General Conference to address the theme “How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?”

I would like first of all, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, to sincerely thank for the warm and cordial welcome to us since our arrival in this Mecca of knowledge and culture, and for all the provisions that have been made to make our stay more enjoyable.

Before further remarks, I would like, Madam President of the General Conference, to congratulate you on your election to chair the 36th session of the General Conference of UNESCO. Côte d'Ivoire is pleased to see a woman access this prestigious position.

Your election testifies to the recognition of your contribution to the influence of our Organization and the promotion of its ideals.

Our wishes are with you and we are confident that you will carry with brilliance of this delicate mission.

I would like to tell to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Davidson L. Hepburn, that as President, he will be remembered as a prominent intellectual, philosopher and a great ambassador for all cultures. Mr. President, we express our gratitude for your contribution to the growth of our Organization and the success achieved under your leadership.

I also welcome the President of the Executive Board, Mrs. Eleonora Valentinovna Mitrofanova and the distinguished members of this vital organ of our Organization, and praise for the tremendous work they have accomplished since the 35th session.

Finally, I would sincerely like to congratulate the Director-General of UNESCO, Mrs. Irina Bokova for the energetic pace she gave to UNESCO, guiding it toward a new humanism.

The relevance of UNESCO's mission to promote the defence of peace in the minds and hearts of men and women remains valid, especially since the challenges are increasing in number.

Indeed, despite the efforts of humanist organizations such as UNESCO, despite the progress of science and technology, the world keeps experiencing crises: food crisis, financial and economic crisis, social and moral crisis...

It is reasonable to ask how we should rethink the course of the world and act together to enhance the lives of men and women and to give the world a more human face.

Peace and sustainable development are the most appropriate means that we should achieve. I would therefore like to congratulate UNESCO for creating the opportunity for us to meet and share our experiences and hopes with a view to enrich us and comfort us in our common quest for sustainable peace. For my part, I am convinced that a culture of peace and sustainable development are intrinsically linked. While sustainable development requires us to work to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, it is in peace and the culture of peace as possible. Without peace there can no sustainable development.

Therefore, I would insist on the importance of peace and on its conditions, drawing in particular from the experience of my country, Côte d'Ivoire.

To understand the concept of culture of peace, I would like to refer to the definition of peace given by the late President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, at the

eighth summit of the Organization of the African Union in Addis Ababa on 22 in June 1971. In my view, this definition remains valid.

“Peace within the African States should be based on justice, tolerance, dialogue, respect for human dignity and the respect for freedom, equality between people.”

The difficult learning of democracy has created a paradoxical situation for Côte d'Ivoire. The country has been at war even though it is the birth land of the concept of culture of peace.

The burst that has occurred in my country helps understand that peace is fragile and delicate, which implies that it can disappear at any time. For a long time, Ivoirians, for their majority, thought that peace was established for good in the Côte d'Ivoire. We have learned to know the value of peace from the painful experience that we have just experienced. Peace is sacred. It is therefore necessary to honour peace.

Unfortunately, because of a poorly managed attempt at democratization, peace has been severely hampered in our country, as is still the case in many regions of our planet. Lives are destroyed, property is looted, women and girls are abused. War and its horrors are more common, alas, than peace, respect for human rights and the benefits of democracy.

However, I firmly believe that there are always underlying reasons for hope, like the one that brings us here today in this house of peace is UNESCO.

Today, Côte d'Ivoire is peaceful and stable again. Our country has decided to make every effort to avoid falling back into chaos and past events that we all deplored. I would like at this stage of my argument, to renew the gratitude of the Ivoirian people to the entire international community, including the UN and especially UNESCO, which is supporting us through a special post-conflict overall support programme in UNESCO's fields of competence for Côte d'Ivoire, by resolution 34C/60, and decisions 179EX/38 and 180EX/43. My country is in favour of updating and strengthening this program. We are strongly attached to it in particular with regards to the impact of the crisis on the social, the

educational system, on the situation of young people and especially of refugees and displaced by war.

The construction of genuine peace requires a multi-dimensional action: physical, economic, financial, environmental, but also ethical.

In order to build lasting peace in our country, we must first put into practice the following precepts, which were already mentioned:

- Respect life, rejecting violence in all its forms;
- Respect human rights;
- Use dialogue to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Applying these precepts, which make, in my opinion, the cultural issues of peace, implies several strategies that we have decided to implement in order to definitely get out of the crisis, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to build by 2020 an emerging country with a society that we envisage as inclusive, prosperous, just and open to modernity.

Among these strategies, the first consideration should go to the construction of democracy. This endeavour is familiar to many nations and UNESCO as well, but it is certainly new to people who are recovering from such a major trauma as the one we experienced. It is a difficult task because it requires a commitment on all fronts, the most difficult of which often bear to minds.

For the construction of democracy, we must reach a genuine rule of law, whereby no citizen takes justice in his or her own hands, and whereby relations are governed by legitimate rules that everyone agrees to strictly abide to.

For my part, I made this commitment and I want to promote a State based on justice and fairness. The way of democracy is certainly difficult to take, but we will not go astray. It is, in our opinion, the only lasting way worth anything in the modern world. In this process of democratization, the Ivoirian government is working to organize the elections next December. These elections, like the presidential elections, are consistent with the terms agreed between the Ivoirian parties, particularly in the context of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement. Moreover, by establishing the Commission on Dialogue,

Truth and Reconciliation, my country is aware that social cohesion is a priority. The Commission will help to raise awareness on the ethical dimension of the restoration of social cohesion. The duty of forgiveness is to encourage each other to forgiveness without excluding atonement or justice.

We believe that this reconciliation should be framed by justice. War crimes, crimes against humanity must be fully sanctioned by justice. In this, international justice must also play its role.

We can of course explore the traditional channels of conflict resolution and social cohesion building by referring ourselves to our own culture and I think for example of “alliances” between the ethnic groups that make up my country. Our researchers in Côte d’Ivoire and possibly elsewhere in Africa, are conducting research in this direction. We must encourage them and hope that the results will be usable in terms of modernity. UNESCO’s programme on social transformations (MOST) can help us move further on that path.

Of all the ways of seeking peace, those that induce authentically human values and attitudes are the foundation on which everything must be based.

I remain convinced that peace is also an ethical requirement inscribed in the heart of the Ivoirian people, and even in the heart of every man.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the culture of peace is in itself an ethical as well as an educational requirement or, more, an imperative to convert to peace. In this process, school has a crucial role of education and training to play. In addition, treaties, agreements, seminars, conferences, the improvement of the material and physical conditions of people can contribute significantly to this evolution. But taken separately, they are at risk of being ineffective and unproductive. They are instruments which, in order to be effective, must depend on the agents of change that we all need to become, by committing to enact it, as peacemakers. All the peoples of the world are capable of peace. They just need to commit.

Tillman Thomas

Prime Minister of Grenada

Allow me to offer my heartfelt congratulations to you upon your election as President of the 36th session of the General Conference and wish you every success during your presidency!

I am confident that you will guide this session to a great, successful, outcome.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dr. Davidson Hepburn, President of the 35th session of the General Conference, the first President from our Caribbean Community (CARICOM), for having carried out his duties at this level with dignity, and with a consensual spirit. His election to the position, confirmed the determination of Member States to change the status quo, by choosing someone from a Small Island Developing State of CARICOM, to assume this important responsibility in UNESCO; and indeed someone from the Latin American and Caribbean Group 3, the GRULAC.

Today we are gathered here to consider how UNESCO's action could create, develop and promote the pathways to lasting peace and sustainable development.

Established to construct "the defences of peace, in the minds of men", and women, through international cooperation in education, sciences, culture, communication and information, the ideals of the UNESCO remain most relevant for strengthening Member States solidarity, and contributing to peace and security, through the promotion of a Culture of Peace, and for Sustainable Development.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 has been recognized as one of the best ways to lay the foundations for sustainable development. Unfortunately, the global economic crisis has accentuated the many challenges,

and obstacles, to the attainment of these Goals. Moreover, this has had dire consequences for developing countries, and in particular, for Grenada's economy, and many Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Thus our march towards the achievement of our desired goals, has been considerably slowed.

Sustainable development requires an ethical framework for a sustainable world, involving the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality, and socio-political sustainability. Thus, building a Culture of Peace is a prerequisite for reaching socio-economic equity, and sustainable development.

How then can we build a culture of peace? What strategies and initiatives can be developed to foster a culture of peace and nonviolence as well as sustainable models of development?

The power of education

It is an accepted view that education is not only a human right, but also a prerequisite for sustainable development, and an essential tool for good governance, informed decisions and for the promotion of democracy. As such, it is essential to integrate, at all levels of the education system, the values of a culture of peace, the principles of equality, freedom, justice and democracy, respect of all human rights, tolerance, reconciliation, solidarity and promotion of intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Similarly, developing education for sustainable development also requires a special focus on climate change and disaster risk reduction and prevention. This leads to a greater awareness, and to new ways of thinking, new social and ethical attitudes, and innovative responses, to our most pressing contemporary challenges.

In this context, may I propose that UNESCO should deepen the partnership with Member States in their efforts to transform education systems at all levels. This is necessary for accelerating progress towards Education For All (EFA), lifelong learning, attaining quality education, and developing skills for the world of work through curriculum reform; carrying out policy reviews and the further development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(TVET), including green jobs and higher education, to meet the demands of the 21st century.

In this era of globalization, the world cannot genuinely prosper with inequalities between regions, and priority should continue to be given to Africa for building a Strategy for African Prosperity. Special attention should also be given to the needs of priority groups of countries such as the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and SIDS. This is absolutely necessary to allow them to address the unique conditions that render them disadvantaged.

Likewise, a global society cannot maximize its true potential with inequality among its members. Hence, attention must be paid to gender equality, as a fundamental pillar for peace.

Girls and women currently make up to 70% of the world's one billion poorest people, and the majority of the 793 million illiterate adults. As stated by Ms. Irina Bokova Director-General of UNESCO in her message on the occasion of the International Literacy Day, "Literacy is a prerequisite for peace because it carries multiple benefits, cutting across the human, cultural, social, political and economic spheres. In today's knowledge driven societies, lack of literacy is more than ever synonymous with exclusion and marginalization".

Given that one of UNESCO's global strategies is gender equality, the Organization should intensify its action in promoting education of girls and women at all levels of the Education System.

This would be timely following the recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize jointly to three women, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work.

Advocating for gender equality also requires that specific attention be given to the needs and contributions of young males in our Caribbean societies, where disproportionate numbers of males are confronted by underachievement, poverty, violence and exclusion. We expect UNESCO to develop strategies to address the emerging social and ethical challenges of the twenty-first century, by supporting Member States in the development of social science knowledge,

and elaborating forward-looking and inclusive approaches and policies, to respond to social transformations, and promote social inclusion.

Our Youth also want their voices to be heard and to be responsible actors in their various societies! As such, it would be critical to empower them, to allow them to initiate social change, and to be active participants in determining their own future.

Today, our youth are interconnected and are constantly communicating and playing key roles bringing change to their societies via the social media. Thus, it is important that the potential of the free, independent and pluralistic media, and especially the new social media, be harnessed.

This is consistent with Agenda 21, which clearly identifies information, integration, and participation as key building blocks, to help countries achieve development. The media, in all forms, can serve as a bridge between cultures and societies. Consequently I suggest that UNESCO should intensify its action in favour of building knowledge societies.

UNESCO's mandate to contribute to bridging the digital divide by fostering information and communication capacity for universal access, freedom of expression and freedom of the press; notably through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the Information for All Programme (IFAP), should be actively pursued.

The global environmental and ecological crisis manifested in climate change, biodiversity loss, oceanic over-exploitation and degradation, desertification, fresh water shortages and sea level rises, highlights the need for new approaches to the management of our resources. Our approach should involve cross-sectoral coordination, and integration of environmental and social concerns into all development processes, as well as broad public participation in decision making to generate responsible behaviors.

In this regard, the participation of UNESCO in the preparation of the Rio + 20 Conference to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, is of utmost importance!

The Organization's contribution in its main fields of competence, namely governance, education for sustainable development and ethical aspects of sciences should be reinforced.

This will be a major opportunity, to rethink policies and approaches, taking into consideration the needs of all stakeholders, in particular, the most vulnerable societies in Africa, and island economies. It is expected that embracing the concept of inclusive blue/green societies will be considered in a realistic way.

The role of the oceans is of strategic importance in this environmental crisis! An integrated, responsible management of the oceans, and an improved global ocean governance framework, are also prerequisites for the sustainable use of these resources. The implementation of Early Warning Systems for Tsunamis and other marine hazards, is necessary to prevent disasters such as the ones witnessed recently in Japan and other countries. UNESCO should seek to mobilize the necessary funds for the installation, in all regions, of Early Warning Systems, and in particular in the Caribbean, where only 20% of the extra-budgetary funds have been secured presently for this project.

In this respect, I am happy that Grenada was able to host the workshop organized by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO-IOC) on "Strengthening sea-level observation network and coordination activities in the Caribbean" in January this year. For small island countries such as we have in the Caribbean, this could mean the difference between survival, and total destruction of our populations.

In all its considerations, GRULAC must reflect all perspectives or perhaps due consideration should be given to sub-grouping which would facilitate such process.

The Power of Culture for Peace and Development

Culture can be a mainspring for the sustainable development of people, communities, and nations. Developing a solid cultural policy and advocating a cultural dimension in all public policies are critical.

As a result, we applaud the signal importance of UNESCO's action, in favour of protection and promotion of Heritage and Cultural Expressions and, in particular, the Organization's mandate through its normative action, and the implementation of its main conventions namely,:

- the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,
- the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage,
- the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression and
- the Convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

All of these must be translated into meaningful tangible actions.

As these conventions are becoming more and more recognized and effective, it is time now for UNESCO to work towards regional and sub regional equity. The Organization should now focus on more capacity building, and innovative actions, to assist these countries and regions to maximize the potential benefits from these instruments.

Science for a Culture of Peace

Science too can play a role for a Culture of Peace by proposing innovative solutions to challenges encountered. Providing science-based knowledge, building science capacities for research, training and the popularization of science in development-oriented areas, as well as sharing the transfer of scientific information, is a collective and ethical responsibility, bearing in mind, the borderless nature of the global environmental crises.

It is important that UNESCO redoubles its efforts in this area, assisting in providing solutions to the new challenges which affect the lives and livelihoods of so many people worldwide.

Addressing Climate Change and Natural Disasters

The increased number of natural disasters resulting from Climate Change, which impact all regions of the world, represents a great threat to global

prosperity and security! The special needs of small islands, some of them in danger of extinction, and those of vulnerable groups, in particular those living in coastal zones, should be taken into consideration.

A holistic approach, taking into account the scientific, educational, cultural and ethical dimensions, should be translated into concrete initiatives by all stakeholders.

The ethical dimension of science and technology must be highlighted, and Grenada attaches great importance to the development of policies in the ethics of science and technology, in particular to UNESCO's continued work concerning ethical principles in relation to climate change. The Organization should further mobilize science, technology and innovation for sustainable development, and natural disaster risk reduction and mitigation.

Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) are confronted by environmental degradation, and UNESCO's contribution to the Mauritius Strategy for the Sustainable Development of SIDS should be developed through innovative, strategic and targeted contributions adapted to their specific needs and in an intersectoral approach involving the active engagement of all Major Programmes – Education, Science, Culture and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT).

Consistent with UNESCO's Constitution which clearly states that "peace must be established on the basis of intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind", Member States should recognize that more solidarity and international cooperation is needed, to allow UNESCO to carry out its mission.

To achieve solidarity in a transforming world, UNESCO also needs to be more efficient, more focused and to be able to reshape itself; adapting to an era where multilateral cooperation is faced with increased demands and increased austerity.

The results and recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation of UNESCO, and the recommendations of the Ad-Hoc Working Group established by the Executive Board, present an opportunity to adapt to the realities of

the Twenty first century, and to play its role as an agent of change within the United Nations.

In this regard, we welcome the proposal to extend the Programme and Budget of UNESCO from two to four years and its Medium Term Strategy from four to eight years. This will allow UNESCO to align its planning cycles with the United Nations' Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).

The defences of peace are constructed in the minds of men and women. They are also constructed in the precincts of International Organizations!

By recommending to the General Conference to admit Palestine's membership to UNESCO, the Executive Board has taken a courageous decision consistent with its mandate. Its admission as a member of the Organization will allow Palestine and Israel to work together, by a commitment to sustained security and democracy, to building a culture of peace and sustainable development through the power of UNESCO's mandate.

What we now need is a new global commitment from all Member States, to tackle the challenges we face, and to make the most of the transformative power of education, science, culture, and communication and information.

Together we can make that difference.

I wish to highly commend UNESCO for its outstanding achievements over the years and indeed the further growth it has been experiencing under the leadership of its first woman Director-General,

You can count on our continued support.

Pascal Irenée Koupaki

Prime Minister of the Republic of Benin

Since the President of the Republic of Benin, Dr. Boni Yayi, was to attend today, I was asked to carry the voice of Benin in your august assembly, the 36th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, on the theme: “How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?”

The Convention establishing the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization rightly states that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

Let me recall that through the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 53rd Session, at the dawn of the Millennium, the international community recognizes that peace is a dynamic and participatory process which promotes dialogue and conflict resolution in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. It also recognizes the urgent need to eliminate all forms of discrimination and intolerance.

The Declaration also states unequivocally that “Education at all levels is one of the principal means to build a culture of peace.” It stipulates that UNESCO should continue to play an important role in promoting a culture of peace and to make major contributions to this endeavour.

Through its action, UNESCO has promoted a culture of peace by disseminating good practices and by assisting Member States to address key challenges relating to the promotion of an inclusive quality education that defends universal values such as human rights, peace, tolerance and education for all in the service of sustainable development.

More specifically, UNESCO has developed teaching and learning resources, manuals and guidelines on relevant topics such as learning to live together, human rights and child rights, peace and democracy, gender equality and violence prevention in schools.

Those concrete contributions manifest the value added by UNESCO to the efforts of its Member States which, it must be emphasized, have the primary responsibility in the building education systems that meet international standards.

In this regard, Benin welcomes the effective action of the various Directors-General who have successively headed the Organization, and especially Mrs Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, for her willingness to continue to promote the culture of peace and sustainable development.

The analysis of the recent economic and social facts shows that the world is still troubled by wars and various conflicts, by social protests which shake every continent on the planet.

These contestations have highlighted the need to promote the integral development of man, whoever he may be, to achieve an integrated development of peoples, to transform the world in a common space of growth and development.

In fact, development is another name for peace. Moreover, peace and development are inseparable from democracy which is the major means of their concretization. So I think it important that UNESCO should continue its global efforts to support transitioning countries on their path towards democracy.

In order to avoid social or generational conflicts and fully commit to building an environment of peace, special attention should be given to the employment of youth, who constitute nearly 60% of the African population. So we understand why UNESCO should work to implement the conclusions of the United Nations High Level Meeting on Youth held in New York on 25 and 26 July 2011, and contribute to the development of a global strategy for promoting youth employment and the elimination of underemployment. It is important to help

young people become the main actors of peace in our societies so that they cease to be an easy target for enemies of democracy and inclusive sustainable development, as an essential factor of peace.

We need to invent new approaches in our relations both globally and within our countries to reduce the social divide. We need to develop a global economy with solidarity between peoples at the center and which would value human resources while ensuring the balance and complementarity between man and nature.

Indeed, humanity will not reach the goal of peace for everyone, if it does not break with the logic of maximum and immediate profit, which is blind and deaf to all forms of solidarity and preservation of the interests of future generations.

In this perspective, UNESCO will, better than before, be called upon to play an even more decisive role in the development of the planet. As a laboratory of ideas, it must fulfill its role as consciousness-raiser; it must invent new rules and create exchange spaces more open to people and more likely to convey hope with a view to saving future generations from the scourge of wars and help create better living conditions.

Benin considers that UNESCO should take an active part in the efforts of the international community to help eliminate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Support for the Least Developed Countries to achieve their goals of sustainable development must be strengthened to support the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs in Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011.

It is in the interest of all peoples on the earth that UNESCO be constantly reinforced and continue to serve as a forum for dialogue among cultures and civilizations to facilitate the emergence of a human community living in harmony with nature and dedicated to cooperation for peace and the common welfare.

Specifically, in terms of sustainable development, Benin suggests to reactivate, within UNESCO, the knowledge and policy base for renewable energy, particularly solar energy.

Moreover, in the field of culture, UNESCO should encourage the process that places the mother tongue at the core of Education For All (EFA), even if globalization and intercultural dialogue require research and experimentation for multilingual education, which another door of access to technology, science and culture.

Let me conclude my remarks by noting that with the strengthening of solidarity between our countries and between generations, we can consolidate peace in the world and face together the challenges imposed on us by the current global turmoil, thanks to the deepening of democracy and the quality of public policies and actions conducive to accelerating development, shared prosperity, and therefore the search for peace between nations and peoples.

Mehriban Aliyeva

First Lady of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The topic of today's Forum can hardly leave anyone indifferent because, indeed, the future of humanity is impossible without building a culture of peace and ensuring sustainable development.

Today we live in a very complex world. On the one hand, it is characterized by the introduction of new technologies and the rapid development of modern science. While in the natural resources used to be the only source of wealth in the past, a human being now becomes himself or herself its own new source as the initiator of new ideas and technologies. But unlike natural resources, the human mind has no limits. The term "human capital" is no longer a metaphor. Intellect and wealth can go hand in hand.

On the other hand, the world is experiencing a deep financial crisis which is seen by many as a symptom of a more serious systemic crisis. Ongoing globalization is making us all the residents of a global village, but unfortunately at the same time we are divided like never before. The world of economy is constantly demonstrating how far it is from the ideals of social justice and global ethics.

Regrettably, intolerance, xenophobia and hatred are deepening this division. Tens of millions of people in many countries of the world face tough consequences of discrimination and rejection because of their race, ethnic roots or religion. Terrorist attacks, which claim lives of innocent people, political and religious radicalism undermine our security and that of our children.

Wars and conflicts continue in various corners of the world, killing millions of people. For our country – Azerbaijan conflict and its consequences are not just words but a bitter experience. The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives, continues to be the

greatest pain for each of us. This conflict led to the occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijan's lands, with nearly one million of Azerbaijanis becoming refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). A large number of historical and architectural monuments, schools, museums, libraries were destroyed in the occupied Azerbaijani territories. Experts forecast that if not prevented, conflicts will have killed more than 150 million women and children in the 21st century. Most of these wars began with propaganda of hatred and intolerance.

But despite this grim picture I look forward with optimism. We should not avoid addressing these threats by means of civilized dialogue. And this was exactly the goal of the most recent Baku international humanitarian forum which provided an insight into many questions raised today in this hall. The forum, that gathered representatives from 39 nations, held discussions on such issues as multiculturalism, modern technologies, convergence of sciences, biotechnology and ethics problems, humanitarian aspects of economic development models, social media and high technologies, and traditional systems of values in postmodernist society. The forum participants adopted the Baku Declaration, calling international organizations, including UNESCO "to create realistic frames for intercultural, interconfessional and inter-civilizational dialogues as the conditions of preserving and further positive development of mankind". And this is fundamental for building a culture of peace.

Apparently, a new world order is already forming and the process will be accompanied by many complications. I believe that the humanitarian aspects of globalization have become extremely relevant. In this sense, realizing our responsibility for the fate of human civilization is of essence. Sincere dialogue, good will, broader vision of the problems we face and mutual understanding are the tools that we all will need in order to successfully address these challenges for our own sake and for the sake of the generations to come.

Raila A. Odinga

Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya

Allow me first, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kenya and of our national delegation, to congratulate UNESCO for initiating a Leader's Forum as one of the activities of this General Conference.

I trust and believe that the Forum's resolutions will contribute significantly to strengthening UNESCO's promotion of the kind of peace that fosters meaningful social and economic development. You have Kenya's full support in this.

I should like to thank Mrs. Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, as well as the Government and the people of France, for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in Paris.

In my view, peace and sustainable development are two sides of the same coin. Neither can truly exist without the other. The onus is upon us, therefore, to pursue a culture of peace from the individual through the national, regional and global levels.

UNESCO has done an amazing job since its inception more than 60 years ago. But there is always room for ever-more practical and innovative solutions, to help us meet the changing and developing challenges of the 21st Century.

International co-operation, collaboration, and partnership are the watchwords. None among us can any longer act in isolation. We must all willingly co-operate, especially in instituting governance systems that prevent violence.

The preamble to UNESCO's Constitution says it well: "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

The fact is that the kind of peace we can achieve will depend on our ability to transform both the way people think and the systems that dominate the world order.

We all desire a world with workable ways of resolving conflict. Destructive, expensive wars must be a thing of the past, for violence has never been a solution to political and economic challenges.

All empirical evidence shows that an absence of peace stifles development and denies citizens the ability to chart their own destinies and develop their intellectual potential. Without peace there is neither freedom nor dignity, and ultimately all human life is threatened.

As pointed out by the Global Peace Index in May this year, had the world been even a quarter more peaceful over the preceding year, the global economy would have benefited by an additional \$2 trillion – equal to the two per cent of global GDP per annum required to mitigate global warming, as well as covering the costs of achieving the Millennium Development Goals – and with some left over to meet other development challenges.

You will recall that, in December last year, the UN adopted a resolution emphasising the importance of culture in meeting sustainable development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals.

By that time, we in Kenya had not only incorporated the cultural component into our national development strategy, which we call Vision 2030, but we had also embraced culture as one of the four major pillars of our foreign policy.

We fully believe that communication, education, science and culture are vital vehicles for peace-building. Education and international exposure teach our youth about different cultures, different lifestyles and different religious beliefs.

Using these vehicles to reach out across national borders lessens the hostility engendered by prejudice and ignorance, and fosters appreciation, tolerance and mutual awareness. UNESCO's efforts have long been at the heart of this kind of international understanding.

We have noted with appreciation that, as the lead agency for the 2005 to 2014 United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO is supporting Member States as they integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into the design and development of inclusive education policies.

This will no doubt go a long way towards achieving the desired societal reform.

But we must not forget that ultimate responsibility for inculcating and nurturing a culture of peace lies with individual Member States. Through this Forum, we have the chance to seek, reexamine and share knowledge and mechanisms that could guarantee lasting solutions and benefit all nations, individually and communally.

The paradox of Africa is the extensive wealth of its human and natural resources on the one hand, and the extreme poverty of its people on the other.

African countries have for decades faced the challenges of underdevelopment, armed conflict, refugees, the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, malaria, Aids, and other communicable diseases.

More recently, Africa has also faced disproportionate threats to human security – those brought about by terrorism, piracy, and human and drug-trafficking.

This is another reason why it is imperative that we strengthen international co-operation and collaboration, to eliminate these evil threats to peace and development.

Kenya has already been in the forefront of promoting peace, stability and security in Africa. Our officers are frequent participants in regional peace initiatives and in peace-keeping missions in different parts of the world.

Recently, we have made a significant contribution to the pursuit of peace in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.

Our biggest current challenge is the urgent security and humanitarian crisis in Somalia, and I should like to take this opportunity to call for continued support from the international community for the Somali political process.

One vital step towards peace is the uplifting of living standards – removing people from grinding, hopeless poverty. The world needs scientific and technological innovation and knowledge to improve health, find low-cost energy solutions, enhance food security, and effectively reclaim and conserve eco-systems.

To this end, we must redouble our efforts to ensure access to new technology is made available to communities where the social and economic impact will be greatest.

In conclusion, may I pay tribute once again to UNESCO's long experience in building a culture of peace, both through the implementation of UN declarations and through its own focused programmes.

It is our challenge to look at what has been successful, and to absorb the lessons learned and the experiences gained, so that we have the tools to change cultural mindsets for the better.

We must commit to proposing and approving practical measures that will really make a difference.

Let us not be afraid to do whatever it takes to lead the way in nurturing a culture of peace in the minds of men.

Boris Tadić

President of the Republic of Serbia

At the onset, I would like to thank Director-General Bokova for her exemplary leadership of this Organization, and for inviting me to address the 2011 UNESCO Leaders Forum.

Allow me to underline what a pleasure it is to share the stage with this distinguished group.

Our topic this year is UNESCO's contribution to building a culture of peace and sustainable development.

This is a critically important topic for us in these globally challenging times. The present crisis is on everyone's lips. It is not just an economic crisis, however; it is first and foremost a crisis of morals and values. Understandably, material considerations dominate the international discourse on how to solve the crisis. But today, I want to focus on another – for me, equally important – element. This is what our topic has defined as building a culture of peace and sustainable development.

The framework that UNESCO provides is indeed the most appropriate one.

Aristotle pointed out that only mankind possesses *logos* – or “reasoned speech” – and that we are naturally drawn to live in communities, not in seclusion. Reflecting on this, Thomas Mann wrote that “speech is civilization itself. The word, even the most contradictory word, preserves contact – it is silence which isolates.”

More than anything else, this capacity to communicate, to discuss between ourselves in an orderly and thoughtful way, is what continues to define us as human beings.

This intrinsically human trait opens up the possibility for dialogue to result in understanding, and ultimately agreement. In times past, technology placed limits on the scope of our knowledge of whatever we defined as the outside world. For millennia, various cultures – various civilizations – could develop autonomously from one another. The world of today has made this impossible. Information flows instantaneously, whether its source is across the street or on the other side of the planet. In other words, the gap between what is local and what is global is bridged in the blink of an eye.

This appears to be an irreversible development. The basic issue before us is not how to counter globalization, but how to harness it to the common advantage of mankind. At bottom, this is what UNESCO is about. One may describe our work here as a sort of confluence of a great many rivers. Some, being ancient and placid, have been imbued over time with reflection and knowledge; others younger, more ebullient, cascade forth with a vitality conducive to innovation and rapid development.

Our basic task is not to judge or evaluate the merits of any single source, but to try and draw together the various streams. The result would bring forth a world in which all cultures would grow increasingly secure in respect to each other. As a consequence, inequalities would become less prevalent, discrimination less rampant, and the instability arising from want or violence not only less extensive, but ultimately relegated to the margins of history.

This is how we can build a global culture of peace and sustainable development. To do so, we must guard against the erasing hand of uniformity. Dialogue is not about sameness, but about respect and reconciliation. It is not about standardizing cultures or changing faiths, but about enlarging the common denominator of values and principles that bind us all to each other as human beings.

What we need is a new verticality of values. Our times call for the construction of a new *axis mundi* – symbolically speaking, a new global spine around which all of us – regardless of the country we come from and the culture we embrace – can rally and create a new moral and humanist environment.

In our century, there can no longer be divisions between large and small cultures and traditions. Each in their own way possesses a fundamental value that must never be allowed to be denigrated by anyone else. This is what I meant when a moment ago I spoke of enlarging the common denominator of values and principles that bind us all to each other as human beings.

And this is what we endorsed ten years ago when we embraced the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

Working through UNESCO will actively help us overcome the daunting threats to peace and stability we all face in the 21st century. Working through UNESCO helps us to confront the silence Thomas Mann warned leads to isolation, but also to mistrust, instability, and ultimately conflict.

Success will be achieved if our descendants are able to look back on our efforts and say, 'in the 21st century, hope prevailed over fear, and the cultures came together in all their wonderful diversity to conquer hostility and hatred.'

Consider the words of Sir Julian Sorell Huxley, the first Director-General of UNESCO. Upon being asked to define the parameters of progress, he wrote that fulfilling the human race's potential meant directing its "diversity away from competitive discord to harmonious symphony." I can think of no better way to define the generational task before us: to produce a harmonious symphony of mankind.

In this context, I would like to express my agreement with Director-General Bokova's recent statement that "these difficult times call for more UNESCO, not less." That sentence perfectly encapsulates the reason why Serbia has put forward our candidacy for membership in the World Heritage Committee for the period 2011- 2015. We strongly believe our well-known and wide-ranging experience and expertise in all the areas under the Committee's jurisdiction can strengthen the Convention and further promote its august principles. Because we need more UNESCO, not less. Serbia is committed to making sure that vision becomes a reality in the years and decades to come.

In our globalizing times of challenge and renewal, the problem of identity – both from the perspective of the individual and the national culture – is one of

the most pressing. Mainstream cultures around the world are increasing their fascination with the here and- now. More than in past times, what is trendy and contemporary dominates. We are almost obsessed with what is modern – with being modern.

This healthy approach has a dark side, however. If we are not careful, it can lead to a sense of losing or forgetting our roots.

I don't think we can be thoughtfully modern without remaining strongly linked with our own, particular tradition – our own specific heritage and inheritance. We must remain connected to our past without becoming subservient to it. In other words, we must not allow our destiny to be one characterized by forgetfulness. Modernity properly understood is not a liberation from the past.

Whether we are fully aware of it or not, we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors – of those who came before us and who contributed to making our culture what it is today. Those famous and anonymous heroes of yesterday, who contributed their genius, wisdom and knowledge to prevent the collective forgetting of where we came from, deserve our sustained respect. We owe our very modernity to them – that is to say, we owe our identity to them and their hard, ennobling work.

They represent the source of the rocks with which we built our monuments, the alphabet with which we wrote our chronicles, and the songs with which we sang of our exploits and our pain. This is what the Convention for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage is about. That is what the Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage is about. And that is what the Memory of the World Project is about. These are the frameworks we should use for the establishment of a culture of peace. Conserving and reconstructing what came before for the benefit of those who will come later is a solid definition of identity. Thanks to UNESCO, our personal and national identities become integral parts of world heritage. This has never happened before in human history. But we have to be careful in the conclusions we draw from this unprecedented state of affairs.

So let me underline the point. Identities are becoming universal *because* they are first and foremost particular. They have to be somebody's, *before* they can belong to everyone. As this is the case everywhere, it is the case in Serbia's breakaway province of Kosovo and Metohija as well. As a multiethnic and multi-confessional, democratic country, we deny no one's identity, and so we have every right to expect the same from everyone else. Four of our holiest sites are located in Kosovo, and have been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage in Danger List. Their unquestionable Serbian identity must be preserved, and any attempt to make them "Kosovar" must be prevented. Serbia, as a state party responsible for these monuments, shall remain committed to this task. We also count on support of UNESCO, because this is not the forum for airing political divisions. Here is where we protect cultural identities, not make up new ones.

Serbia attaches great significance to regional cooperation in the context of the Convention that frames the legitimacy of all the work we do in the context of UNESCO.

In our part of the world, cultural heritage often crosses international, recognized borders. My country has taken a lead in strengthening cross-border cultural cooperation. We see it as a strong contributor to regional reconciliation.

For instance, Serbia, together with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro, jointly proposed inscribing of the World Heritage List the medieval funerary monuments of the Bogumils, the Stecci. We are also committed to jointly nominate the Dinaric Karst Region with Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia. I recently hosted the Ninth UNESCO Summit of Southeast European Heads of State, whose theme was "Contemporary Art and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe."

Despite its critical importance, this universal form of intercultural communication has often not been sufficiently recognized as a vehicle for promoting common values. Its outstanding potential to bridge divides was emphasized at the Summit. Despite the various divisions that arose during the Yugoslav civil war of the 1990s, joint contemporary art projects continued to flourish. They went on to play a visible role in the cultural reconnection of the Western Balkans in this young century.

Today, we are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that artistic expression is a powerful instrument for encouraging sustainable development. By emphasizing creativity, innovation, and social cohesion, it generates confidence in the process of reconciliation and promotes human rights, tolerance, and mutual understanding. That is why we have so strongly supported the initiative by Serbian and Bosnian artists and galleries to establish a Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo – an idea in keeping with the city's multiethnic history.

We have also lent our support to an initiative by Mr. Ivan Tasovac, the director of the Belgrade Philharmonic. Thanks to his efforts, the philharmonic orchestras of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana – the capitals of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, respectively – will play a series of concerts in each of the three Western Balkan cities in the next year for the first time in several decades.

Increasing inter-cultural cooperation in the Balkans also plays a strong role in cross-border education. One of Serbia's most significant contributions is the Petnica Science Center, located near the Western Serbia town of Valjevo. Petnica is the largest and oldest independent science and technology education organization in Southeast Europe, responsible for more than 2,500 seminars, workshops, and research projects involving more than 50,000 students and science professors in fifteen disciplines. These are conducted at the high school and university level, and include participants from all Western Balkan countries.

Once a year, Petnica organizes a two-week intensive summertime program called Petnica International. University students from across the globe participate in this world-renowned event, which represents a unique opportunity for scientific exchanges to take place in a unique, purpose-built educational environment.

We are working on a series of proposals designed to better inform and interest UNESCO Member States in participating in the cross-cultural, scientific activities of the Petnica Science Center. We hope its forthcoming 30th anniversary will take place under the auspices of UNESCO.

The regional UNESCO Summit that I hosted this past September took place at the Roman archeological site of Viminacium – the Pompey of the Balkans. This once thriving city, buried and forgotten for many centuries, was one of the most culturally rich cities of the late Roman Empire – a great crossroads that connected East with West, North with South.

Viminacium stands as a powerful embodiment of what the Balkans represent in these times of increasing globalization. A place where bridges across cultures are built. A place where divisions are being overcome. Right at the center of the Balkans stands Serbia – a country with many centuries of heritage to share with the rest of mankind. We are proud to offer our distinct and proud contribution to the beautification of the world through our active participation in UNESCO.

One way to do this is through the written word – the most precious manifestation of the *logos* Aristotle wrote so much about. Fifty years ago, the great author Ivo Andric, who in the best way presented multi-ethnicity of our region, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Let me therefore come to the end of my remarks by quoting from his magnum opus, *The Bridge on the Drina*, a book that more than any other brings out the message I have tried to convey to you today:

“From everything that man erects and builds in his urge for living, nothing is in my eyes better and more valuable than bridges. [...] Belonging to everyone and being equal to everyone, useful, always built with a sense [of purpose], on the spot where most human needs are crossing, they are more durable than other buildings and they do not serve for anything secret and bad.”

Logos, like bridges, preserves and ultimately enhances contact. It is our duty to the sort of future we seek to build, to make sure UNESCO continues to encourage all of us Member States to resist the temptation to create distance and build walls of seclusion, instead of bridges of understanding. Our job is to create a harmonious symphony of mankind, to make sure we all better and more seamlessly connect, and thus enrich the world of the 21st century – the kind of world we want our children to grow up in. For that to happen, my friends, we need more UNESCO, not less.

Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez

First Lady of the Dominican Republic

Recalling the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, which states that achieving peace is linked to development, it is a great honor for me to participate in this 36th session of the UNESCO General Conference, aimed at reflecting on its role in building a culture peace and sustainable development.

I welcome the appeal that UNESCO has made under the leadership of Irina Bokova, to present innovative and revolutionary ideas for the eradication of the idea of violence in the minds of men and women.

Today more than ever the role of UNESCO becomes relevant in an international environment characterized by financial, food and environmental crises, as well as by the increase of social inequality, organized crime, drug trafficking and domestic violence; events that endanger the social harmony, respect for human dignity and violate the human rights.

I speak today, representing a great little country, the Dominican Republic. An island in the heart of the Caribbean, open to the world, its cultures and which sees all citizens of the world as brothers; a free, happy people who loves to live and who defends human dignity, social justice and development as banners of peace. But also, a country not spared by the current global crises, which affect especially young people who suffer more severely the consequences of poverty, inequality, unemployment and the lack of opportunity.

These situations, linked to the current lack of values, make youth more vulnerable to all kinds of risks, against which governments and the international community have the great commitment to implement effective public policies for development, taking into account that half of the world's population is under 25. According to a World Bank's report the Gross Domestic Product of

our countries will grow 2 percent less if we don't integrate youth as catalysts of development.

Nevertheless, in order to make development inclusive, we must contribute to the formation of a new human being, who bases his or her actions on ethical and moral principles and values such as peace, honesty, responsibility, respect and solidarity.

As First Lady, I have created the "Strategy for a Society of Values" and youth are the main protagonists of this initiative. Through the media and the social networks they promote actions to transform their communities and a culture of practice of values in all areas concerning people and society life.

Reflecting on the thought of John Paul II, who suggests that youth are the hope of peace as well as the peacemakers, and analyzing the conclusions of the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum, which indicate that they are the peace drivers of their societies, I propose to UNESCO that we use the potential of young people and focus our interventions in creating the required youth capacities for the construction of a culture of peace, from a holistic and comprehensive approach, incorporating also their families and the communities where they live, in its dual role of issuers and receptors peace.

The First Lady's Office has been working with UNESCO for the implementation at secondary schools of the important and effective "Youth Development and Violence Prevention Plan" which trains young leaders as multipliers and promoters of peace.

I think it is appropriate that we extend these interventions to achieve greater impact on families and communities, implementing in our countries a "Young Leaders for Progress and Peace National Training Strategy", taking as a model the successful experience of the project of the same name that was ran by my Office.

With a participatory and life experience methodology, we would foster ethics among young people based on respect for human rights, democratic values, social commitment, solidarity, tolerance and defense of peace, as a pillar of their actions, so that they are subjects of their own development and agents

of social change. We would work to form the new social leaders, and a true culture of peace, leaders with the capacity to resolve conflicts in a creative, responsible and peaceful way, and we would instill in them a moral and community development foundation to be true agents of community cohesion.

We would also encourage innovative proposals on how to make the practice of peace value at all levels a reality, recognizing and supporting in our countries those initiatives that are most visionary and relevant to their contexts.

The spontaneous youth demonstrations of the Arab spring, the indignant youth in Spain and Occupy Wall Street in the U.S. persuade us that young people want a change and are willing to great sacrifices to build more democratic and fair societies, where dialogue and joint collaboration go first and individualism, selfishness and speculation that contribute to their exclusion and hold back development are eradicated.

Let us use the power of today's youth and its social engagement outside of political parties and ideologies. Young people are key to development. If youth is able to change political systems, overthrow governments and demand a more just world, they are also able to seed peace at home, in their communities, their schools and throughout society.

Let us keep on betting on them. Let us foster a youth leadership based on the values of progress, social commitment, respect for human rights and tolerance, to act as agents of social cohesion, exercising peace as a right and a duty.

Let us teach our young people to learn to live and make peace in everyday life and that this in turn help us to build healthy families and safer and more peaceful societies.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, "There is no route to peace, peace is the route", and I would say, a route of links of love, tolerance and solidarity among people and nations; of comprehensive and quality education, of advocacy and strengthening of the family; a route of human, ethical and citizens values; respectful of nature and mindful of the environment; of equality among all humans beings. A route that ultimately starts in each one of us and consolidates with the commitment of all.

Thursday, 27 October 2011

Johnson Toribiong

President of the Republic of Palau

I am deeply humbled by the honor of having been invited by the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, to address this eminent Leaders' Forum at the 36th session of the General Conference of UNESCO on behalf of the Republic of Palau and the Pacific Small Island Developing States known as "PSIDS".

I am truly most grateful to avail myself of this historic opportunity to be the voice of the Pacific Small Island Developing States in this international forum to address the important question before us: "How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?"

Culture is shaped and evolves through people's interactions with other people and their own environment. As a son of the Pacific islands, my views on peace and sustainable development are fashioned and colored by the culture I grew up in and influenced by my education and experience.

Historically, the cultures which evolved in the Pacific island societies were shaped by limited land areas they lived on, the seemingly endless expanse of ocean surrounding them, and their relative isolation. But today, as it is everywhere, our island cultures are being impacted by the pop cultures of industrialized nations.

Indeed we now live in a global village, and cultures all over the world are undergoing a process of transformation by the impact of modern technologies which facilitate constant interactions between peoples across the globe through modern means of transportation and instant telecommunications. These technologies have brought about explosion of information. We now live in an age of instant dissemination information. As a result, our diverse cultures are becoming more similar in some basic ways.

It is in this age of instant information dissemination that the theme of this conference should be considered.

The pursuit of world peace has been the goal of world leaders, no less today than in the past. But peace has been an elusive goal. Building a culture of peace is a daunting challenge in view of continuous eruptions of conflicts, violence, and war in today's world and throughout history, in spite of efforts by political, religious and other leaders to keep and promote peace in the world. This fact should not discourage us; it should challenge us to consider how UNESCO, an international organization, may find more effective ways to contribute to building a culture of peace.

UNESCO stands for international collaboration dedicated to support the cause of peace and harmony through the promotion of educational, scientific, and cultural activities around the world. UNESCO should utilize modern means of communications technologies to building a culture of peace.

In this world of diversity and conflict, the higher moral value of tolerance is one of the most critical components of the culture of peace. UNESCO should launch a campaign against all forms of discrimination, such as racial, ethnic, and religious, in its programs and activities at the regional and international levels.

Good governance is another critical component to building a culture of peace. Where political leadership is repressive, tyrannical, or corrupt, a culture of peace cannot flourish. Without good governance the seeds of the culture of peace cannot take root. We know that good governance is based upon respect for human rights and freedom, the rule of law and democratic principle that government derives its powers from the consent of the governed.

UNESCO and its Member States must promote these values and principles of good governance as a prerequisite to building a culture of peace.

Disputes within a country or between countries inevitably arise. But when they are not resolved peacefully, peace gives way to violence and war. Peaceful dispute resolution founded upon the rule of law that is just and fair must

be recognized and promoted by UNESCO and its Member States as another important component for building a culture of peace.

At the same time, the culture of peace cannot be sustained where there is poverty, disease, inequality, and illiteracy. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to eradicate or reduce poverty and hunger, diseases, illiteracy and gender inequality, among other things, are in line with the UNESCO's effort to contribute to building an international culture of peace and sustainable development.

The role of UNESCO as the United Nations agency responsible for coordinating the "Education for all (EFA) action plan", a program launched at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, should place emphasis on the fact that education of our youth is where the building of the culture of peace should begin.

The UNESCO's motto is "since wars begin in the minds of men that it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."

With this in mind, the culture of peace should be cultivated through educational, scientific, and cultural programs, projects, and activities of UNESCO at regional and international levels. It is through education that right values can be cultivated in minds of men, especially the young.

From our experience in the Pacific for example, we have promoted mutual understanding and cooperation, tolerance and appreciation for our diversity throughout regional organizations and activities, such as the Pacific Islands Forum, regional fisheries organizations, the Pacific Arts Festival, the Pacific Games and other sub-regional organizations which have engendered a culture of harmony and peace in our region.

We must move beyond our present horizon to strengthen our traditional and historic relationships and develop new plans and strategies to effectively activate cooperation and partnerships between UNESCO and its Member States to promote the culture of peace.

Besides the cultivation of the culture of peace, how may we contribute to sustainable development?

Peace and sustainable development are intertwined and interdependent. They have a symbiotic relationship. Development is never sustainable where there is no peace.

Besides the critical importance of peace to sustainable development, a more pressing issue of great concern to the Pacific Small Island Developing States is climate change, especially the threat of rising sea level caused by global warming. The ocean which has been our generous source of livelihood is now rising in rage to threaten our security and survival. Some low lying islands are faced with the real possibility of being swallowed by the rising sea level. It is a tsunami of biblical magnitude in slow motion.

Climate change is caused by high volume of green house emissions into the atmosphere, which the Pacific Small Island Developing States are the least responsible for and yet are among the most threatened by it.

Today we are more disappointed by the United Nations recent report that current effort to mitigate climate change fall short of reaching the vital goal of keeping global warming below two degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial levels.

In the last debate at the United Nations General Assembly last September, I raised the legal issue of transboundary harm under international law as to whether those nations which have contributed to climate change should be held responsible. My country and others similarly situated states will sponsor a resolution to be introduced in the United Nations General Assembly to request the international court of justice to render an advisory opinion on the applicability of the doctrine of transboundary harm in the case of climate change.

Regardless of the outcome of this legal approach and the debate regarding the cause and consequences of climate change, we ask UNESCO to use its scientific resources and influence to address climate change.

Furthermore, development cannot be sustainable where it is based upon unrestrained exploitation of resources. We urge UNESCO and its member states to cultivate a culture of conservation. Our environment, our oceans and land resources must be protected from unrestrained exploitation. We all must be good stewards of our environment.

Exploitation of resources must be balanced by the culture of conservation.

Mahatma Gandhi said it well when he said: “earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed.”

The capacity of our planet earth to provide enough to satisfy every man’s need has been stretched to the limit. The world population this year would top seven billion. UNESCO must lead the way forward to encourage the use of science and technology to improve production and conservation of food and water supply for our people. This is critical to ensuring sustainable development and the survival of mankind.

Another component of sustainable development is the use of green energy. Green energy and green industry must continue to be encouraged. Transitioning from reliance on fossil fuel to renewable energy is a win-win policy. It mitigates climate change and promotes the use of infinite supply of renewable energy.

In closing, UNESCO and its Member States should utilize their resources including modern technologies through its educational, scientific and cultural programs and activities to contribute to building a culture of peace and sustainable development.

We in Palau and the Pacific Small Island Developing States are committed to building a culture of peace and sustainable development in our small ways. In Palau we have the following initiatives in place:

1. The Micronesia Challenge, a regional environmental conservation initiative to conserve 30% of our reefs and 20% of our land in their natural state.

2. We have established the world's first shark sanctuary to help preserve the health of our oceans in keeping with our tradition of conservation, known as "bul."
3. We have a protected area network, known as "pan", an environmental program to protect our fragile environment from exploitation by collecting "green fees" from tourists to fund the protection of these areas.
4. We have adopted the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and are seeking to nominate sites to the world heritage list.
5. We were among the first Pacific Small Island Developing States to have a "man and biosphere reserve (MAB) of UNESCO" in 2005, the Ngarmeduu Bay, which shows that man and nature can co-exist in harmony and peace.
6. We have supported a program known as "the Micronesian voyaging society" through Palau community college to preserve the practice of traditional navigation from the knowledge passed from the late renowned grand master navigator, Pius Mau Pialug from Micronesian island of Satawal, using stars, winds and ocean currents to make transoceanic voyages. This grand master navigator commanded the epic voyage of the internationally famed Hawaiian canoe, Hokulea, from Hawaii to Tahiti. He passed this knowledge to his son who has been hired to teach this ancient traditional art of navigation at the Palau community college.
7. Palau in October of this year ratified the UNESCO's Convention for safeguarding of the intangible heritage, known as 2003 ICH Convention.
8. Palau is a member of a regional organization of the Pacific under the parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) to regulate the harvesting and conservation of our tuna resource to ensure its sustainable development.

9. Palau is an active advocate of MDGs.
10. The Pacific supports the Universal Declaration on Archives.

Since this is the first appearance of the representative from the Pacific to address the General Assembly of UNESCO, please bear with me a few more minutes.

I strongly recommend that UNESCO recognizes the need for Pacific Small Island Developing States to interact with the rest of the world in all areas of human and national development, especially within the framework of UNESCO. By increasing the roles and participation of the Pacific Small Island Developing States in UNESCO's activities, the Pacific Small Island Developing States will not only realize their full potential as responsible members of the international community, they will make UNESCO truly representative of the views of its members.

May this Leaders' Forum and the general conference of UNESCO be remembered in history as the first to give important roles in key organs of UNESCO to Pacific Small Island Developing States.

In this regard, I would make at this time a formal request your full support for the candidature of Papua New Guinea to the UNESCO's Executive Board. I thank you for your favorable consideration of this request.

Moreover, the Republic of Palau is a candidate to the seat of the World Heritage Committee during the 18th General Assembly of the State Parties to the Convention from 7-9 November 2011. My country of Palau is a member of the Pacific Small Island Developing States, a key priority group in UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy 2008-2013, thus I am also requesting your full support of Palau's candidature of Ms. Faustina Rehuhermarugg, Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs of the Republic of Palau to this post.

Kris Peeters

Minister-President of the Government of Flanders (Belgium)

I feel honoured to be able to participate in this first-ever Leaders' Forum. I would like to commend UNESCO with the choice of the two central themes. A culture of peace and sustainable development are essential preconditions for safeguarding the future of our planet. Moreover, they demand a global approach by the international community.

UNESCO is the right organization to address these issues because of its broad cultural, scientific and educational expertise, and because of its mission: to build peace in the minds of men and women.

In the 66 years since UNESCO was founded, the world has changed dramatically. Technological progress has turned our planet into a global village. However, technology cannot solve everything. Technology cannot bring about peace. Peace has to be manmade.

To put it in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King: "We've learned to fly the air like birds, we've learned to swim the sea like fish. Yet, we haven't learned how to walk the earth like brothers and sisters."

In the face of ongoing conflicts and in the light of people's aspirations for freedom, human rights and true democracy, the promotion of a culture of peace is of the utmost importance.

Belgium wants to join forces with UNESCO, in particular through our presidency of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research in 2012.

We are also starting preparations for the 2014-2018 Great War Commemoration project, through which we want to send a universal message of peace around the world.

The “Great War” was the first-ever international conflict on a truly world scale. UNESCO can grasp this commemoration to put the message of “No more War” in the international spotlights.

On the occasion of the Great War Commemoration, we intend to subscribe the Flanders Fields Declaration in 2012, together with likeminded partners. This declaration will emphasize that conflict and suffering have not yet been eradicated and that respect for international law and human rights, cooperation between people, disarmament and integration, remain key elements in our pursuit of a better future for all mankind.

History has clearly shown that democracy and freedom are no eternal achievements. They require continuous diligence and vigilance from everyone. Therefore it is imperative to make remembrance education a priority. Belgium wholeheartedly supports UNESCO’s activities related to education for peace.

The UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), which will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2013, is a fundamental instrument for building sustainable peace. Together with the Flemish National Commission for UNESCO, we strongly support this network and have recently given it a new impetus.

Climate change, deforestation, the loss of biodiversity and increasing desertification constitute an extremely worrisome threat to our existence and to world peace. The two themes of this Leaders’ Forum are consequently inseparably interconnected.

Sustainable development presupposes that we strike a proper balance among ecological, economic and social interests. Technology and science can help us in finding concrete solutions.

This is demonstrated by the current exhibition around the UNESCO building, financed by Flanders and made possible through Belgian, German and EU satellite technology. By means of this technology, the consequences of climate

change upon World Heritage Sites are demonstrated. This fascinating link between cultural, educational and scientific dimensions truly shows the added value of UNESCO.

Ismail Serageldin, Ambassador of the Alliance of Civilizations and former Vice-President of the World Bank, already predicted in 1995, that “if the wars of this century were fought over oil, the wars of the next century will be fought over water”.

However, to this he added the important side note: “unless we change our approach to managing this precious and vital resource.” Consequently, we believe that UNESCO has to undertake a prominent role in the preparations of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

We need to do even more to ensure the protection of natural resources, capacity building, and a solidly based and integrated coastal management. The International Hydrological Program (IHP) can play an important role, just as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). In the future, we would like to see an increase of the IOC budget up to 2% of the total UNESCO budget.

Since 2005, we have offered support to the UNESCO/IOC Project Office for International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) in Ostend. This centre is making a significant contribution to the development of international oceanography, and to the promotion of the sustainable use and development of coastal areas.

Another crucial issue is the battle against desertification. Special attention to UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme with regard to drylands is therefore fundamental. The countries and the people suffering most severely by desertification are often the ones with the least effective defences available to them. The “Sustainable Management of Marginal Drylands (SUMAMAD)” project tries to provide an answer, by promoting research and capacity-building in Africa, the Arab states, Asia, and Latin America.

The international community has to help the poorest and most exposed people and communities to adapt to the consequences of climate change. We are also making our development aid more responsive to these concerns.

There is a clear need for a global governance structure. It has to bridge the gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. And it has to accelerate global action towards a greener and more sustainable economy.

We encourage UNESCO to explore partnerships with the private sector, which has a key role to play in delivering green growth through trade, investments, research and development, innovation and resource efficiency.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has to remain a high priority, because it is able to change people's minds towards valuing sustainability.

I will conclude. In tackling the challenges we are discussing today, UNESCO has to reach out to all its allies: youth organizations, the UNESCO National Commissions, academia, the private sector and, last but not least, other international organizations dealing with peace issues and sustainable development.

UNESCO has an immense expertise, but needs to apply that knowledge even more actively in the field itself. For that reason, choices need to be made.

A new global balance is taking shape. UNESCO can assume an important role when focusing on a number of clearly defined themes, in which the Organization can take the lead. I truly hope that the outcome of this forum will contribute to the future strategic direction of a reformed UNESCO. A UNESCO that is more focused, more efficient and aptly reinforced.

CLOSING REMARKS



Closing Remarks by Irina Bokova

Director-General of UNESCO

Thank you, Madam President of the General Conference,
Honourable Ministers,
Madam Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to say: what diversity!

What energy!

What passion!

And what awareness, too – acute awareness because it comes from experience – of the fragility of peace, as President Alassane Ouattara of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire pointed out, and of the unbreakable bond between peace and sustainable development.

Without poverty reduction, there can be no lasting peace.

Without a culture of peace, there can be no sustainable development either.

These are two sides of the same coin, to quote Prime Minister Raila Odinga of the Republic of Kenya, two indissociable twins, to quote Prime Minister Pascal Irenée Koupaki of the Republic of Benin.

Montaigne wrote in his essays that people are tormented not so much by events as by their thoughts about those events.

This is why it is good to discuss matters together.

This forum has afforded us an opportunity to hear statements by leaders and dignitaries but, above all, by men and women willing to engage in dialogue – dialogue that does not exclude confrontation and naturally builds bridges among people and cultures, as stressed by President Boris Tadić of the Republic of Serbia, who quoted Thomas Mann’s “the word preserves contact; it is silence which isolates”.

I have noted at least one key idea, namely the need to develop relational intelligence, which, as President Johnson Toribiong of the Republic of Palau has said is the only appropriate intelligence in our communications era, in that it entails thinking together about matters that are all too often considered separately.

The need, moreover, to reconcile past and future. No one can be modern without retaining links to history. Traditions give us knowledge to deal with global warming and to settle conflict, as do the traditional courts used in the Republic of Rwanda to resolve tension.

We must use them, share them and spread them.

The need, furthermore, to ensure that cultures coexist in their diversity. Speaking out in public plays a key role in this regard for it imposes a choice between diversity as a source of solutions or as a pretext for division. I have seen many men and women determined to make the right choice.

The need, lastly, to reconcile material aspects and values, for the economic crisis is also a moral crisis and sustainable development is not a question of natural resources only.

I recall the balanced athlete metaphor, epitome of the balance of mind and body, used by President Pal Schmitt of the Republic of Hungary.

I thank all of the leaders for their statements.

I regret that the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria could not be here with us. His country has been struck by terrorist attacks, with heavy loss of

life. Such attacks strike at multilateralism, too. His devotion strengthens our resolve to act to overcome this hurdle.

When we are engaged in daily programme implementation, we need such a broad view, akin to a tapestry drawing in the making that stands out clearly when one takes a few steps back.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Minister President Kris Peeters reminded us of our conviction that peace needs the sustainable use of our resources.

Prime Minister Tillman Thomas underlined our vulnerability in the face of climate change and natural disasters.

Many Ministers underlined aspects of our commitment to a culture of peace and sustainable development.

The Minister of Education of Romania spoke on the importance of the education of minorities in their language.

The Minister of Education of Norway said that a culture of peace and democracy must be introduced in schools, and that the teaching of history is vital, along with remembrance.

The Minister of Pakistan spoke of education as a “transformational system.”

The Minister of Education of South Africa shared their experience with building peace and reconciliation through ‘open dialogue.’

The Minister of Uruguay called on us to develop concrete tools for peaceful coexistence, for ‘cultural citizenship.’

The Minister for Democracy and European Affairs of Sweden explored the links between democracy, human rights and peace, stressing the importance of education for the empowerment of girls and women.

We take from this Forum all of these messages and many more.

Our discussion has not painted the world in the colours of despair.

Quite the contrary.

We come away from this debate encouraged by the will that exists to look head-on at challenges. This is very important.

A strong sense of resolution underpinned this discussion – the resolution that positive change can and must happen.

This resolution stems from a consensus on the levers that build peace and sustainable development.

Education is the first.

Education is way to develop respect for human rights and tolerance. It is also a powerful development accelerator, vital for reaching the Millennium Development Goals, and for building 'green' societies and economies.

Science is another lever.

Science holds many answers to the questions we face today – from poverty alleviation to climate change adaptation. It is also the foundation for 'knowledge societies,' and must be developed for the benefit of all. It is vital that we democratise the achievements of science for the development of all societies.

Young people were at the front of all minds.

As the First Lady of the Dominican Republic said, meeting their expectations is essential to peace and sustainable development in the century ahead. This is the century of youth, with half of the world's seven billion-strong population under 25 years old.

The golden thread woven through our discussion was that of values.

Peace and sustainable development are not abstract concepts, whose success can be decreed.

They concern individuals -- women and men, girls and boys, real people and societies.

Their dignity, human rights, and capacity must be the moral compass guiding all national and international action.

As the First Lady of Azerbaijan said, "the human mind has no limits."

Everyone must have the right to imagine a better future and the tools to shape reality.

These are the stakes of peace and sustainable development.

This is UNESCO's mission.

I wish to thank all speakers, especially the Heads of State and Government, for their participation in this Forum.

I believe the ideas we shared confirm the importance of UNESCO today.

You have shown strong support also to the reform of the Organization I have launched. I thank you for this.

I hope all of you present at the Leaders' Forum will pass a strong message of support to UNESCO's commitment to a culture of peace in New York, to the General Assembly, where at this very time delegations are discussing the adoption of a resolution on the culture of peace. I cannot imagine such an important resolution of the United Nations without a strong endorsement of UNESCO's action and ideas.

Ladies and gentlemen, dialogue is essential – but the time has come to act.

We have important opportunities to take these ideas forward -- at this General Conference, next year at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and others.

We must act at the global level, as called for by President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon.

But this is not enough.

Peace must be built every day, by each of us.

One word was repeated by almost every speaker – this was solidarity.

The great Polish-born English novelist Joseph Conrad wrote of the “subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in hope, which binds together all humanity – the dead to the living and the living to the unborn”.

This “invincible solidarity” is the beating heart of a culture of peace and the foundation for sustainable development.

Thank you.

ANNEX

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT



HOW DOES UNESCO CONTRIBUTE TO BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE AND TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

I. PATHWAYS TO LASTING PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

→ **Peace and development at risk in a context of multiple global crises**

The central objective of the United Nations and UNESCO is to “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”. As a tribune of the world’s consciousness and a global forum for forward-looking debate and exchange, UNESCO was established to construct “the defences of peace in the minds” of men and women through international cooperation in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. These humanist ideals at the heart of the Organization’s mission, formulated 66 years ago, undeniably remain the most relevant compass for action today, as we come to realize that we live in a world of multiple challenges and stress where peaceful relations among peoples and nations are threatened by complex and multiple crises impinging on the hope for global peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

Prosperity, invoked in the Constitution, is at risk. The global economic, financial and subsequent social crises struck a world already marked by the shocks of the food and the energy crises, adding obstacle after obstacle to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Many industrialized economies are burdened by a sovereign debt predicament that has become pervasive. For hundreds of millions of people living in developing countries, especially in the least developed countries, global crises have further deepened the already pervasive state of crisis constituted by poverty and all too often

extreme poverty. Beyond, the present and future generations are faced with a global environmental and ecological crisis, which includes climate change, biodiversity loss, oceanic over-exploitation and degradation, desertification and fresh water shortages. The stakes at hand are civilizational since, as it was asserted by Agenda 21 adopted 20 years ago at the Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit), “peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and inseparable.” Economic and environmental crises reinforce the spectre of potential conflicts, especially in times of political uncertainty.

Thus, peace is at risk. As global wars become, one hopes, a matter of the past, violence, civil strife and conflict will not. Close to forty countries experienced armed conflict in the last fifteen years. As well as undermining prospects for economic growth, poverty reduction and success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, armed conflict is reinforcing the inequalities, desperation and grievances that trap countries in cycles of dearth and violence and affects girls and women to a disproportionate effect. New threats to peace have emerged as inter-State wars are decreasing. All the while, internal conflicts and terrorist attacks are on the rise. Any conflict, however local, must be a concern for all, since, in our globalized world, a conflict anywhere can spread conflict everywhere. In times of unprecedented communication, opportunities, interconnectedness and migration, some of the risks to peace also lie in social malaise, fanaticism, marginalization of vulnerable groups, lack of mutual respect, rejection and ignorance of other cultures, traditions, beliefs and histories. All of these may lead, in the absence of appropriate political responses, to extremism or exclusion jeopardizing the very foundations of peace and sustainable development.

→ **A globalization process in need of solidarity and shared values**

Globalization and new technologies are bringing people together in ways that were unimaginable even 20 years ago. Yet, many people feel threatened, even confused, in this new environment. It seems that we have not yet fully come to terms with the phenomena of globalization and their paradoxes. There is increased interconnection and communication, and at the same time there are inertia and counter-forces resisting that process. Our economic

interdependence is much more advanced than our moral and political development – as is evidenced in the persistence of glaring inequalities between and within countries. Our growing interconnectedness has not yet fully translated into genuine solidarity and shared values both among peoples from the same country and community and those from different origins. We mostly maintain national or local approaches to our most urgent challenges, which is a welcome feature of preserving cultural diversity. Yet, the most threatening challenges have become intrinsically borderless – as is the case with economic or environmental crises. Are the multiple global crises but a symptom of an unfinished globalization process? It will have to spawn new mechanisms for global management, especially of global public goods.

While globalization has spread growth in every continent, inequalities remain and new ones are emerging. Throughout the recent months, young women and men have demonstrated their commitment to social change towards such universal principles as democratic participation, fairness, empowerment, and shared prosperity. Societies thrive when youth are enabled to contribute fully as members of their community: their involvement must be prioritized and well resourced.

Acknowledging that the gender divide is one of the most significant forms of human inequality across all social and income groups, the UN has been proactive in putting gender equality and women's empowerment and women's rights high on the international agenda, and UNESCO made it one of the two global priorities of its overall strategy.

Likewise, as global society cannot prosper with inequalities between regions, priority must also be given to the future of Africa, which is an integral part of the global future. For more than a decade now, many African countries have experienced sustained economic growth and the continent as a whole is expected to host nearly 22% of the world population by 2050. The challenge of the coming years for Africa's development, which UNESCO has endorsed as its second global strategic priority, is to translate these trends into capacities for sustainable economic and social development as well as influence on the global scene.

→ **Culture of peace and sustainable development: two sides, one coin**

Long-term peace cannot be realized when millions are deprived of a decent life. On the other hand, development goals cannot be reached without a culture of human solidarity. The United Nations has recognized that two key innovative pathways to realizing the intertwined rights of all peoples to peace and prosperity are the culture of peace and sustainable development. One of the central objectives for the international community today is thus to rethink globalization with a keen interest for the present and the future. On the one hand, lasting peace being more than the absence of conflict, a culture of peace is essential for people to acquire a permanent disposition to non-violence and pacific relationships with their contemporaries. On the other hand, as shared prosperity cannot be attained at the expense of the needs of the present and future generations, humanity – in all its forms – needs to change the way in which people relate to others and to nature, committing to sustainable development. While tailoring its action to the requirements of the time, UNESCO remains committed to the different components of peace enunciated in its Constitution, namely democratic principles, human rights, gender equality, justice, freedom and solidarity.

II. BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE

In a time where existing social, political and cultural tensions persist, it is vital to act in bridging communities and mindsets and in struggling against stereotypes and all forms of violence, most notably in relation to marginalized groups and as regards violence against women in particular. In that perspective, globalization should not be seen only as an economic, financial and technological process. It also constitutes a profoundly human challenge, one that invites the international community to take cognizance of the interdependence of humankind and of its rich diversity. There is a need for the soft power of “intellectual and moral solidarity” advocated by UNESCO’s Constitution. It is with a view to disseminating those principles that, in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States of America

by religious extremists, the General Conference of UNESCO had unanimously adopted the “Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.” For the past decade, the Organization has been fully and actively engaged in advocating the value of cultural diversity and its corollary, the dialogue among cultures. But urgent action is still needed, especially in the light of the ever increasing number of violent terrorist attacks waged by extremists in many countries.

New life must be breathed into the ideal of a culture of peace as endorsed by the United Nations. A culture of peace “consists of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society.” To embrace a culture of peace is to place emphasis on the future as a humanistic aspiration in a world becoming more and more plural, interdependent and fragile. It has become ethically imperative to reach across cultural and religious barriers, engaging in frank and open dialogue, adapting international, regional and national strategies to contemporary contexts.

In debating issues pertaining to the culture of peace, the participants in the Forum may want to consider the following areas of reflection and action (See the Annex below for more details):

- Promoting and integrating the values and principles of a culture of peace into education systems
- Improving knowledge about different cultures and peoples
- Reinforcing intercultural dialogue
- Science for a Culture of Peace
- Advocating for gender equality, women’s rights and women’s empowerment as a pillar for peace
- Empowering youth as agents of social change and actors for peace

- Promoting conflict prevention and support to countries in post-conflict and post-disaster situations
- Harnessing the potential of the free, independent and pluralistic media and especially the new social media

III. PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity losses, and pollution – these global environmental crises are mainly anthropogenic – human-made. Humanity has become a force of nature, one that is still in search of itself. All stakeholders subscribe to the idea of “a development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.” While all embrace this ideal, it proves nevertheless difficult to identify concrete paths towards sustainable development in an era where global ecological risks are a growing concern. Twenty years ago, climate change or biodiversity losses were not recognized outside of the scientific community as clearly identified hazards. Twenty years after the adoption of Agenda 21, the fight against poverty remains a frontline in the pursuit of sustainable development. Our sense of shared destiny is eroded when too many men, women and children live lives that are blighted by poverty and exposure to environmental degradation while others adhere to highly unsustainable lifestyles. This is why reaching the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 is one of the best ways to lay the foundations for sustainable development.

In order to revisit the potential of sustainable development, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, will be a major opportunity to reignite a global dynamic of sound short-, medium- and long-term policies and approaches that will constitute a new development paradigm with the involvement of all stakeholders. It must launch a process of rethinking priorities, instilling values, sharpening measures and reforming institutional arrangements in order to bring about coherence among the economic, environmental and social pillars and ultimately redressing unsustainable imbalances. While most of the international debates have so far focused on the green economy or green growth, thought must be

given to introducing the concept of inclusive green societies. Social and cultural attitudes do matter when long term production and consumption patterns are under pressure because of their unsustainability. As sustainable development rests on three pillars, the economy, the environment and perhaps chiefly, society, significant changes can only happen through education, the natural and social and human sciences, culture and communication and information. For all the green technologies we can muster, concretizing a renewed sustainable development paradigm will remain impossible if the present evolutions are not embedded in a commensurate and receptive fabric. The future needs inclusive green societies concerned with the material well-being and human development of the present and future generations, thereby reinforcing the prospects for a culture of peace.

In debating issues pertaining to sustainable development, the participants in the Forum may want to consider the following areas of reflection and action (See the Annex for more details):

- Mobilizing and Generating Scientific Knowledge
- Paving the Way for Sustainable Development: Education and Training
- Promoting Local Knowledge, Cultural Diversity and Dialogue: The Power of Culture for Development
- Sustainable Development and gender equality: the Specific Needs and Contributions of Women
- Addressing Climate Change and Natural Disasters
- Fostering the Sustainable Use and Governance of the Ocean and its Resources
- Improving Access to and Management of Freshwater
- Ensuring the Conservation and the Sustainable and Equitable Use of Biodiversity
- Sustainable Development as a Strategy for African Prosperity
- Improving Global Governance for Sustainable Development

IV. UNESCO – AN AGENT FOR CHANGE

The current challenges to global peace and prosperity call for new approaches and models. This is the main thrust behind the Leaders' Forum: an opportunity to inject from the highest level new inspiration and directions for the future. With its five domains of intervention, education, the natural and social sciences, culture and communication and information as well as its five key functions as laboratory of ideas, a clearing house, a standard-setter, a capacity-builder and a catalyst for international cooperation, UNESCO constitutes a platform for soft power. It is in a strategic position to nurture holistic ideas and perspectives. Indeed, in reflecting on how to achieve a culture of peace and sustainable development, the participants in the Leaders' Forum should acknowledge that these distinct yet intertwined endeavours are inherently complex, calling for comprehensive and intersectoral approaches to rethink international cooperation in all its dimensions. When risks elude all political or social borders, dynamic and diverse partnerships must come into play, mobilizing all actors with a will or a potential for concerted action. This is why the Constitution of UNESCO is based on the awareness that "a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic government can not secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the people and that, therefore, that peace must be established on the basis of intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind".

To achieve solidarity in a transforming world, UNESCO also needs to transform itself, adapting to an era where multilateral cooperation is faced with increased demands and increased austerity. A culture of peace and sustainable development are goals that will materialize only if the Member States can rely on instruments geared towards efficiency, cohesion and responsiveness. As UNESCO is in the process of reforming its strategies and actions, the Leaders' Forum can contribute in-depth reflection and generate recommendations as to the future strategic directions for the Organization.

V. IDENTIFYING NEW PATHWAYS

What new strategies and tangible initiatives can be developed to foster a culture of peace and non-violence as well as sustainable models of development? What can be the role of soft power, in particular education, the sciences, culture and communication and information, in strengthening human solidarity imparting value shifts and new behavioural patterns? How can UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?

Against the present background of multiple global crises, international or internecine conflicts and social tensions, there is a distinct need for long-term action mobilizing creativity, innovation and knowledge both at the global and country levels, where international agendas must come to fruition through concerted action. How can UNESCO and its Member States creatively adapt their policy frameworks in order to address the new global challenges which are multiplying and undermining humankind's cohesion? The Leaders' Forum may well serve as a laboratory of ideas within UNESCO's General Conference. It aims at instituting a unique space of dialogue whereby Heads of State or Government, Ministers and senior decision-makers can debate pressing international issues with a view to contributing "to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms". Channelling the expectations and aspiration of the peoples of the world, the Leaders' Forum is an opportunity to pioneer innovative, even provocative ideas and new ways of promoting peace and prosperity in a globalized world through UNESCO's fields of competence.

ANNEX

The following section is intended to provide the reader with more detailed information on the main lines of reflection proposed as a basis for the discussions to be held during the Leaders' Forum within UNESCO's General Conference.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE

→ **Promoting and integrating the values and principles of a culture of peace into education systems**

Education at all levels, both in school and beyond the classroom, constitutes one of the most fundamental and sustainable ways to promote intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. There is a growing recognition that education is never a culturally neutral process and that diversity in educational systems – sensitivity to cultural diversity in curriculum development and inclusive education, for example – is a prerequisite of quality education. An education infused with the values of peace, tolerance and reconciliation contributes directly to the elimination of cultural and gender stereotypes as well as the building of understanding and mutual respect for all religions and cultures. Imparting learners as well as teachers with a renewed sense of solidarity should increasingly be acknowledged as a determining factor for education reform, most notably in Africa, where many countries are faced with the dual challenge of coping with significant rates of unschooled children as well as illiterate adults and managing a rich internal cultural diversity. In this regard, promoting a culture of peace is an indispensable approach to initiate an examination of ways to transform education systems so as to meet the demands of the 21st century.

→ **Improving knowledge about different cultures and peoples**

Dialogue or tolerance cannot happen if our knowledge of other cultures is limited. This is one of the main presuppositions in the Constitution of UNESCO. Indeed, ignorance is the root of all exclusiveness, intolerance and

hatred. Learning on aspects of other cultures and cultural realities is therefore fundamental in influencing mindsets, attitudes and perceptions, preparing for dialogue and establishing peace-prone environments. Policies should reflect this kind of sensitivity and understanding and demonstrate that awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity can be fostered in all domains of social or economic activity. Every human being should know about his or her own culture and the diversity of cultures at large. This has important implications with respect to debates on the cultural rights of minorities and on immigration, especially in countries where cultural, ethnic or religious diversity is a social reality not necessarily acknowledged at the policy level. The elaboration of a pluralist consciousness is essential to adopting a broader world view, and assist, if not empower people to find and shape their place in the world's fabric.

→ **Reinforcing intercultural dialogue**

An environment that stimulates intercultural dialogue paves the way for a culture of peace. Attention to promoting and preserving dialogue is all the more urgent because culture can be, just like religion, misused for political purposes as a source of exclusion and rejection – leading in turn to social tensions and internecine conflicts. In many cases, conflict tends to break out when dialogue becomes impossible or stops and, conversely, conflict can often times be mitigated or prevented when dialogue starts. Culture can thus be enrolled to serve both conflict and reconciliation – it depends on how the universal values embedded in the Human Rights Declaration are upheld. Authentic dialogue rests on efforts at mutual tolerance so that divergences and convergences can be openly discussed. Equally, efforts at ensuring that culture is used for rapprochement, will help to reconcile nations and communities with themselves as well as with others. To concretize a culture of peace, intercultural dialogue should become a permanent exercise at all levels, local, national, regional and international and involve every segment of society, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector and communities.

→ **Science for a Culture of Peace**

Science, a human adventure best characterized as universal and borderless, can be instrumental in stimulating constructive dialogue, openness, and mutual respect. Science is an organic component in the culture of peace. Promoting scientific approaches in school and in public life in general is essential to obtain and maintain peaceful as well as democratic societies, where debates build on shared knowledge and where fact-based policies facilitate the emergence of mutually acceptable solutions. This is true also at the international level, where peace and reconciliation can be achieved through scientific cooperation between scientists living in regions marred by conflict. Undeniably, science and technologies can be used for conflict, but they are probably best put to use when they instil people and nations with a sense of solidarity that is both intellectual and moral. Indeed, science and technology have an ethical dimension that must be highlighted, especially in a world where they have become a ubiquitous feature of every human activity.

→ **Advocating for gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment as a pillar for peace**

The world community would have better prospects at achieving peace and prosperity if it was also better at promoting gender equality, women's rights and women's leadership. However, women's role in peace and development has often been taken for granted and overlooked. As women are too often excluded from collective debates and from decision making in the economic, social and political spheres, they do not usually take part in discussions and decisions that lead to crises or escalate into conflicts and are not systematically involved in organised conflict resolution and peace building processes. Much more women are needed in decision-making positions around the world. Another obstacle encountered on the path to reconciliation between and within communities is violence against women, which is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. UNESCO made it one of its strategic priorities to foster a major change of consciousness regarding gender equality, which cannot be attained by legal measures alone, especially when social violence takes the guise of traditional and legitimate practice.

→ **Empowering youth as agents of social change and actors for peace**

Young people today, perhaps even more so than during previous generations, are at a crossroads. They want their voices to be heard. They want to be actors of their own future. They know that their engagement in all aspects of daily life can be relevant and meaningful. Unfortunately, however, young women and men, on all continents are becoming disenfranchised, and are feeling increasingly like a “lost generation.” This perception is amplified by the social and financial instability and the extraordinarily high levels of unemployment they experience, a phenomenon steadily growing throughout the world. As a result, many of them live lives mired in tension and conflict. This breeds further despair, frustration and fear; all of which is aggravated by continuous exposure to violence, whether in daily life, through the media or at school. Forward-looking and inclusive approaches and policies must be adopted concerning youth, both in aging countries and in demographically dynamic regions like Africa. The “youth quake” that occurred in the Arab world and elsewhere are direct expressions of social situations aggravated by the absence of life or career prospects. Refusing to be preached to or lectured, young people do not view themselves as mere beneficiaries of policies designed for them by others: they are stakeholders willing to carry their share of the responsibilities in their local, national and global communities. Indeed, youth are active partners in society and should be recognised as problem-solvers. Youth today are aware of their being the first generation to be so significantly interconnected. With a new sense of entitlement, youth asserts its right to self-expression, self-realization and self-determination.

→ **Promoting conflict prevention and support to countries in post-conflict and post-disaster situations**

Fostering prevention and reconciliation is particularly pertinent to situations in which long-standing conflict, whether open or latent, is rooted in a culture of mutual suspicion, hostility or even hatred and in concrete patterns of inequality based on discrimination and asymmetrical power relations. Prevention also calls for attention to post-disaster situations which can often cause malnutrition, human displacements, poverty and diseases, thus

easily becoming sources of conflict and social unrest. By removing the bases for the emergence or re-emergence of violence, promoting prevention and reconciliation at the field level can build personal and social capacity for lasting peace and can contribute to the attainment of important human development goals. As a predisposition for dialogue and non violence, a culture of peace is relevant not only for countries or societies that have been torn apart by violent conflict, but also for any human context scarred by trauma which has been caused by injustice and social violence. Discrimination, xenophobia, violence against women, child exploitation, or various forms of inequality need be addressed as obstacles on the road to peace. Whether it is in big cities or rural areas, whether in developed or developing countries, a culture of peace is an integral part of building open, tolerant and pluralist communities looking to the future in a spirit of humanism that puts individual and communities at the epicentre of all development processes.

→ **Harnessing the potential of the media and especially the new social media**

The media in all forms can serve as a bridge between cultures and societies. Consequently well trained journalists have a key role to play in initiating peace and defusing conflict. It is therefore important to promote freedom of expression and freedom of the press, media literacy and respect for cultural diversity as crucial aspects of civic education for peace, and hence to prevent the use of media from fuelling conflict and igniting tensions between communities and cultures. More profoundly, though, the historically unprecedented development of the Internet and social media, with their simultaneous impacts at the local and global levels, call for new approaches to dialogue and communication. By allowing for the spontaneous formation of myriads of communities, information and communication technologies (ICTs) bring a new potential to dialogue, yet they also entail a downside. ICTs can nonetheless generate some forms of cultural isolation and polarization, that is, a situation where communities keep to themselves in ignorance of each other and where no shared values can be found to underpin the practice of intercultural dialogue. A new paradigm of communication and dialogue is thus needed which takes into consideration the immediate and long-term impact of globalization and the new media on peace and development.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

→ Mobilizing and generating scientific knowledge

Green societies must be knowledge societies. Emerging and fast-evolving challenges call for innovative solutions to spark change, making it necessary for industrialized, emerging and developing countries to invest heavily in scientific research and higher education. In green economies and societies, innovation and research are essential to understand complex large-scale phenomena, reduce energy consumption, minimize carbon emissions, optimize the use of natural resources and establish green mass markets. Mobilizing knowledge is also about building skills and capacities for global sustainability, development and green jobs: in sub-Saharan Africa alone, an estimated 2.5 million engineers and technicians will be needed to improve access to clean water and sanitation. Bearing in mind the borderless nature of the global environmental crises, most notably those pertaining to climate change, biodiversity loss or the health of the ocean, international cooperation in the sciences and technology will have to gain momentum, including through intensified collaborations and increased technology transfers benefitting developing countries.

→ Paving the way for sustainable development: education and training

Education is the gateway to empowerment. In a world economy that is increasingly driven by knowledge and skills, the key building blocks of a green economy and green societies are education systems that foster new ways of thinking, develop new skills and support new social and ethical attitudes. Education for sustainable development is a key bridge between responding to the concerns of the present and addressing the realities of the future. As lead agency for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), UNESCO endeavours to promote responsible citizenship and sustainable lifestyles and consumption habits, fundamental to green societies. Since the environmental crisis is also an ethical crisis, sustainable development must therefore also be rooted in and aligned with ethical considerations and precepts, thereby contributing to a shared future based on environmental integrity, economic viability and social inclusion for present and future

generations. Education for sustainable development is indeed education for the future.

The transition to a green economy and society requires well trained professionals able to address and cope with the challenges of major economic and social transformations. This presents a huge opportunity, as effective national policies can help build capacities for green jobs and disseminate the principles of sustainable development in all trades. Technical and vocational education and training are critical for providing youth and adults with the required skills and competences needed to be prepared for the demands of the 21st century green labour market. This is of particular importance to women who are still underrepresented in most of the fields that are crucial for the building of a green economy.

→ **Promoting local knowledge, cultural diversity and dialogue:
the power of culture for development**

Culture, in all its dimensions, is fundamental to sustainable development. As a sector of activity, through tangible and intangible heritage, creative industries and various forms of artistic expressions, culture is a powerful contributor to economic development, social stability and environmental protection. The transition towards green societies offers a unique opportunity to deploy a developmental model that is tailored to suit the diversity of traditions, cultures and knowledge systems. There is no single path to sustainable development. Sharing fundamental principles, every path is different. Every path must make more of the power of culture for development. Culture is indeed pivotal in promoting eco-diversity. This entails acknowledging and promoting different approaches in shaping sustainable environmental practices and disaster reduction measures, respecting indigenous knowledge systems as they can inspire practices and innovations based on traditional lifestyles. Culture therefore represents a soft power catalyzing the different dimensions of sustainable development.

→ **Sustainable development and gender equality: the specific needs and contributions of women**

Women currently make up 70% of the world's one billion poorest people. One of the main challenges of the years to come is to overcome gender inequalities in order to ensure that women are not disproportionately affected by poverty. Women and men do not experience global challenges in the same way. Recognizing the specific needs and contributions of both women and men is essential and would result in the reduction of gender inequalities and improved development perspectives for both women and men. Solutions, while being grounded in interdisciplinary approaches, must involve both women and men, and address their respective and common needs, goals and aspirations.

→ **Addressing climate change and natural disasters**

Climate change is a defining challenge of our time, a clear threat to global prosperity and security. The world is coming to realize that the risks inherent to climate change may be higher and more complex than previously anticipated. It is the responsibility of the international community to help the poorest and most exposed people and communities adapt to the consequences of climate change and to assist industrialised countries in successfully reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A holistic approach taking scientific, educational, cultural and ethical dimensions into account is crucial to successfully addressing those challenges. Considering that women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, gender-sensitive strategies must be identified to respond to the environmental and humanitarian crises related to climate change. Given the increase in natural disasters, including those that are climate-related, vulnerable groups, in particular those living in coastal zones and small islands, need special assistance. All parts of society need to be encouraged to take concerted action in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

→ **Fostering the sustainable use and governance of the ocean and its resources**

When we speak of a green economy or green societies, we should not forget that we live on a blue planet. The role of the oceans is one of the most strategic stakes for the coming century, both in terms of economy and governance.

One in four people relies on seafood as their primary source of protein, while marine and coastal resources and industries are basic to livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people. The ocean is at the core of global systems that make the Earth a habitable planet. The rain, weather, climate, coastlines, much of our food, and even the oxygen we breathe, are all ultimately provided and regulated by the sea. The sustainable management of the oceans and an improved global ocean governance framework are prerequisites for the sustainable use of these resources. We need to strive at integrating the “blue” with the “green”.

→ **Improving access to and management of freshwater**

In less than 25 years, two thirds of the world's population will be living in water-stressed countries. Securing access to safe drinking water for all and wisely managing our limited freshwater resources should, as consequence, be high priorities on the sustainable development agenda. Safe drinking water and sanitation services are vital: millions of people are excluded from a decent human life because they lack access to these essential ingredients of the Millennium Development Goals and the newly proclaimed right for access to freshwater. Particular attention should be paid to the situations of women, who play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. Providing science-based knowledge on water management is crucial for decision-makers and the public, particularly when the sustainability of livelihoods is threatened by adverse consequences of climate change and biodiversity erosion.

→ **Ensuring the conservation and the sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity**

All over the planet, biodiversity – the diversity of life, from micro-organisms to plants and animals, from genes to species and ecosystems – is declining to the extent that many scientists believe life on Earth is on the verge of a massive extinction phase. Without biodiversity, life – and human life – would simply be impossible. The biosphere, as a set of very diverse ecosystems, provides a wide array of free services, which are at the foundation of all forms of human livelihoods, from the economic to the spiritual. More than 1.3 billion people

depend directly on basic ecosystems goods and services for their livelihoods. In addition, it must be noted that women, as bearers of traditions, knowledge and practices play a particularly vital role with regards to biodiversity uses. Managing the relationship between human development and the environment is thus a most complex challenge that requires actors at all levels to strike a strategic balance between nature preservation and the rational use of natural resources.

→ **Sustainable development as a strategy for african prosperity**

Sustainable development is one key plank to solve what could be termed the African paradox, that is, the situation of a continent which is rich with natural and human resources but which will not meet the MDGs targets globally. While it remains imperative for the international community to keep assisting Africa in terms of financial and technological assistance, the region as a whole must seize the opportunities offered by its economic and demographic growth to spur an African Renaissance, based on endogenous capacities and innovations. The region stands to lose the most from unpreparedness to climate change and other environmental challenges – but it stand to gain the most if it can creatively engage into sustainable development strategies and approaches. The integration of the region remains a strategic imperative as African countries maintain less economic and scientific relations between themselves than with the exterior of the continent. In this long-term effort spanning the interests of the present and future generations, particular attention should be paid to capacities in science, technology and innovation as well as education and technological and vocational education and training, which are the starting blocks of endogenous sustainable development.

→ **Improving global governance for sustainable development**

New approaches to development should be meaningful locally and effective globally. A more coherent institutional framework at the global, regional and national levels is overdue. Good governance for sustainable development requires adequate frameworks, which include all stakeholders, including civil society, public and private partners, academia and marginalized groups. At the global level in particular, there should be a clear recognition of well

established mandates, experience and comparative advantages of United Nations organizations, which must intensify their reform efforts to foster coherence, efficiency and enhanced high-quality delivery. In a fragmented system, institutional reform is unquestionably needed, at multiple levels, to integrate the dimensions of sustainable development, step up and improve effectiveness in implementation, and bring about true coordination and coherence of policy. We need a new global commitment that makes the most of the transformative power of education, sciences, culture, and communication and information. These are the best ways to tackle the challenges we face.

PHOTO GALLERY





Eleonora Mitrofanova, Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO



Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO



Katalin Bogay, President of the General Conference of UNESCO



Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire



Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon



Pal Schmitt, President of the Republic of Hungary



Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia



Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau



Pascal Irenée Koupaki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Benin



Raila A. Odinga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya



Kris Peeters, Minister-President of the Government of Flanders



Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada



Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of the Republic of Azerbaijan



Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez, First Lady of the Dominican Republic





Stephen Cole, Al Jazeera English, Doha and London



Zeinab Badawi, BBC Four and BBC World News



An international platform for reflection and discussion, UNESCO has created the Leaders' Forum within the 36th session of UNESCO's General Conference to inject from the highest level of governments new inspiration and forward-looking directions. The Leaders' Forum is a major opportunity to explore in an open manner innovative, even provocative ideas and new ways of promoting peace and prosperity in a globalized world through UNESCO's fields of competence and thereby help chart the programmatic activities of the Organization in the future. Discussions at this edition of the Forum were focused on "How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?".

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