



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO LEADERS' FORUM

UNESCO General Conference, 37th session

UNESCO MOBILIZING FOR AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE POST-2015 AGENDA

through education, the sciences,
culture and communication and information

6 November 2013
UNESCO Headquarters
Paris, France





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LEADERS' FORUM

37TH SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE

The Leaders' Forum is a forward-looking policy dialogue involving Heads of State and/or Government as well as representatives of Member States at ministerial level, gathered to address issues of strategic, global and interdisciplinary interest with a view to providing general orientations for the work of the UNESCO.

The Leaders' Forum held on 6 November 2013 at the beginning of the 37th session of the General Conference was organized around the theme **“UNESCO mobilizing for and contributing to the post-2015 agenda through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information.”** This theme was selected in response to the debates and consultations launched worldwide by the United Nations family to define the post-2015 development agenda, building on the experience with the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000. The new global development agenda shall, from 2015 onwards, provide governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders with a framework for time-bound and measurable action based on a shared vision.

A meeting of decision-makers from all continents, the Forum is a unique opportunity for world leaders to formulate key messages to steer action in the fields of education, the sciences, culture and communication and information. The Forum was opened by **Hao Ping**, President of the General Conference, **Alissandra Cummins**, Chairperson of the Executive Board and **Irina Bokova**, Director-General of UNESCO. The Heads of State or Government present at the Leaders' Forum were **Laura Chinchilla**, President of Costa Rica, **Moncef Marzouki**, President of Tunisia and **Algirdas Butkevicius**, Prime Minister of Lithuania. Special addresses were also delivered by **Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak**

Al-Nahayan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development of the United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the President of the United Arab Emirates), **Mohammad Javad Zarif**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, **Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri**, Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), **Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo**, President of the Constitutional Court of Gabon, **Muhyiddin bin Mohd Yassin**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of Malaysia, and **Hossam Issa**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Higher Education of the Arab republic of Egypt. A video message was received from **Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**, Executive Director of UN Women.

The sessions of the Forum were moderated by **Shashi Tharoor**, Minister of State for Human Resource Development of India and **Stephen Cole**, Senior Presenter at Al Jazeera English, Doha and London.

UNESCO IN THE POST-2015 AGENDA

Foreword by Irina Bokova

Director-General of UNESCO

During the Leaders' Forum at the 37th session of the UNESCO General Conference, leaders from across the world came together to explore the challenges they face in common and the key role of UNESCO in tackling them. Under the theme "UNESCO mobilizing for and contributing to the post-2015 agenda through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information," a wide-ranging discussion reflected on the most pressing issues to be resolved collectively until 2030.

During the discussion, leaders identified frontiers to be crossed in the future global development agenda and reiterated the importance of UNESCO's ethical mandate. In seeking to foster "intellectual and moral solidarity", UNESCO works to promote the enjoyment of human rights by all women and men. These rights are universal, but they remain unachieved ideals for too many men and women, young people and minorities. Exploring how these principles can shape a more sustainable future, the leaders identified areas for concrete action in UNESCO's fields of competence.

Education must be a top priority, reflected in a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda. All countries must accelerate efforts to eliminate illiteracy, and it is vital that every child and adult receives a basic education. For this, Governments must invest in quality secondary and tertiary education, as well as in technical and vocational education and training. Education for sustainable development is also critical to influence behavioural patterns and ethical attitudes. Most of all, the aspirations of young women and men must be addressed to provide them with skills and opportunities to engage fully in their societies and to live together as global citizens.

The Leaders' Forum highlighted the diversity of cultures as a hallmark of our times. This calls for new approaches to living together and cultural literacy. It calls also for recognizing culture as a driver and an enabler of sustainable

development. The Millennium Development Goals did not recognize this power – the future development agenda should do so, to deepen ownership and embed development efforts in local contexts. This is essential for strengthening the foundations for governance and lasting peace. Development can only be sustainable when rooted meaningfully in local communities in respect for human rights.

The discussion stressed also the need for a new social contract within and between States – to strengthen harmony between people and with nature, especially with regard to biodiversity and the ocean. The post-2015 development agenda should seek to build new synergies between science, policy and society, drawing on holistic perspectives at the global level for innovative strategies at the local level.

The vision that emerged from the Leaders' Forum was clear - poverty and exclusion can only be eliminated through actions that foster dignity and equality, especially for women and young people, in respect of cultural diversity and within a framework of human rights.

In all of this, leaders underlined the 'soft power' of UNESCO and the need for the Organization to sharpen its contribution to respond to the needs of societies, especially throughout Africa. This is why I am determined to ensure that UNESCO's action becomes ever more focussed and innovative, drawing on the resources of civil society and new partnerships with the private sector. We must tap every source of ideas, knowledge and experience to shape a better future for all. By linking the global to the local and by sharpening its action, UNESCO will help to shape and implement an ambitious post-2015 development agenda.



Irina Bokova

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
Irina Bokova , Director-General of UNESCO	5
OPENING ADDRESSES	9
Hao Ping , President of the 37th Session of the General Conference	10
Alissandra Cummins , Chairperson of the Executive Board	11
Irina Bokova , Director-General of UNESCO	15
STATEMENTS	17
Keynote addresses	
Laura Chinchilla Miranda , President of Costa Rica	18
Moncef Marzouki , President of Tunisia	24
Algirdas Butkevicius , Prime Minister of Lithuania	32
Special addresses	
Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak AL-NAHAYAN , Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development of the United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the President of the United Arab Emirates)	36
Mohammad Javad Zarif , Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran	39
Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri , Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)	42
Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo , President of the Constitutional Court of the Gabonese Republic	44
Muhyiddin bin Mohd Yassin , Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of Malaysia	49
Hossam Issa , Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Higher Education of the Arab Republic of Egypt	51
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka , Executive Director of UN Women (video message)	54
Introduction to the debate	
Shashi Tharoor , Minister of State for Human Resource Development of India	55
SUMMARY OF THE DEBATE	59
CLOSING REMARKS	77
Hao Ping , President of the 37 th Session of the UNESCO General Conference	79
ANNEX–BACKGROUND DOCUMENT	81
PHOTO GALLERY	97

OPENING ADDRESSES



Hao Ping

President of the 37th Session of the General Conference

The Leaders' Forum is a contemporary expression of the ambition of the founders of UNESCO to harness the power of ideas and values to prevent conflicts and foster peace and prosperity in the world.

As the international community examines the content of the global development agenda, it is my belief that the hour of UNESCO has come, to remind world leaders of their responsibility to engage in dialogue that will make a difference.

It is time to reaffirm UNESCO's mandate with energy and conviction, where knowledge, innovation and creativity, in a global economy, have become a major engine of growth, development cannot be realized without massive investments in education, the sciences, culture and communication and information.

UNESCO has much to contribute to the current debate by deploying its five functions as a laboratory for ideas, standard-setter, clearing house, capacity builder and a catalyst for international cooperation in an inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral manner.

I am therefore honoured to welcome under this roof the wisdoms of the different countries and cultures, to enlighten us on the course we are about to take, as the contours of the global development agenda to follow 2015 are being debated worldwide.

Alissandra Cummins

Chairperson of the Executive Board

As the United Nations family prepares to evaluate the progress achieved in the past 15 years towards the Millennium Development Goals, as well as to define the post- 2015 international development targets, it is imperative that UNESCO maintains its active engagement in this process. In this sense, the theme of the Leaders' Forum this year is of particular pertinence not only as a means of inspiring the direction of the Organization, but also to precipitate ideas and formulate messages that we, as Member States, must bring to the UN General Assembly on the critical role of UNESCO as a key player in building a sustainable, peaceful and equitable future.

In order to do this, we must remember that the central concept to emphasize is "sustainable development" and not simply "development". For development to be sustainable, it must first, and foremost, be people-centered. Any development intervention should have at its core the sustainable and long-term improvement of the well-being of its intended beneficiaries. In this sense, the advantage that UNESCO brings to the table in terms of its multidisciplinary character is obvious. In fact, this multidisciplinary characteristic provides the best starting point for designing holistic approaches to sustainable development.

Our actions in education are uniquely positioned to not only address the pedagogical aspect of education, they are also situated in a House that specializes in the sciences, culture and communication and information – all the building blocks necessary for achieving quality education and education for sustainable development. In this, we must continue to assert UNESCO's role as the lead UN agency for education in the post-2015 development agenda.

Our actions in the natural sciences, in water cooperation, in oceans management, and in ICT bring together critical technical expertise that could

be leveraged to harness science, technology and innovation for sustainable development. In this, the Organization's advocacy for building green societies and green economies, as well as its initiative on the blue economy, should feature prominently in the international community's consideration of the post-2015 targets.

Our actions in the social sciences, human rights, ethics and freedom of expression are essential intellectual elements for ensuring peaceful, just, equitable, and ultimately sustainable social transformations. UNESCO's actions in these fields form the core of our ethical mandate within the UN system – fulfilling our role as the moral conscience of the international community. In this, UNESCO should become an indispensable partner for all post-2015 targets, providing much needed input to ensure informed decisions and actions by all implementing UN agencies.

In terms of our actions in culture, its role as an accelerator for positive change was largely forgotten or minimized within the existing set of MDGs. The tendency to frame development solely in economic terms, and now sustainable development as a combination between economic and environmental sustainability, is in my opinion, the biggest limiting factor. In the current construct, human development is not viewed holistically, and therefore, as an expedient measure, anything that does not immediately fit into this framework is relegated to a minor role. In working to bring culture into the sustainable development debate, we have often had to argue it from the perspective of how it would benefit the economic objective to other international stakeholders, when in actual fact culture should have been the core factor around which economic and environmental sustainability are built. Culture and cultural heritage provide glimpses into the identity and value constructs of a community, and it is there that behavioural change that would lead to sustainable models of development could be realized. Without cultural adaptation, we will not achieve education for all nor poverty eradication. Culture is the key upon which we can drive holistic human development that is people-centered, including spiritual development of individuals. The tendency to dismiss this central role of culture as “soft” in an economic model, or at

best grudgingly accepting it as a peripheral necessity, is the main hindrance to integrating it into sustainable development.

The Director-General and her team have worked very hard these past two years to underscore the inextricable links between culture and development. In fact, the International Congress on “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development” held earlier this year in Hangzhou, China was the first ever occasion for such an in-depth discussion on this issue. Through these efforts, the international development community has finally recognized the limitations of imposing a single development model on different world cultures, and has started to make progress in applying culture towards the achievement of the MDGs. This aspect of UNESCO’s contribution to the MDGs is critical, and should be maintained beyond 2015.

It is clear that in defining the post-2015 development agenda, UNESCO needs to reassert its role within the UN family as a peace builder through education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture and communication. UNESCO needs to help steer the international discourse towards the tenets of sustainable and holistic development in the next phase of global development. If this does not happen, it is a certainty that the effects of unsustainable development will increasingly fuel international tensions and conflicts.

It is also clear that in order to maximize its impact for sustainable development in the post-2015 era, UNESCO needs to become more inter-disciplinary in its approach – or in the jargon of the House, it needs to become more inter-sectoral in its actions. In other words, it needs to better combine its multi-disciplinary expertise to achieve more effective interventions. An integrated multi-disciplinary strategy is especially important for developing countries, but most especially for small island developing states and least developed countries, in order to achieve economies of scale by channeling the limited resources available towards policies and actions that will guarantee positive outcomes.

On the other hand, as Member States, we must also be cognizant of the relatively limited resources we have attributed to UNESCO when compared to the scope of its mandate and our expectations of its delivery. A quick analysis of our regular budget versus the total population of the world shows that we are currently investing approximately 4.5 US cents per person per year in pursuit of progress in education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information for over 200 member countries of UNESCO. This is a paltry sum, but nevertheless, if we look at what the Organization has achieved, there has been an incredibly effective return on investment – all accomplished within a universal and multilateral framework. However, in this scenario, it should not be a surprise that the Organization has always struggled to maintain a strong presence in the field, and this has also severely handicapped our contribution and influence on the UN development framework within individual countries.

As we move to position UNESCO's mandate within the post-2015 development agenda, it is evident that the Organization will have to foster stronger partnerships with Member States and civil society to achieve a multiplier effect on its limited resources. More importantly, Member States should seriously consider transforming their National Commissions for UNESCO into an effective arm for the delivery of the Organization's programmes, activities and policies on the ground, in response to the post-2015 development agenda – with the goal of creating a true UNESCO presence in each country. This would also enable the Secretariat to consolidate its field presence to become centers of expertise focusing on building the capacity of National Commissions in its fields of competence. Such a move would profoundly extend the reach, scope and effectiveness of the Organization, and bring much needed clout within the UN system to advocate for education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information in the implementation of the post-2015 development goals.

Irina Bokova

Director-General of UNESCO

What world do we want to live in? This question stands at the heart of the *Millennium Declaration* and it has inspired action across the world to meet the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. All these efforts have been guided by a humanist vision of a more just and equitable world. There has been remarkable progress – but it has been insufficient and uneven.

Today, we must focus where needs are greatest, we must help countries accelerate towards 2015, and we must shape a new agenda to follow. This should build on past achievements, while tackling new challenges in an integrated manner. It should focus on what is most urgent - the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequalities and the promotion of sustainable development. It must build on human rights. It must pursue a transformative agenda that responds to the needs of societies and a planet under pressure. Most of all, it must promote peace and security, on the basis of respect, understanding and dialogue.

In July, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a report – *Accelerating Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and Advancing the UN Development Agenda beyond 2015*. Last month, the United Nations General Assembly held a *Special Event on Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*. The *Open-Ended Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals* is working on a set of new goals to follow 2015. All of this points in the same direction. We need cross-cutting multipliers to achieve progress and shape a bold agenda.

This must start with education. There have been great advances in enrolment since 2000, but 57 million children remain out of school. We need a new goal for education – focusing on equity and quality, throughout life, especially for girls and women, for learners to become global citizens. In this spirit, the *Global Thematic Consultation on Education for Post-2015*, co-led by UNESCO and

UNICEF, has called for 'Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All.'

Science, technology and innovation are another accelerator of sustainable development. We need more scientists, especially in Africa. We need women scientists. We need stronger sciences for sustainable development. This calls also for cooperation in ocean science, for sustainable water management, for stronger links between science, policy and society.

Along with education and science, culture is a factor of sustainability. It is a force for social cohesion, growth, employment; this has been evidenced by UNESCO with actual figures. It is through culture that people gather, mobilize and plan for the long-term. There is no future without culture. Culture is a notable absentee from the development agenda set in 2000, and we must absolutely include it as an accelerator of sustainability in the post-2015 agenda.

The issue in this debate, the key to success is to identify the factors of sustainability, so that our efforts are sustainable. The answer lies in the UNESCO Constitution: to be lasting, peace and development must be grounded on foundations more solid than political and economic arrangements, they must be grounded in human dignity, the rule of law, and strengthened by freedom of expression and access to information.

The world may have changed dramatically since 1945, and even since 2000, but this message and these values are more current than ever. 2015 is not a political event, it is a rendez-vous, I think, with the history of the modern humanist movement. 1948 witnessed the spring of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ... 50 years later; the Millennium Declaration provided clear and quantified objectives to translate these rights into reality. UNESCO has a vital role to play and I am determined that, together, we fully grasp this historic opportunity.

STATEMENTS



Keynote addresses

Laura Chinchilla Miranda

President of Costa Rica

It is with deep emotion and pride that I address all of you as President of a country that encapsulates, as few in the world do, the far-reaching philosophy of UNESCO. Without seeking to turn ourselves into the emblem of anything, we can just say that Costa Rica has found some solutions to the problems that today weigh upon humankind, solutions which deserve serious consideration. We are not a “problem-free” country; there is not, never has been or ever will be any such thing. Our problems are those of our time, those of our society and of the juncture of history that has befallen us. But it is also true that, before each of the problems we have had to face throughout our history, we have sought to respond responsibly, maintaining fine balances.

“Where there is a Costa Rican, wherever that may be, there will be peace”, once said the President of Uruguay, Julio María Sanguinetti. There will also be many other things. I should like today to add: dialogue, solidarity, tolerance, freedom and respect. Respect for others, yes, but also respect for the planet, the environment and nature. That nature we have approached – to use a term familiar to jurists – as a “subject of law”. Namely a nature that we treat as a subject, with all that this means: something that we must preserve, study, treasure and never violate or plunder. This is the very principle of any sustainable development.

Between the years 1 and 1400 of the Christian era, the size of the world's population did not vary substantially. From the Renaissance on, with the development of scientific disciplines, medicine and the eradication of several

deadly pandemics, the planet began to undergo a population explosion that is now starting to become something we cannot handle. Here are some figures. The position today is that 10 of every 1,000 persons in India have a car. In China there are 40 cars per 1,000 inhabitants. In Europe the number is 600 per 1,000, and in the United States 900 per 1,000. Just think of the quantity of carbon dioxide that this is generating. But consider, above all, what will happen when the entire population of India or China acquires – as a perfectly understandable ambition – one or more vehicles. It is estimated that by the year 2020 the planet will be emitting a daily 40,000 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. Irrational and undisciplined development is therefore unacceptable. However, to freeze economies and ordain zero per cent growth would plunge us into a no less serious crisis. So we see ourselves in this predicament: on the one hand, an unsustainable (in fact catastrophic) development and, on the other, a non-development, a form of stagnation with no takers because – quite rightly – nobody will want to embrace it.

The Imperative of Responsibility by Hans Jonas in 1979, and *The Natural Contract* by Michel Serres in 1990, were books that alerted the world: we were running blithely towards the abyss, singing on the way to what was going to turn into a collective suicide. Their basic principles are very simple, the first being that nature is not responsible for us; we are responsible for nature! Secondly, Rousseau's "Social Contract" will be of very little use if we do not promptly establish a "Natural Contract", that is, a pact with nature. Did anyone ever ask nature whether it wanted to be "mastered" and "possessed"? Perhaps it just wanted to be loved, respected and adored! Priests and guardians were what it needed, not violators.

Costa Rica has chosen to make love to nature, not to plunder it, batter it and exhaust it. With 26 natural parks covering more than one fifth of its territory, Costa Rica is the "greenest" country in the world and the one with the most species per unit of area. In only 51,000 km² of surface area, it possesses 4% of the planet's biodiversity, and we assume full responsibility for it, regarding it as a heritage property, something that belongs to humankind. We have set ourselves the target of becoming – by 2021 – the world's first carbon-neutral

country and we have prohibited hunting in our fields, not by decree but by popular will.

This is how things are done in Costa Rica: consensually, as an expression of the majority will, which we respect as a matter of principle because that is just what the essence of our people is. We are one of the 22 oldest and staunchest democracies in the world. Yes, we are in the purest sense of the word a democracy. It is a word too freely assumed and bandied about, a word eroded and weakened, a word crowded over daily by more than one de facto dictator. It is a word that some have stripped of its content or simplified in the extreme.

Voting is no equivalent of democracy. Voting is an undoubtedly laudable electoral mechanism but one which does not, in itself, guarantee anything. An uneducated and uninformed people will lack the criteria to cast its vote sensibly. It will be a ready prey to propaganda and manipulation. It will end up voting against its own interests, placing its destiny in the hands of its executioners. Voting is perfectly sterile – worse still, potentially counterproductive – if unaccompanied by the democratization of culture and knowledge. Where education is lacking, the vote becomes something like a pistol in the hands of a child. How many despots in the history of the world were elected democratically, only to become the scourges and disasters of their peoples?

Hence education goes to make up our conception of democracy. In Costa Rica, primary and secondary education were declared free and compulsory back in 1869. We were thus 79 years ahead of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our Constitution stipulates that 8% of GDP must be spent on public education, which, together with a universal health system, has meant a level of human development comparable to that of the world's developed nations. Both systems – education and health – have been extended to take in an enormous immigrant population that for decades has been absorbed by my country.

Our education has been modernized with the introduction of digital technologies, but it does not see in technology the sole solution to the training of integral human beings. We have implemented an education programme centred on three axes: ethics, aesthetics and citizenship. This

is perfectly natural: what is ethics after all if not a kind of aesthetics of the moral gesture? When we talk of “good deeds” or a “lovely gesture”, are we not alluding to aesthetic categories? Furthermore, what is aesthetics other than a kind of ethics of forms? When we bring up harmony, melody, rhythm and artistic beauty, are we not transferring to the plane of sensitive forms a sort of ethics of sounds, colours, volumes and textures? Our education hinges on the essentially Platonic premise that aesthetics and ethics are, basically, two different manifestations of the same phenomenon. What is more, civics teaches us harmonious coexistence, which is at the same time both an art and a science and involves calling on the concepts of harmony and consonance: like the musicians of an orchestra, we must act with one accord for a joint effect which is the common good, what we call society and which is more – much more – than a sum of individuals each pulling in their own direction and solely bent on private benefit.

Our education system has brought us a particular level of awareness in certain nowadays extremely sensitive areas. Costa Rica has, for example, the best gender equality index in Latin America, and it is a country among the safest and most respectful of the exercise of press freedom. In May 2013, we hosted the celebration of the International Press Freedom Day and the Guillermo Cano Prize was awarded in San José, Costa Rica. We had on that occasion the honour to welcome Ms Irina Bokova as well as several UNESCO officials and journalists from all over the world.

Our education and our culture flourish because we have been capable of injecting into them the resources which, in other countries of the world, are sunk in armies, weapons and soldiers, the spiral of death that even the poorest nations on earth believe has to be activated. On 1 December 1948 one of our most eminent Presidents took the decision to abolish the army. Instead of arming ourselves to the teeth, like so many other dictators of his time and of our region, he ratified that resolution in the political Constitution of 1949. Since then, we Costa Ricans have lived in peace with ourselves and with the other nations of the world, having as our sole weapons for settling conflicts the rule of law and the international legal system.

We know history as an immemorial genealogy of war. No war ever really solved anything. Each war promises to be the last, the “war to end all wars”. We do not believe in that. Wars become interwoven in others, in a sinister succession, an endless and purposeless cortège. Each war merely deferred, put off and passed on to future generations the still suppurating wounds of those who suffered the previous historical traumas. One example of many possible ones is that the Napoleonic campaigns to a great extent gave rise to the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, which in turn spawned the First World War, a prelude to the Second World War, which resulted in the Cold War... And so we follow in a kind of macabre genesis, with each generation taking over the legacy of hatred, bursting out cyclically and inexorably with alarming and perfectly predictable frequency. Friends, if war had been the solution there would be no more wars! The existence of war, still and ever, is just what proves its absurdity as a solution, its failure as a practice and its incapacity to settle any conflict!

There never was a just war: this is an aporia, an antinomy, a contradiction in terms. Thus it was that we opted for peace. That is our real name. We Costa Ricans have married peace and ours is an absolutely indissoluble link. This inevitably prompts the question of how we defend ourselves in the event of aggression. The answer is by turning to the international law bodies, seeking the protection of the entities that the world has established to settle this type of conflict. Friends, since the Tigris and the Euphrates “decided” to invent civilization, it took us seven thousand years to come up with the United Nations, the Nobel Peace Prize, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Court of Justice, and the International Criminal Court. Too much time to understand at last that we must not be banging each other’s heads. It will certainly not be Costa Rica that hauls humankind back to the Early Palaeolithic. We will not be the ones to undermine an edifice that has cost the world so many millennia, so much grief, so much blood, so much death. No, we shall never be the ones to undo a skein woven with thousands of millions of lives cut off.

Once more, and as always, we renew our faith in the organizations entrusted with ensuring world peace and the harmonious coexistence of nations. That faith has been recently boosted with the culmination or progress of important

causes that Costa Rica has promoted in the name of world peace. I refer to the recent approval by the United Nations of the Arms Trade Treaty and the also recent holding of the High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, the first of this nature at the United Nations, together with the setting up of the open-ended working group to advance multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, coordinated by my country.

Costa Rica feels deeply honoured to have been able to attend this world Leaders' Forum. What is UNESCO basically? It is an enormous act of faith in the human being; that is what it is. A reaffirmation that we still believe in ourselves, that we share common goals and that, over and above cultural or ideological differences, we are united by a common core. On the surface of the ocean, the infinite mutation of the waves may give us the impression that we are radically and irreducibly different. But if we were to go ten thousand metres down, where neither the free-blowing wind nor a thousand other causes of friction stir the calm waters, we would perhaps discover that a profound brotherhood, serene and enfolding, unites us. It is that common core in all of you that I have today sought to hail.

Moncef Marzouki

President of Tunisia

First of all, allow me to offer my warmest congratulations to Mr Hao Ping, President of UNESCO's General Conference, on his election, and thank his predecessor Ms Katalin Bogay for all her efforts.

I would also like to congratulate Ms Irina Bokova on her re-election as Director-General of the Organization and wish her the very best of success. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank her for supporting the revolution of the Tunisian people by visiting Tunisia on more than one occasion.

In addition, I would like to thank Mr Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General, for selecting Tunisia as one of the ten Champion Countries of the "Global Education First Initiative".

The importance of universal education is a subject that unites peoples and States like no other, especially since scientific studies have proven that the main catalyst behind the transition of countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea from poverty in the 1950's to booming industry in the present day was the success of the education policies they adopted 20 years previously.

Discoveries such as this make States ever more determined to create the best education systems possible, to fulfil this key requirement for success.

The current global obsession with improving education systems therefore comes as no surprise; the whole world has turned into a testing ground, where every country is trying to come up with the perfect education formula, either to catch up or to stay in the lead.

We are all now searching for the best way to fund, structure and evaluate our education and training systems.

We are all struggling to manage systems that are getting more complicated and expensive by the day.

We are all under pressure to find the best ways to match education systems with market requirements.

We are all realizing that any social system not built on moral values is at risk of collapse.

We are all aware that our education systems are not as effective as they could be, which explains, for example, why in my country 20% of children between the ages of 12 and 18 leave school with no qualifications, leaving them at a higher risk of unemployment than the rest.

We are also facing a new challenge: the emergence of a new type of illiteracy, which may be even more serious than the illiteracy of the past.

For anyone who wants to keep up with the modern age, reading and writing are not enough.

New technology puts additional pressure on education and, as we all know, anyone who fails to master this technology is affected by a new form of illiteracy.

While this technology has certainly opened up many welcome prospects for knowledge and learning, it also poses new challenges when we have barely been able to tackle the previous ones.

We are all conscious of these problems and are investing all of our efforts into solving them. But have we asked ourselves how goals should be set, especially in the field of education, and to what extent these goals can contribute to sustainable development?

I believe that part of our discussions on education should be focused on targets, rather than just on how to develop our educational institutions.

For example, the American sociologist Alvin Toffler has demonstrated that education would not be as it is today if it were not for the capitalist intention to subjugate the children of poor people and farmers to turn them into malleable

raw materials; education is now treated as a social process, as opposed to the original process of providing workers, expertise and skills to fuel the industrial revolution that spread first throughout Europe and later throughout the entire world. The circumstances at the time made it necessary, in terms of new industry and technology, to carefully build these frameworks. Since then, however, the State has clung to the same way of thinking; every State realized that if it wanted to be a great power, its citizens must be educated. These education systems were therefore established to serve the interests of the State, not for their original purpose of serving humanity.

Humanity has been structured according to either the will of capital or the will of the State, as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. This is an ongoing problem on many levels. We cannot discuss education and sustainable development without reviewing these fundamental goals that have been imposed on us.

We cannot achieve sustainable development unless we go back and set new, clearly defined goals. If we fail to do so, we will continue to create education systems that are intrinsically designed to fulfil the needs of capital, industry and technology as well as the needs of the State rather than those of the people and societies that we want to develop into truly human societies, in the hope of forming more States to be admired, such as Costa Rica.

Today, I am convinced that to achieve the goal of education as described by the United Nations and UNESCO, that is to say to build peace in the minds of men and women, education must serve humans and humanity. Economic, political and social objectives should be secondary to that goal, not the other way round.

If we accept this as the best way of thinking, we must realign our main goals for education and redesign the programmes shaped by these goals. In my opinion, the three main goals should be as follows.

The first goal should be to ensure that people can use essential tools such as reading, writing, numeracy and now the media to gain access to all the

intellectual heritage, artistic traditions and value systems that peoples and humanity have to offer.

Let us not forget that the teaching methods that underpin our education systems are not as benign as we might imagine; these methods, based on dictation, memorization and treating texts as if they were sacred, are in themselves a political act. The proof of this is that the countries that choose to incorporate educated people into a system that teaches them the desire to possess money and cultivates an entrepreneurial, methodical mindset from a young age are the most democratic countries with the most faith in human rights.

One issue is that we are faced with an education system that is shaped by outdated national and economic needs; the other issue is that to teach students the type of citizenship that we are aiming for, we need participatory methods that allow students to be active, not simply passive learners.

The second goal should be to identify and nurture each person's natural potential. Not every child can be a genius and it is true that that we have been very demanding with our children, expecting them to be geniuses or nothing and placing a great deal of pressure on them. Instead, we must seek out in each of them the qualities that can be nurtured to help them develop a sense of humanity, which will in turn benefit both them and society.

I must point out that we should not let our obsession with quality obscure the fact that you can measure how civilized a society is by the way it treats its weakest members, such as prisoners, the mentally ill and persons with special needs. Countries such as Norway, where children with disabilities are integrated into mainstream education, set an example that we should follow, illustrating the educational philosophy that should guide all of our thought processes. Education systems should not be driven by this obsession with competing to train up the best students, an obsession imposed by the needs of capital and of the State; the primary aim of education should be to promote the development of all humans without exception.

The third goal is that any form of sustainable education should help to build peace in our hearts and minds; what I call teaching citizenship and humanity.

For generations, civic education has formed an important part of Tunisian education, but there have also been ridiculous attempts by all States at so-called civic education, which involves telling children an elaborate collective myth of history in an attempt to integrate them into the national group and ultimately incorporate far-fetched ideas into a thought system that can prepare the ground for war. This is because national identity is often constructed in opposition to the “other”, forming the basis for war. These States, no matter how democratic they are, have failed to teach their children, in the latter stages of secondary education and at university, how to stand against corruption, torture, electoral fraud, propaganda and disinformation, to teach them a sense of citizenship.

Any alternative form of civic education should aim to teach children, adults and young people how to unpick society's systems such as the economic, banking, judicial and health systems, to understand how they work and how they deviate from their intended purposes. They should learn to pick apart the myths that they are told so they can shield themselves in the face of the torrent of information that faces them, most of which is tainted.

Even so, this type of civic education, aimed at liberating rather than taming citizens, also has its limits as a result of the blinkered view of nationalism that is propagated by the way history is taught as a school subject. History at school rarely teaches children and young people to be global citizens; instead, it traps them in a narrow version of history, that of their own people and nation, while other forms of human history are cast aside.

Nowadays, to survive in the face of a complex web of crucial issues which are interwoven and interdependent – most importantly the environment – we must foster a sense of belonging and responsibility, not only towards a nation and people but also towards the earth and humanity. Moreover, just as we must teach our children about our national political, social and economic systems, we must also teach them about our common global systems, in other

words the structure and tasks of the United Nations and all of its specialized agencies.

Therefore, I would like to put forward a suggestion made by eminent historians, that UNESCO should create a collective version of history, one that tells the tale of humankind as a whole. This version of history should be broad-ranging and illustrate how, throughout the ages, many different parts of the world witnessed at the same time explosions of creativity and innovation, showing how all peoples have contributed to human civilization.

This collective history can then be integrated with other more specific types of history and taught in its basic form at primary school, then in more detail at secondary level. I will do my utmost to ensure that Tunisia is one of the first countries to get involved in this type of experiment.

In addition to this, a collective version of geography – and by this I mean non-physical geography – could also be taught in every school in the world.

I am one of the greatest admirers of UNESCO's Living Human Treasures programme and keenest followers of its World Heritage List, onto which every country is clamouring to inscribe its monuments and stunning natural sights.

I am extremely proud that the World Heritage List includes the ancient cities of Tunis, Sousa and and Kairouan, the monuments of Carthage, Kerkuane, El Jem and Dougga and the Ichkeul lake.

It was this very programme that inspired my most important ideas about individuality and universality. It taught me that universality does not mean moulding civilization to fit a primarily Western model, but nurturing individuality to bring it to the peak of innovation, at which it earns the status of universality because all human beings admire it and see themselves in it. No one disputes the fact that the pyramids belong to the Egyptians, but they are such a magnificent landmark that they have earned the status of global human heritage.

We must teach people all over the world about this List so that Cambodian children feel that not only Angkor Wat belongs to them, but so do Machu Picchu, the Pyramids of Giza, the Great Wall of China and Great Zimbabwe.

We have a choice: do we want to nurture in every child a sense of belonging not only to a people, a State and a civilization, but to humanity as a whole?

If we genuinely want to build a fortress of peace in people's hearts and minds, then we must develop this sense of shared being.

We must neither be overwhelmed by the difficulties that we will face, nor should we be complacent about them.

Indeed, the task of setting education goals will long remain in the hands of States, within their national boundaries, both geographical and mental, and thus in the hands of capital, which cares nothing for education as long as it provides it with its raw materials, that is to say with skilled manual workers, technicians, researchers and administrators.

It is true that a large proportion of education today lies in the hands of those who own the media, who also want to get into people's hearts and minds to serve their own interests.

What is most difficult of all is that most education remains outside the control of any of the goals set and plans made by either us or them.

As I have always emphasized, a master is one who sets an example, not one who gives orders. As has been demonstrated throughout history, the men and women who lead by example are the ones who have left a lasting impression on history.

We have no control over the examples that are set by others; indeed, it is the powerful forces of the State, the media and capital that try to mould people's minds and invade their hearts. But we still hold out hope that those minds that do set a good example and guide us along the right path will also have a significant influence.

Fortunately, we learn more as each day passes. Fortunately, new generations bring fresh minds. Fortunately, there are organizations such as UNESCO that can provide support to us, the global defenders of rights and democracy, in our projects, organizations that share our view of education as an end in itself, not a means to an end.

Sometimes, when the storm clouds gather and the tremendous challenges ahead seem too much to bear, I remind myself of a saying that I use in times of difficulty: "It is foolish to want to change the world, but it is a crime not to try."

Therefore, we must not shy away from trying. In the words of our national poet and humanitarian Aboukacem Chebbi: "The night shall fade and the shackles shall break."

Algirdas Butkevicius

Prime Minister of Lithuania

13 years ago, in September 2000, Member States of the United Nations adopted 8 Millennium Development Goals. All of them were directly or indirectly associated with UNESCO, who indeed has significantly contributed to their implementation.

Therefore, on behalf of the Republic of Lithuania, I would like to congratulate UNESCO for its renowned actions on safeguarding cultural and natural heritage as well as for its fostering cultural expressions and diversity.

Lithuania welcomes initiatives on education and science, especially in areas of recent and still on-going conflicts. Through such actions, UNESCO continually “Builds peace in the minds of men and women” and successfully implements its main mission to enforce peace through the programmes on education, science, culture, communication, and information.

Although the Millennium Development Goals are, as it was correctly observed by UNESCO, an unfinished business, thanks to these goals and global platforms for cooperation the world has made an unprecedented collaborative progress. And it is of utmost importance to continue following a great example of this unifying agenda. Thus, we have two main tasks ahead of us: acceleration of the Millennium Development Goals' achievement, and strengthening development efforts beyond 2015.

Currently, our main task is to accelerate the Millennium Development Goals' achievement, which we cannot be sure of without a proper mobilization of all possible resources: public and private, domestic and international, and without using them in an innovative manner. The same rule applies for the future: we should commit more strongly to allocating sufficient resources, using them

innovatively, and setting a more efficient framework based on the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals' implementation period.

The recent financial crisis has perfectly illustrated the vulnerability of progress and sustainability. The Millennium Development Goals' agenda helped to lift millions of people out of extreme poverty. It brought millions of girls and boys into classrooms. Unfortunately, we have overlooked a new challenge – youth unemployment – which has reached record numbers, become a threat to the global development, and caused yearly losses of as much as 1.2% of the global GDP, or almost a trillion US dollars.

It is of absolute importance to assure that these young people do not become the “lost generation”. Therefore, tailoring a specific target to foster youth employability is crucial to ensure constant attention to this issue in the post-2015 agenda.

Ensuring equal access to education and high attainment levels remain one of the most important goals. Lithuania, although having good level of overall literacy, low drop-out rates, and high tertiary education attainment, strongly supports these goals.

However, stronger commitment has to be dedicated to improve the quality of education and to build dynamic education systems – systems that are capable of overcoming future challenges, and adjusting to provide everyone – from children to the elderly – with the skills needed for successful life and decent jobs.

Despite the financial crisis, in the European Union alone there are over 2 million vacant jobs that cannot be filled because of the skills mismatch. Qualitative education for all and the possibility to learn for the whole life are and will always remain one of the main conditions for the continuing and successful development of a person, society, and the world.

The future development agenda should be closely linked to science, technology, and innovation. Scientific and technological innovation should be adopted in practical use, incorporated in the traditional knowledge, and made widely accessible, while scientific research should be demand-led.

Therefore, strengthening the interface between science and policy communities, as well as ensuring full coherence and synergy with the existing national, regional, and global initiatives on research, development and innovation, are important tasks to undertake in the post-2015 agenda.

It is no less important to emphasize the vital role that communication and information play in scientific advance and in promoting sustainable development.

Culture is the area currently not reflected in the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, it is not only the main pillar of the person's inner development; it has also grown into a strong economic sector, generating income and creating jobs, as well as being responsible for a significant share of the GDP.

Culture has become a driver and an enabler to realize development goals: the creative economy plays an important role in the development of countries. Culture-led development ensures greater social inclusiveness, innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship for individuals and communities.

It is crucial for us to preserve our identity: our heritage, both tangible and intangible, for the future generations. It is also very important to foster cultural dialogue and diversity, not only to ensure the moral development of our countries, but also to maintain dialogue and peace between the diverse peoples of the world.

Thus, we support the call by the Hangzhou Declaration for the full integration of culture to be defined in the Post-2015 development agenda through clear goals, targets, and indicators.

Lithuania, as the current Presidency of the Council of the European Union, would like to highlight that the post-2015 framework should be based on the principles of equality and equity, democracy and good governance, the rule of law and accountability, and successful global partnerships.

It is hard to believe that today there are still communities, where people cannot express themselves freely, do not have the right to vote and decide on their future, and where they face abuse and violence.

Therefore, we would like to see the post-2015 agenda with a strong focus on peace and security, quality education for all, scientific innovations, culture, gender equality, and empowerment of women.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to repeatedly emphasize the commitment of the Republic of Lithuania to UNESCO. We have consistently shared the same view, which is written in the Constitution of UNESCO: that peace must be founded upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind, for it to be long lasting.

Let us create a better, smarter, more innovative, creative, and coherent future together.

Special addresses

Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al-Nahayan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development of the United Arab Emirates - on behalf of the President of the United Arab Emirates

It is my honour to convey to you all the greetings of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, and his best wishes for the success of the forum. His Highness very much appreciates the role of UNESCO in furthering cooperation and joint action in the fields of education, culture and science throughout the world.

This global forum for leaders reminds us of the great challenges the world is facing: the economy, environment and climate, water issues, food, energy, poverty, extremism and terrorism, international conflicts and demographic change. All of these require us to define the role of culture in confronting such issues and problems and to define the responsibility of UNESCO in employing culture to rationalize the phenomenon of globalization and close the gaps between countries in education, health, women's rights, new technology, access to information, and in regard to economic progress in general.

We in the United Arab Emirates are proud that our culture has, throughout history, provided us with an integrated system of ancient traditions and authentic values that form a suitable framework for our lives and support mutual understanding between us and the peoples of the world. Our culture in the UAE is a global culture that fosters our sense of human belonging and through which we affirm our proper place among the countries of the world.

As we survey the horizons of UNESCO's future activity, I believe that certain points, specifically concerning the role of culture and drawn from our experience in the UAE, are worth considering:

The first point is our firm conviction of the role of culture in encouraging successful interaction between civilizations and cultures, as well as building international relations on foundations of cooperation and coexistence and abandoning stereotypes. UNESCO must be concerned with making cultural activity around the world a means for openness between countries and regions so that each may get to know the history and civilization of the other and coexist together in peace, progress and harmony.

The second point is that the history of the United Arab Emirates underlines the country's reliance upon information and communication technologies (ICTs) as an important resource for successful cultural development. UNESCO now has the pivotal role of making judicious and enlightened use of ICTs in cultural activity accessible everywhere. One of our tasks at this Forum is to encourage close ties between the people of the world by means of modern technology and to work together to provide all the requirements essential to the success and continuation of these ties.

The third point is that we are all well aware of the strong mutual relationship between education and science on the one hand and culture on the other. Education and science reflect a society's cultural values. Indeed, by their very nature, schools, universities and research centres are cultural institutions that cannot work in isolation from the culture and make-up of society.

On the other hand, we must be aware that the close link between education and culture has acquired particular importance in the modern age, which demands continuous learning, much of which is now conducted in a non-formal manner outside schools and colleges and, within a framework of societal expectations and potentials, is closely linked to levels of cultural development in society.

The fourth point is that, in the light of all of the above, I call upon UNESCO to take the lead in ensuring the position of culture in the face of the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

I call upon UNESCO to be the conscience of the world and to make cultural action a tool to encourage the peaceful and development-oriented application of all aspects of science and technology.

I call upon UNESCO to help all countries safeguard their heritage and present their culture to the world. Culture and heritage undoubtedly offer scope for what we nowadays call “popular diplomacy”, which seeks to build trust, optimism and cooperation between all the countries of the world.

UNESCO has the important role of putting culture at the heart of human life and protecting cultural activity from the frequent pressures to marginalize it. UNESCO has a great opportunity to help all countries safeguard their heritage, encourage cultural exchange and support creativity and innovation in all the countries of the world.

In three weeks' time, we in the United Arab Emirates will celebrate the forty-second anniversary of the founding of the State. On this occasion, I would like to point out that the founder of the State, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, was known as “the wise man of the Arabs” and a leader blessed with foresight. He had a clear vision for the future of his country and of its place among the nations that stemmed from his national culture and practical experience of world affairs.

The world today is in urgent need of wisdom on the part of leaders and citizens alike. Wisdom is our path to economic prosperity and the spread of peace, justice and tolerance throughout the world. At this Forum, I call upon us to be wise and to affirm our support for UNESCO and its proud role in deepening the principles of hope, cooperation, stability and prosperity worldwide.

Once again, I express my delight at attending this Forum and extend my gratitude and appreciation to you all.

Mohammad Javad Zarif

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran

It is a distinct honor and pleasure to participate in this august Forum, and I wish to express my gratitude to the Director-General for her gracious invitation.

I am fully cognizant of the difficulty with attempting to provide a precise definition of culture, which is a complex and multidimensional concept. The same difficulty also applies to the concept of sustainable development. Looking at culture as a distinctive system of values, beliefs, traditions, norms, practices, customs, behaviors and manners as well as a compendium of spiritual material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group -which altogether shape and guide the social destiny of a nation- one can easily arrive at the inevitable nexus with the concept and field of sustainable development, which has been defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Culture serves as the constituent element in the social fabric, to promote, enhance and institutionalize social awareness and responsibility, and help produce socially and culturally conscious citizens. Their active and proactive participation in the cycle of social life can, and must, play a creative role in the processes, whose cumulative outcome and ultimate objective we call sustainable development. Culture, as understood and espoused even by ancient civilizations, and of course divine religions, also entails respect for, and responsibility towards, nature – which has been further enhanced and reinforced in more recent times by the growing awareness of the imperative of the protection of environment at both individual and collective levels. We have also come to appreciate the positive impact of culture, both tangible and intangible, on the much-cherished, albeit illusive, social cohesion and

stability in human society, which has come to be seen as a basic prerequisite for sustainable development.

We all concur that the post-2015 sustainable human development agenda must accord culture the pivotal role it deserves in order to ensure that development will have a humane face. To that end, we need to adopt innovative conducive cultural and culture-based approaches and devise appropriate new creative initiatives.

As stated in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001: "... cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature." The Declaration further goes on to consider culture as "one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence." This assertion accorded to cultural diversity to be one of the most important policy areas of sustainable development.

And now a word of caution as regards the downside of the discourse on culture, which concerns its abuse or misuse, not as a unifying element between and among different societies and communities, but rather as a divisive factor. The rather widespread use of violence and resort to force in different parts of the world in the name or under the guise of culture or cultural differences is a sad fact in our world these days. Erection of artificial boundaries between cultures and undue emphasis on cultural differences have in fact served to raise the walls of suspicion, mistrust, and eventual enmity between different communities and peoples. Politicization of cultural differences, with ulterior motives, is an alarming rising trend. A similar trend, with equally negative repercussions also applies to the realm of science and education. This calls for vigilance on the part of all of us, individually as well as collectively.

In his address to the United Nations general Assembly, President Rouhani proposed to collectively wage a campaign of "World Against Violence and Extremism" (WAVE), and invited all members of the international community to join this WAVE. He also emphasized the imperative of thinking about a "Coalition for Enduring Peace" all across the globe, instead of the ineffective "Coalitions for War" in various parts of the world. Emphasis on culture and

culture-based approaches to global challenges constitutes the critical central element of this new initiative. Only through a “Coalition for Enduring Peace” will we ever be able to overcome violence and extremism and move towards sustainable development. History and experience also tell us that only through dialogue, understanding and inclusive cooperation, solutions for common problems can be explored. The collective search for solving common problems of a global nature and at the global level should now embrace, much more than in the past, the contribution of culture, which entails attention to each and every culture and building on their common elements. Inter-cultural dialogue should be pursued in a manner to facilitate and promote cultural rapprochement, which would in turn lead to a “Synergy of Cultures”. Drawing on the earlier discussion on the nexus between culture and sustainable development, I believe that the “Synergy of Cultures” can be relied on to that end.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that UNESCO can – and should – play an effective role in promoting the indispensable role of culture in the heart of sustainable development. At a more specific level, the Organization is suitably situated to promote and elevate the status of culture and cultural activities and components in the post-2015 Development Agenda. According to its Constitution as well as its historic responsibility, UNESCO, as the house of culture and a laboratory of ideas should continue to provide an inclusive environment for the exchange of views, dialogue and interaction in its main fields of competence; notably culture, science, education and communication.

I have the pleasure of presenting to UNESCO a magnificent silk carpet entitled “Rapprochement of Cultures,” which has been created for UNESCO on the occasion of the launch of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures by Master Mohammad Jamshidi and his colleagues from Qom in Iran.

Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri

Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)

It gives me great pleasure to address you in the name of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) at this very important Leaders' Forum on Mobilizing for and Contributing to the post-2015 Development Agenda.

Many changes have befallen our world and have consequently affected different sectors: Science, media and information advancement, the widespread use of the internet and the rapid growth in communication have all blurred international borders and shortened distances between peoples, but have also influenced living styles, patterns of behavior and the cultural specificities of peoples.

Besides, globalization in its various aspects was not without considerable repercussions, not clearly perceived, both on international relations and on interactions between people from different religions, cultures and civilizations.

However, the response to the main challenges hindering the comprehensive development of peoples, through mutual support and cooperation as key to world peace, stability and coexistence, was far from instant.

The world today is riddled with painful wars and conflicts and is facing enormous difficulties to break free from old-fashioned, stereotypical perceptions fuelled by extremist rhetoric and racial bias. Ours is a world of hatred, of exclusion, of violence and terrorism and of racial discrimination; a world where peace and security are far off, a world of equal dignity for all peoples and cultures.

We are deeply concerned by the reluctance of the world community to work together to best address these and other problems hindering comprehensive

development, such as illiteracy, poverty, water pollution, communicable and endemic diseases, environmental risks, and disparities between communities, cultures and civilizations.

Indeed, delivering on these challenges is a collective duty requiring the combined effort of all cultures and civilizations, which can only be attained through consolidating the values of mutual respect, tolerance, openness, acknowledgment of cultural diversity and human solidarity.

ISESCO, standing as the cultural conscience of the Muslim world, believes that the values of human interaction, mutual understanding, tolerance, respect and cooperation, which all cultures and civilizations share, should be sublimated and instilled in the minds of all, as a common heritage of humanity, through genuine dialogue among cultures and civilizations, based on positive human interaction and the combined effort of all.

In an inclusive post-2015 agenda, it is therefore of the essence to build a more equitable and prosperous world, where all parties are involved in the noble mission to achieve dignity, security, justice and equity for people in the world. In this regard, I should like to emphasize that this initiative by UNESCO is highly commendable and praiseworthy. I would like to thank you for your attention and I wish full success to this Forum.

Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo,
President of the Constitutional Court
of the Gabonese Republic

First, I would like to thank you for inviting us to the 37th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, and in particular to speak at the Leaders' Forum, which this year focuses on the theme "UNESCO mobilizing for and contributing to the post-2015 agenda through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information".

My country, Gabon, is most honoured, as is the Constitutional Court and its President.

By involving us in this high-level discussion, you have given me the opportunity to commend you on the significant progress that has been made by your Organization towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

While undoubtedly much remains to be done, the initiative of convening this meeting reinforces our idea that UNESCO is determined, more than ever, to move forward. We shall accompany the Organization with determination, particularly since we have observed that the progress made has differed from one continent to another, with Africa getting the worst deal.

You will recall that for the period 2008-2013, UNESCO made Africa and gender equality its priorities in all of its fields of competence, a choice that doubly pleases me, as both an African and a woman.

You will therefore understand why I am inclined to plead in favour of a renewal of these priorities in the next action programme, since so much action still needs to be taken as the all-too famous "glass ceiling", to use a popular expression, remains particularly low in Africa.

It is clear, nonetheless, that several decades after its establishment, UNESCO's core mandate remains fully relevant and that other equally legitimate priorities need special treatment.

Addressing you in the wake of the noteworthy speeches made by the eminent persons who have preceded me, I am well aware of the difficulty of the task before me. Indeed, they have said almost everything there is to say and to perfection.

I believe, however, that two points deserve particular attention as regards the post-2015 agenda.

The first regards the relationship between culture, education and new technologies.

The second concerns building a legal system that is capable of supporting an educational and cultural system committed to excellence.

With regard to the first point, we are, I believe, at a watershed full of hope, but also fraught with risks of all kinds.

Indeed, new technologies currently offer our modern society untold possibilities for improving our capacities across the board in many areas, such as culture and education.

On this last point, for example, traditional education systems – where a teacher faces a group of pupils or students – should be reconsidered in the light of evolving information and communication technologies.

It seems unrealistic, today, to wish to build an education system that is as inclusive and efficient as possible, without integrating the vast potential of information highways and specifically Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC).

As you know, MOOC allow us to transmit the same lesson to thousands of students via a live broadcast as well as to organize assessments and discussion forums with teachers and lecturers and thus, at the end of the course, award a certificate.

The use of MOOC is therefore a response to the greatest challenge facing the education system: enabling the massification of teaching for an ever-growing public and surmounting the structural obstacle of a lack of premises and teachers.

How can it be otherwise for much longer in our States with the severe lack of infrastructure, chronic shortage of teachers and literacy rates that are still far too low?

The use of these procedures, like that of digital documentation, now seems inevitable if we wish to provide the greatest possible access to education and information.

Despite our willingness to adopt these technologies, the question arises as to how to reverse the process, when we are confronted with a steady rise in our young people.

As inevitable as these techniques may be, they must also be fully controlled and supervised in order to find the right balance with traditional teaching methods, which establish indispensable human relationships between teachers and learners. One model cannot simply replace another; the most successful possible combination must be found.

This is why, while fundamentally rethinking the roles of teachers and accompanying them in the process, it is important to ensure that mass access to knowledge does not lead to unification and standardization, which would be prejudicial to the pluralism of education systems and destructive of cultural models.

This need for pluralism in cultural and education matters leads me to an area that I know well, that of the law, which, I believe, should make a decisive contribution to building an efficient education system.

Concerning the second point – namely building a legal system that is capable of supporting an educational and cultural system committed to excellence – it is worth highlighting the fact that the educational and cultural question cannot remain in a formulaic logic limited purely to statements of intent; it

must fall firmly within public policy objectives and be anchored in national and international standard-setting instruments.

Beyond the increase in awareness, it is indispensable to create a set of coherent and stable standards that give a legal form to the right to education and culture and are capable of ensuring its effectiveness and binding nature.

We consider, first of all, that the simple constitutional recognition of a right to education and culture is not in itself sufficient. Admittedly, it has a symbolic and programmatic value, but above all the Constituent must underpin all of the components that will contribute, by their combination, to the effectiveness of this law. Once sufficiently precisely defined in its various elements, this law could then be usefully implemented first by legislators and then by judges.

Given the importance of this matter, it would be preferable for this set of rules to take the form of a coherent Charter, adapted to each State and incorporated into the Constitution. Such a set of standards could be based on a relevant document of this type, such as the World Declaration on Education for All adopted at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990.

The charter could thus, under the supervision of the constitutional judge, provide a framework for the action of elected government officials and all citizens, around which the right to education and culture could truly be built.

This normative framework is indispensable. It will essentially constitute duties incumbent upon the people and the political authorities and will only be effective through a proactive approach by the States, primarily, as well as the citizens, as the realization of a right to education is binding and particularly demanding.

Let us take, for example, the existing relationships between the rights to education, environmental rights and the right to sustainable development, currently enshrined in numerous Constitutions.

The right to sustainable development implies the search by our societies for a balance between economic and social development and sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of the environment. It is

our responsibility to transmit this natural heritage to future generations and affirm trans-generational solidarity.

Could we conceive the realization of this right without the right to education being fully and effectively affirmed? Building sustainable development requires research, innovation, information and an indispensable level of culture and education among the population.

Education for all is a fundamental right, at the very heart of development, requiring strong and sustained political commitment and an appropriate normative system.

However, conversely, the realization of the right to education calls just as well for the right to sustainable development and environmental rights.

One of the essential components of the right to education is certainly that it is realized in a healthy and safe environment, which, it is well known, contributes to the quality of learning and training.

In conclusion, I need not remind you that these subjects are fundamental. What is the point in universal suffrage if the electorate is unable to assess the scope of the right to vote? What is the point of the expression of national sovereignty if only a tiny proportion of the population has sufficient training to exercise that right? The final challenge is the success of the democratic process, which, in our view, can only really be asserted if a significant proportion of the population can have access to a certain level of education first.

The realization of these conditions, namely the right to education and the right to a healthy environment, constitute, in our opinion, the pillars of a sustainable democracy.

Muhyiddin bin Mohd Yassin

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of Malaysia

First and foremost, on behalf of Malaysia, kindly allow me to convey our warmest greetings and sincerest appreciation to all members of this auspicious Leaders' Forum.

Since the adoption of the six Education for All (EFA) goals and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000, commendable success has been attained across various fronts. In spite of this, we acknowledge that much needs to be done in light of recent data released by UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS) that include:

- i) 57 million children of primary school-age and 69 million children of lower secondary school-age currently do not have access to basic education;
- ii) 250 million children are still illiterate and have not acquired basic skills despite having had four years of formal schooling;
- iii) Over 84 % of the world's adults are now literate, but some 774 million adults remain illiterate of whom two-thirds are women. Most of the world's illiterate originate from the South and West Asia and the Sub-Saharan Africa regions; and
- iv) 3.5 million new secondary education positions will have to be established by 2015 and 1.6 million additional teachers will be required to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015;

Against this backdrop, Malaysia is confident that support will be forthcoming from this august Forum towards remedying the above-mentioned shortcomings. For this, UNESCO should further strengthen the role of education as well as contributions from the sciences, culture and communication and information,

in shaping the post-2015 development agenda. Chief among these includes demonstrating leadership throughout the EFA initiatives, finalization of its roadmap to ensure consistency towards its finalization by 2015, setting the agenda beyond 2015 and influencing high-level political will across Member States.

Malaysia strongly supports the call for a clear convergence, within the post-2015 global development agenda, between the six EFA goals (UNESCO) adopted in Dakar in 2000, and the education-related MDGs, including the Secretary General's "Global Education First Initiative" (GEFI) created in 2012. The consensus reached at the Global Consultation on Education held in Dakar in March 2013 for a new education goal, namely "equitable, quality education and lifelong learning for all" especially for girls and women is much lauded.

I am pleased to share Malaysia's attainment of the EFA and MDGs goals well ahead of the due date of 2015. In particular, success in the universal primary education enrolment ratios and completion rate as well as poverty eradication deserves special mention. In recognizing this, the United Nations had on 24th October 2013 bestowed upon Malaysia the UN Malaysia Award for achieving the Millennium Development Goal 2 – Achieving Universal Primary Education – and we are humbly grateful for this. The provision of infrastructure to ensure educational access for the rural poor was partly central to this success.

Whilst achieving this, Malaysia is cognizant of the fluid nature of developmental and growth demands, coupled with ever shifting benchmarks and increasing standards. We fully subscribe to all efforts in addressing and helping our fellow Member States in achieving their national objectives. Arguably, our challenge ahead is to deliberate on an appropriate post-2015 development framework for education which strikes a balance across two fronts; that is being in alignment with the mandates of UNESCO against that of priorities and needs among Member States.

In conclusion, Malaysia believes that the EFA agenda must not only be seen to work; it must work, for its benefits are far many. For this, I would like to state and call upon a more vigorous commitment and effort among us sitting here today for its full realization.

Hossam Issa

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Higher Education of the Arab Republic of Egypt

I would like to thank UNESCO for sponsoring the Leaders' Forum and for choosing a subject of enormous importance to discuss during the current session of conference, namely UNESCO mobilizing for and contributing to the post-2015 agenda through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information. Posing the subject of education and culture raises a pivotal issue. Education and science imply unity of thinking, the importance of thinking and specifically, the importance of critical thinking.

What our country needs at the very least is a comprehensive change from teaching methods based on indoctrination to education that lays stress on thinking – i.e. on liberty, as thinking and liberty are inseparable. Thinking and liberty mean that one does not impose on the pupil by indoctrination other political or ideological concepts inconsistent with the politics of the intellect, and that may, indeed, represent means of subjugation by the ruling classes, leaders or ideologies current in society.

There is a contradiction here and we must all work together to resolve it: how do we actually change from education based on indoctrination to participatory education in which there is partnership between teacher and student? When the revolutions of the Arab Spring broke out, they did so in the name of liberty, social justice, human dignity and democracy. "Liberty" meant more than political freedom and, by "social justice", people had in mind something more than part of the national income. The ability to work in society requires a different type of education, one that qualifies students and young people to enter the sphere of production. That is another issue in which UNESCO should take an interest.

Then there is the link between education, particularly technical education, and the system of production in the State. Most students receive an education but, because of the failure to give thought to matters, the prevalence of indoctrination or poor equipment, it has no theoretical value and, in most cases – particularly technical education – does not fully qualify the student to enter the labour and production market. Accordingly, I call upon UNESCO to accord considerable attention to technical education in the Arab countries and reform it in such a way as to establish a link with the production market and enable graduating students to find work.

In our case, this is not going to happen at all. There is yet another problem. Given the poverty of resources and increasing number of students aspiring to a university education, we have, in many cases, given up and are filling the universities with enormous numbers of anxious students without having the resources to admit them. This has resulted in the collapse of standards in the universities. It will only be possible to address this problem by means of another type of education – one that is open and based on genuine foundations. Unfortunately, however, the open education that I know – at least in my country – is largely inadequate and does not qualify students for anything much. UNESCO's problem here is how to help us to overcome these difficulties.

Another extremely important matter is that, given the dearth of resources, especially in the field of scientific research, we must try to avoid duplication of research and we must establish links with research facilities not only within the country but also at continental level and, perhaps, internationally. We should link our research institutions together, for example in Africa, in order to avoid repetition of the same research and save the resources being lost due to such duplication. We would then be able to move forwards. Weaker centres could be linked to stronger ones and receive fresh impetus. UNESCO ought to assist us in this task.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that UNESCO has an effective role to play in many other areas, foremost among these being the reshaping of the role of culture in development, concern with alternative and renewable sources of energy and finding better ways of joint transboundary water management

to achieve sustainable development, secure peace and prevent conflict. The reshaping of the role of culture and linking it to science will create a new culture with emphasis on knowledge, citizenship and the unity of mankind.

Unity of thinking means the unity of mankind. Had we only believed in that, we would not have witnessed many of the phenomena that have swept through the Arab countries, including my own, in recent years. These have included conflicts based on religion or another factor and have broken the bond of citizenship. In my country, many churches have been set alight and antiquities have been looted. This makes it impossible to build the national culture necessary to create a scientific system.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Executive Director of UN Women

VIDEO MESSAGE

Thanks to you all. I am Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of UN Women.

Education opened our eyes to possibilities, but for me these possibilities also brought responsibilities; the responsibility to pave the way for the next generation. Education provides the foundation for sustainable democracy, peace and development.

rtner and sister, Ms Irina Bokova. Irina, thank you for bringing us together and thank you for your tireless efforts working towards Education for All.

I cannot stress enough the importance of girls and women's education as the key building block for women's empowerment and for nation building. This is why the collaboration between UN women and UNESCO is such a sine qua non and so critical in achieving gender equality.

All of us are looking ahead to how we can accelerate the achievement of the MDGs and shape the post-2015 development framework.

We must ensure a stand-alone goal on gender equality, and we must ensure that education figures centrally, both as a right in itself and as an enabler of wider progress.

Universal quality and gendered public education - let us work together to achieve this.

Let us work together to achieve education for all.

I send you my best wishes for a successful Forum and I thank you.

Introduction to the debate

Shashi Tharoor

Minister of State for Human Resource
Development of India

It is a privilege to be asked to introduce the Ministerial debate today. I think our Director-General really asked the right question at the very beginning this morning: What kind of world do we want to live in? That is ultimately what this Forum is going to have to address.

2015 is almost upon us. I remember, from my days as a UN official, the heady days back in 2000 of the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals. Some of them have actually been fulfilled; in others, the progress has been uneven. But the time is already upon us now to think beyond 2015. There is increasing talk already of Sustainable Development Goals to complement the Millennium Development Goals.

But what we hope to have today from all of you leaders in this Forum is actually a vision. A vision of a goal beyond the mere substitution of one acronym for another – of going from MDGs to SDGs. It is extremely important, as we look forward, to learn from our successes and failures, and figure out how we can do better than we have. Because there is no doubt that we will reach 2015 with an unfinished agenda. The Millennium Development Goals will not all have been met everywhere. And I think it is extremely important to emphasize as well that the key word in this unfinished agenda is that word in the middle there, the word “development”. Development is ultimately what this discussion is all about.

But as we ask that question of the Director-General's, what kind of world do we want to live in? We also have to ask another more uncomfortable question. At a time when we all speak of the galloping forces of change, there is a question we need to face: how has the world not changed? What development has

not occurred sufficiently in these last 15 years, to allow us to speak about a paradigm shift?

Sadly, poverty still persists across the developing world. Inequality still continues, within and between nations. So as we look beyond 2015, it is incumbent on all of us to grasp this particular nettle. As an Indian, inevitably, I am tempted to quote Mahatma Gandhi: *"we must be the change we wish to see in the world"*, the Mahatma used to say, and there, I think, is a task for all of us, to be the change.

Turning to UNESCO's specific mandate, education is obviously the key. My catechism as an education minister – and I apologize to the interpreters in advance – focuses around four E's in the English language. The first E is Expansion – expansion of Education. We achieved Independence with just 17% literacy, only 8.9% of our women could read and write, we had just 26 Universities in the entire country, 400,000 students in higher education in the whole country. Today, the transformation has been quite dramatic, we've gone from 17% to 74% literacy, women going to 66%; we've gone from those 26 Universities to close to 700 Universities, from the 690 colleges in those days to 35,000 colleges today, and from 400,000 students to 20 million in higher education. We have over a million, in fact 1.4 million, schools, some 239 million children enrolled in school; our Government delivers 110 million mid-day meals every day to children. So, expansion has been vital.

The second E is that of equity, reaching the unreached, including the excluded – people left out of education because of their gender, because of distance, caste, religion, language.

In the process of fulfilling these 2 E's, we have perhaps not paid enough attention to the 3rd E, excellence. The quality of our education has been uneven, a common phenomenon in many countries. We face the challenge of ensuring that we do not just have a few islands of excellence floating on a sea of mediocrity – that we improve quality throughout the system. And the fourth E, which I have added quite recently to this catechism, is the E of employability.

I mention this list simply because these are problems faced by many developing countries, and we all need the answers. How do we actually get our young people in many, perhaps in most, of our developing countries, educated and trained to cope with the demographic bulge? In India, 65% of our population is under 35; we have over 600 million people under 25. How do we equip them for employment in tomorrow's world? To do so, of course, we need not just education in the classic sense, but also technical education and vocational training, which have already been alluded to by some of the speakers.

If we get it right, we will have transformed the world, not just our own country, with young people trained, educated, equipped to take advantage of the opportunities of the 21st century. But if we get it wrong, we, I am afraid, face a demographic disaster – because in most developing countries nothing is more dangerous than having legions of unemployed, uneducated, frustrated, unemployable young men.

So, for all of us across the world, education has to be a major national priority, both to seize the opportunities, to obtain a demographic dividend, and to prevent the opposite, a demographic disaster.

When we speak of vocational education, we need to emphasize responsiveness to the demands of industry in the modern era, as well as responsiveness to the needs of learners. Where India speaks of skilling 500 million people in a decade from now, and if we add all those in other countries around the world, we can see what a challenge the globe faces.

So much for Education. Science, Culture and Communication are fundamental aspects of UNESCO's mandate. Development, of course, requires science, technology and innovation; these were largely ignored in the MDGs of 2000. In fact, the Swiss novelist Max Frisch once wrote, "Technology is the art of arranging the world so that we need not experience it". I have to say, even though I am a writer, that I disagree with Mr. Frisch. Because technology has become central to our experience of the world of the 21st century. In this information era, communications technology in particular is key to development. The only way we can leapfrog the obstacles to human progress is by equipping people with technology.

And yet we know how difficult access is for everyone. We know what an enormous amount of challenges we face with the digital divide. The era of the Information Revolution is very unlike the French Revolution, because we seem to have a lot of liberty, only some fraternity and no equality. And that is why the need for more technology transfer, for example, becomes vital. Science: we speak too little about science. Science without culture would be for robots and machines. Culture is what makes science and technology human. And if we are to speak of sustainability, then clearly we need both creativity and science to go together.

And finally, of course, the question of the scope for global partnership must engage us today. We have to acknowledge that there has been widespread disappointment with regard to the fulfillment of Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals. How can we engage the developed and the developing countries together in the quest for the world beyond 2015? How can we engage the rich in the solidarity of the poor? How do we manage to use this forum to come up with constructive ideas?

Our good President, Mr. Hao Ping, mentioned five functions of UNESCO which in many ways, I think, set up the challenge for our entire Leaders' Forum: UNESCO as a laboratory of ideas, as a standard setter, as a clearing house, as a capacity-builder and as a catalyst of international cooperation.

Today's discussion should see evidence of international cooperation. It should generate ideas, should allow us to share experiences with other countries (which would help this Forum serve as a clearing house today to guide us forward), should help us define standards for the world beyond 2015, and should point the way to building capacity where it does not exist, including through the transfer of technology and the development of infrastructure in the developing world.

With all of this we could have a clear road map beyond 2015. And I, for one, along with my co-moderator, look forward to a rich and productive discussion, that will perhaps fulfill each of these five functions that the President of the General Conference has highlighted, and at the same time show us the way for our future work in the years to come.

SUMMARY OF THE DEBATE



On Wednesday, 6 November 2013, the 37th session of the General Conference hosted the Leaders' Forum on the theme "UNESCO mobilizing for and contributing to the post-2015 agenda through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information". With the active participation of three Heads of State and Government as well as Ministers from 54 Member States, a rich and vivid debate was moderated by Mr Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for Human Resource Development of India and Mr Stephen Cole, Senior Presenter Al Jazeera English, Doha and London. The purpose was to reenergize the commitment that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had created from 2000 onwards among governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, and to share a vision for the emerging post-2015 development agenda as well as for UNESCO's role therein.

Throughout the debate, world leaders shared their views on how to attain lasting peace and sustainable development in a world of uncertainty and complex challenges that ever more transcend borders. They were convinced that the path to the future had to espouse the trail set by the MDGs and the UNESCO-led Education for All (EFA) goals. These international agendas have succeeded in creating an unprecedentedly broad awareness in all countries. Progress has been made against poverty, disease, ignorance and inequality. But much remains to be done: the lives of millions and millions of women and men, girls and boys, are still trapped in inhuman conditions. To improve those hundreds of millions of lives, the international community will have to reinforce its commitment to sustainable and equitable development, which extends much beyond the remit of economic or even environmental policies. There is a collective responsibility to invent new approaches and address the needs of people living in poverty or on the margins of society. Success in this regard called for people-centred, innovation-prone policies and programmes so as to empower individuals and communities with the capacity to not only adapt to change but also, as was quoted from Mahatma Gandhi, *"be the change that they wish to see in the world."*

Education must be a key objective in the next global agenda. Mr Muhyiddin bin Mohd Yassin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of Malaysia, considers that the prime challenge ahead is to deliberate on an appropriate

post-2015 development framework for education which strikes a balance between universal goals formulated at the global level and national targets identified and implemented by individual countries. We must first of all increase the work towards eliminating illiteracy. But it is also imperative to bear in mind that education is a preparation to participate in the life of a community. Mr Moncef Marzouki, President of Tunisia, insisted on the importance of enabling people, especially youth, to find decent work as citizens in a world of complexity and diversity. Education must in that sense foster creativity, technical and vocational education and training, critical thinking, digital skills as well as tolerance and openness to other cultures.

The awareness of culture as a lever of development was another key element in the discussions. Indeed, in the words of the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Irina Bokova, culture is the foundation of the future. Sustainable development can happen only if it is embedded in the cultural experience of people. This very experience is a source of identity, prosperity and social harmony. UNESCO will have to promote the positive forces of culture. But, as stressed by Mr Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al-Nahayan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), speaking for the President of UAE, its role will also be to prevent the politicization of culture as a means to oppose nations and to spread conflict and terror. In turn, Mr Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that, in an age of unprecedented interdependence, it is only through mutual understanding that problems could be solved, which required governments and civil society to commit to an intensification of intercultural dialogue leading to a rapprochement, and eventually to a synergy, of cultures.

In this respect, the international community was called upon to seriously reflect on the need for a new social contract, which would address ethical challenges, and which would include a contract with nature, as advocated by Ms Laura Chinchilla, President of the Republic of Costa Rica. To her and other discussants, it was more than urgent to achieve harmony among people and with nature. This is the essence of sustainable development, which must involve renewed action with respect to climate change, biodiversity losses or oceanic degradations. Mr Algirdas Butkevicius, Prime Minister of the Republic

of Lithuania stressed that the post-2015 agenda must provide for synergies between science, policy and society. Drawing on its multidisciplinary mandate, UNESCO should thus foster sustainable development by creating or reinforcing bridges across its different fields of competence, including, as suggested by Mr Hossam Issa, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Higher Education of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the linkages between culture and science. Likewise, Ms Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo, President of the Constitutional Court of Gabona, underlined the feedback between culture, education and healthy environments, and called for an explicit recognition of such linkages in national constitutional texts.

As a contribution to the global debate on how best to steer humanity towards more efficient and human modes of development, the Leaders' Forum has been an opportunity for decision-makers to look forward, to learn from past successes and failures, and figure out how governments, intergovernmental organizations as well as civil society and individuals can act together for a sustainable world. Broadening the scope for global partnerships will be key to engage the developed and the developing countries as well as all stakeholders together in the quest for lasting peace and shared prosperity beyond 2015.

→ **The Millennium Development Goals: An unfinished business**

What world do we want to live in? This question lies at the heart of the Millennium Declaration and it has sparked action across the globe to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to realize Education for All (EFA). All these efforts have been inspired by a humanist vision of a more just and equitable world for all.

The strength of the MDGs was their simple and results-based design. They were a success because they provided a common framework for action as well as measurability and accountability, which allowed different stakeholders of development to coordinate their actions to fight poverty and its root causes, notably with respect to health, water, education and gender equality.

While vast progress has been achieved – especially regarding poverty reduction – it has been both insufficient and uneven. Clearly, the MDGs remain an unfinished business. The first imperative is to accelerate the achievement of the

MDGs and to define a broader post-2015 development agenda addressing new and emerging issues, in particular with respect to environmental challenges and to inequalities between and within countries.

While change cannot be stopped, it can be shaped according to shared values. Human dignity, commitment to women's empowerment, and living together in peace are primordial among these values. On this basis, it is possible to create a better, smarter, more innovative, creative future together. The future starts here and now – this message was echoed in all interventions.

→ **A rapidly changing and increasingly complex global landscape**

The international community is faced with a growingly complex set of challenges. For example, the legitimate quest for prosperity of developing and emerging countries puts to test the capacity of our planet to absorb the environmental impact of unfettered growth and unsustainable consumption patterns, which are a threat to our common future. Climate change is accelerating, with carbon emissions estimated to reach a high of forty thousand million tons by 2020. Biodiversity losses, water shortages, desertification and ocean degradation are increasing. The population dynamics place further strain on the environment – an environment that we are responsible for, not the reverse. Humanity stands at a tipping point in its history.

On the other hand, freezing economies and declaring a zero-growth rate would inevitably plunge the world into a crisis of catastrophic consequence for individuals and societies. The recent interrelated financial and economic crises had been a powerful illustration of this and a demonstration that new approaches to development must urgently be identified.

Despite noted successes in a number of countries over the past decade, extreme poverty, notably in Africa, and inequalities between and within countries are expected to remain a serious concern. We must collectively strive to reduce these inequalities if sustainable development is to be realized. Youth unemployment is reaching record numbers – a global phenomenon which is threatening the aspirations of an entire generation at risk of being turned into a “lost generation”.

The increased interconnectedness of nations and societies brought about by globalization and advances in information and communications technologies (ICTs) has not necessarily translated into greater mutual understanding. The world is still marred by painful wars and conflicts, as well as the rise of extremism and violence. Global peace and security seem a distant dream.

Yet, the benefits of these technologies remain unequally distributed. If put to good use, such technologies have the potential to foster freedom and equality. Technology gaps and related knowledge divides continue to persist within countries and among regions, and afflict excluded and marginalized groups. In a globalized world, knowledge, innovation and creativity have become more and more important for finding solutions to global challenges and as a driver of economic growth and prosperity.

→ **A post-2015 world of sustainability, equity, dignity, solidarity and peace**

In line with the discussions held throughout the international community and the United Nations system in particular, the post-2015 development agenda should put peace, sustainability and people-centred action at its core. It should inspire and guide initiatives and programmes based on the principles of equality, equity, solidarity, democratic participation and good governance, measurability and accountability. In order to be truly transformative, this agenda should be universal in scope, embracing the situations and responsibilities specific to each region of the world, and address the rights of individuals, women and men alike. The calls for dignity and freedom, especially from among the youth, that were echoed during the uprisings in the Middle East, demonstrate even further the crucial ethical, political, social and economic importance of human rights. The global development agenda for the coming decades should focus on what is most urgent – the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequalities, notably with respect to gender and youth, and dignity with solidarity.

The next global agenda should thus carry a vision for real change – not a simple substitution of acronyms. Any development intervention should have at its core the lasting and long-term improvement of the well-being of its

intended beneficiaries. It is imperative to respond to the needs of societies and a planet under pressure.

It is indispensable to acknowledge and implement sustainable development as a complex comprehensive concept integrating economic, environmental and societal norms but also the cultural, ethical and spiritual values that shape the destiny of local communities, nations as well as humanity as a whole.

The international community has the responsibility to envision and forge a new social contract that would include a contract with nature, with a view to fully integrating peace, security and good governance in the post-2015 global agenda. Indeed, development cannot be sustainable if it does not contribute to the promotion of peace as well as the prevention and resolution of conflicts through the rule of law and the international legal system.

---UNESCO is a “testimony of faith in the human being”. The complex challenges of today’s world require multifaceted responses and solutions. UNESCO, with its interdisciplinary mandate and approach, is uniquely positioned to contribute to the development of such responses. It is hence time to reaffirm UNESCO’s mandate with energy and conviction, providing also the necessary resources for strong and effective action in its fields of competence: sustainable development cannot be realized without large-scale investments in education, the sciences, culture and communication and information. UNESCO’s multidisciplinary mandate is a key asset and a unique platform for developing the necessary approaches to holistic sustainable development. Creating synergies and new connections between disciplines will be key, so as to build bridges between development and culture, education and democracy, jobs and creativity, sustainability and shared knowledge.

One lesson drawn from the successes and limitations of the MDGs is that sustainable and equitable development cannot rest solely on economic policies. We need people-centred development approaches driven by humanist ideals, and through which all people can be equipped with tools to help them realize their full potential. Culture, but also education, the sciences, communication and information are essential components of such an approach.

UNESCO has much to contribute to the post-2015 processes through its five interrelated functions as a laboratory for ideas, standard-setter, clearing house, capacity builder and a catalyst for international cooperation. Indeed, in a growingly interconnected world, where for example farmers from remote places across the globe can access services through mobile devices, scientific, intellectual and cultural cooperation should foster the sharing of knowledge and the generation of innovative ideas. Such cooperation should allow individuals, communities as well as governments and international organizations to share experiences and information based on clear evidence and data about development policies, practices, methods and results.

→ **Gender equality and women's empowerment must be a transversal priority**

Inequalities based on gender are still one of the most persistent and difficult-to-tackle forms of inequality. Women and girls worldwide are still disadvantaged and hindered from developing their full potential, which is a violation of their human rights as well as a serious obstacle for sustainable and inclusive social and individual development. However, development cannot be attained if women are ignored. Gender equality and women's empowerment must be a transversal priority in the post-2015 development agenda, as well as a stand-alone goal. For UNESCO, the focus on gender equality implies a strong focus on education for girls and women, including by tackling the high illiteracy rates among women. Science, technology and innovation are another accelerator of sustainable development. More scientists and in particular women scientists are needed, especially in Africa. Culture and creative industries provide another lever to empowering women. In the world we want for the post-2015 period, all people, irrespective of their gender, are endowed with the capacity to pursue their aspiration and to participate fully in the societal and cultural life. In addition to establishing a level playing field, we need to ensure that the glass ceiling – having held back women and girls for too long – will disappear.

→ **The collective responsibility to meet the aspirations of youth**

Since sustainable development implies to meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet

their needs, youth must be a central concern of the next development agenda. Young people are the future of humanity – yet all too often, their aspirations are stifled by unemployment, lack of opportunity, and exclusion from decisions that impact their lives. UNESCO's action needs to tackle this injustice, including through dedicated interventions in the areas of skills development and technical vocational education and training, as well as science, technology and innovation. Collective action for a better future will have to take into account the voices and priorities of youth through more participatory forms of consultation and governance. It was suggested that UNESCO through its diverse action should strive to build a bridge for youth.

→ Priority action against inequalities

Any sustainable development agenda will have to be judged against how the situation of the poorest, most disadvantaged and left behind has improved. This concerns inequalities between as well as within countries, including rich countries, an issue that should be addressed if the development agenda is to be truly universal in scope. Much more than the MDGs, the future post-2015 development agenda has to aim at the reduction of inequalities and the promotion of social inclusion. This necessitates actively tackling the causes of marginalization and exclusion. Education has a unique potential for narrowing inequalities; and without ensuring equitable access to quality education the marginalization of disadvantaged groups will persist further. In many countries the educational needs of disabled children and youth are simply not met. Such objectives as universal primary education or compulsory education cannot be attained if schools do not accommodate the needs of all students, including nutrition, sanitation and dispositions for disabled people. In many countries, the latter have few, if any, access to adapted infrastructures and pedagogical materials. With respect to leveling the playing field for all the groups of societies, UNESCO should increase its multidisciplinary programmes fostering access to knowledge and information, notable by promoting ambitious policies in the fields of ICT, science education and cultural development.

→ **Equitable quality education is central to poverty eradication and sustainable development**

Education is a fundamental human right. It is constitutive to sustainable development, poverty reduction, democracy and peace. While there has been progress in enrolment since 2000, 57 million children still are out of school today. Two thirds of the adult illiterates are women.

Education is not only a goal in itself but instrumental to achieve other development goals. As such it needs to be at the core of the future development agenda.

There are several imperatives for education in the post-2015 development agenda. First and foremost there needs to be a focus on equity and quality in education. The imperative of equitable access to quality education shall go beyond primary education. Language should not be a barrier to receiving quality education. Education policies and strategies should be equitable and inclusive so as to reach the marginalized, including children with disabilities, and to ensure that the education system as a whole is able to accommodate the needs of all students. Gender equality necessitates continued attention with a special focus on access to education for women and girls. Education goals must also take into account men and boys as they fall behind in education achievement in some countries. Lifelong learning, including non-formal and informal education, shall be a guiding principle.

Youth and adult literacy have to be enhanced. Literacy is a fundamental right and monitor for development. Besides traditional forms of illiteracy, new forms of illiteracy are emerging with respect to new technologies, which could represent a serious barrier to the access of the job market in the future. More generally, education systems should pay increased attention to skills for life and work. In that regard, the employability of youth is becoming an increasing challenge. The perception of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a second-rate education among students, teachers and parents needs to be changed. A TVET system, which is responsive to the needs of learners and industry, is especially crucial to train craftspeople and technicians and to foster entrepreneurship and creativity.

Other key issues must be addressed. For instance, the quality of education will depend on teachers – both the quality of teacher training and the number of teachers, which remains insufficient in many developing countries. Early childhood care and education as the foundation of learning needs to be enhanced. Education for sustainable development (ESD) is bound to play an essential role in the very implementation of the next global agenda. UNESCO has a special responsibility to highlight the feedback loops that exist between the right to education, the right to a healthy environment and education for sustainable development.

Raising the awareness of students on the challenges that humanity faces across borders will become an important aspect of education, which, beyond literacy, numeracy and learning outcomes, should also be a global citizenship education. Education is essential to democracy understood as a set of attitudes and behaviours rather than a mere series of formal procedures. Elections alone do not equal democracy. The value of electoral processes is in question if voters do not have the capacity to appreciate the consequences of exercising this right. National sovereignty is vain if only a small part of the population has the information necessary to exercise it. Education must be for democracy not only about it. Education is crucial to form citizens who can assume a responsible, conscious and active role in society. We need to respect the intellectual sovereignty and autonomy of students and teach them how to think critically and creatively and to provide them with leadership skills. Global citizenship education also needs to be based on promoting mutual understanding, combating corruption, democratizing the use of new technologies, teaching and learning about history, cultures of other nations as well as religions, and the United Nations system itself.

The way education is delivered has undergone fundamental changes with the introduction of ICTs. Education systems should draw further on the potential of ICTs and Open Education Resources (OERs). ICTs offer a huge opportunity to significantly increase the access to education. At the same time mass access to knowledge and information should not lead to standardization and unification. Education systems need to remain pluralistic. ICTs can innovate teaching methods, but new technologies alone are not enough.

Education must be based on ethics, aesthetics and citizenship. Education is a global public good. It should be compulsory and free, and serve the interest of the individual and his or her development. Education systems must thus strike a balance between the requirements of the market and the state, on the one hand, and the aspirations of individuals and communities on the other hand. The right to education cannot remain a mere declaration of intentions. It must be incorporated in constitutionally binding documents with the aim of providing guidance for the elaboration and evaluation of educational policies. In so far as sustainable development entails an intergenerational solidarity as well as imperative to innovate and to inform, it cannot be achieved without a duty to educate the present and future generations and to transmit them their intellectual, scientific and cultural heritages as well as the tools to cope with change.

All this calls for a new goal on education in the spirit of the Global Thematic Consultation on Education for Post-2015, which has recommended a goal on “Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All”.

An education goal should also be complemented by targets for specific following thematic priorities: youth and adult literacy, skills for life and work, teachers, early childhood care and education, education for sustainable development and for global citizenship.

UNESCO must ascertain its leadership in education and continue to promote a holistic vision of education in the post-2015 development agenda.

→ **Culture as a driver and an enabler for sustainable development**

Culture is a driver and an enabler for sustainable development and as such should be a pillar of the post-2015 development agenda. Today, the creative economy plays an increasingly important role in the development of countries. Culture-led development ensures greater social inclusiveness, innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. In turn, sound economic investments require a solid knowledge of local cultures. It is crucial for the resilience of communities to preserve heritage, both tangible and intangible, for the present and the future generations.

However, despite growing evidence, the role of culture as an accelerator for positive change had long been largely forgotten or minimized, notably within the MDGs adopted in 2000. The tendency to frame development solely in economic terms, and not as a combination of economic, environmental and social factors was as a limiting factor of the traditional development models, which often ignored culture in the name of a so-called modernity. Culture is not a mere path to economic benefits, but rather the core factor around which economic and environmental sustainability are built. Failing to understand human development holistically leads to ignorance of the fact that the context of peoples' lives is inseparable from their cultures. Without cultural contextualization, it will prove impossible to achieve education for all, or poverty eradication in general. Culture is the key with which to promote holistic human and sustainable development. The 2013 Hangzhou Declaration *Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies* called for the full integration of culture in the Post-2015 development agenda through clear goals, targets, and indicators. This demonstrates that, thanks in part to the efforts of UNESCO, the international development community has finally begun to recognize the limitations of imposing a single development model on different cultures, and has started to make progress towards integrating culture in development policies.

UNESCO should promote respect for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as a foundation for peace. Culture can be misused as a political divider and a pretext to fuel violence among communities and nations. Such risk of politicization call for individual as well as collective vigilance. World heritage cultural sites should be used to teach both about the universality of human creativity and the diversity of cultures, in line with the principles formulated in the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. UNESCO should also make an effort to promote an open and tolerant understanding of world history, bearing in mind the relevance of its pedagogical use. If culture has the power to reinforce identities, it can also be a means to foster cooperation among nations, communities, and civilizations. UNESCO should spare no efforts in opening these doors between nations and in helping countries and communities to break free from stereotypical challenges. UNESCO should also launch, in the context of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of

Cultures (2013-2022), a world campaign against violence and extremism, and should help to forge a coalition for enduring peace worldwide at all levels with the aim to counter terrorism, extremism and violence, including also at schools. In conclusion, UNESCO should continue to advocate for the integration of culture for development in the post-2015 development agenda.

→ **The sciences – an accelerator for poverty eradication and sustainable development**

Despite their key role for advancing sustainable development and poverty eradication, science, technology and innovation (STI) did not receive sufficient attention in the MDGs. STI are key for addressing the complex challenges of sustainability and building a better future for all, which ought to be prominently reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

While science and technology have become central to our experience of the world, millions of people still cannot access their benefits. To make full use of STI we must strengthen human and institutional STI capacities, ensure that STI and knowledge are made accessible for everyone and are adaptable for practical uses. STI shall tap into the rich resources of indigenous and traditional knowledge. Technology transfer and scientific cooperation are also a key element for building human solidarity. Best practices on STI need to be shared and cooperation between scientific centers of developed countries and developing countries must be promoted, as well as synergies and coherence between the existing national, regional, and global initiatives on research, development, and innovation.

Governments and the private sector should commit to invest massively in the development of green economies and societies conducive to sustainable modes of production and consumption. This presupposes STI policies that promote green technologies and renewable energy as well as appropriate skills development for the youth, driven by Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

We need a “pact with nature”, we need stronger sciences for sustainable development. This calls for the promotion of sustainability science, by which the full range of the natural, social and human sciences are mobilized to

address complex challenges requiring multidisciplinary responses. It also calls for cooperation in ocean science, for sustainable water management and water security, climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation.

Likewise, a new social contract is needed, addressing ethical challenges and fostering the rapprochement of cultures. The social and human sciences need to be mobilized with respect to a deeper understanding and more rigorous analysis of one of the major challenges of our time across all countries, namely to steer social transformations in such a way that social inclusion is achieved. Inclusion should be understood as a cross cutting element in the post-2015 agenda so to reduce the gap between poverty and prosperity. It is of importance for governments, international actors and civil society at large to define a minimum threshold of well-being and integrate inclusiveness into policies with respect to the poorest groups, women, youth, migrants, indigenous communities or disabled people.

A strengthened science-policy-society interface should to be an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda.

→ **Communication and information are vital for promoting sustainable development and democracy**

Promoting freedom of expression, including free and independent media, both offline and online, is indispensable for flourishing democracies and to help citizens better participate in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of development policies. Recognizing the driving role that information and communication technologies (ICTs) play in building knowledge societies, and in bridging the knowledge divide it is imperative to ensure their adequate integration into the future development agenda. In the current hyper-information era, ICTs are key to development and while there is a lot of liberty in their use, there is only some solidarity, and no equality. Access to ICTs remains elusive for millions of people – often those who need them the most. The digital divide as well as the capacity to effectively use information and technology should figure high in the post-2015 development agenda.

→ Sparking concrete change for the post-2015 period

Obviously, there is a discrepancy between the importance of UNESCO's mandate and the palpable lack of financial resources. Amounting only to US \$0.45 per person on earth, UNESCO's budget was seen as patently insufficient. Such a meagre investment in peace should be compared to the cost of war and its disastrous consequences. Resources would more profitably be driven to education and development budgets for a more humanist vision of a peaceful world. In a period when the budget of UNESCO is severely diminished, efforts should be made to secure a more adequate level of resources – while also exploring new strategic directions and effective synergies in its fields of competence. UNESCO will have to forge strong partnerships both within the United Nations system and with its wider networks from civil society, National Commissions, school networks, academia, professional groups and the private sector. Moving forward in a collaborative and coordinated fashion with partners can provide a multiplier effect on the Organization's limited resources.

Basing its action on such partnerships, spanning from the global to the local, UNESCO would be better positioned in the post-2015 period to achieve solidarity among people, cultures and nations. In this vein, Member States should consider using even more their National Commissions for UNESCO and strengthen their contribution to delivery of the Organization's programmes, activities and policies at country-level, in particular in to the preparations of the post-2015 development agenda – with the goal of creating an effective and meaningful UNESCO presence in each country, extending the reach, scope and impact of the Organization, and bringing additional clout within the United Nations system to advocate for education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information in the pursuit of the post-2015 development goals.

Creating synergies and connections was a recurring theme in the discussions held at the Leaders' Forum. Bridges have to be built between development and culture, education and democracy, science and education, science and culture, jobs and creativity, sustainability and shared knowledge. UNESCO was considered as being uniquely placed for multidisciplinary and intersectoral approaches. What emerged from the debate is a vision where poverty and

exclusion can be effectively tackled by actions fostering dignity and equality, especially with respect to women and youth and upholding cultural diversity. UNESCO should contribute proactively to the debates among governments and international organizations on the path to the post-2015 global development agenda in the areas of education, sciences, culture and communication and information.

For the post-2015 development agenda, UNESCO should inter alia advocate for:

- Equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all;
- Culture as a driver and enabler for sustainable development;
- Sciences as an accelerator for poverty eradication and sustainable development, including by focusing on the ocean, water and biodiversity;
- Promoting freedom of expression and ICTs for sustainable development and democracy.

CLOSING REMARKS



Hao Ping

President of the 37th Session of the UNESCO General Conference

Allow me first to congratulate all the participants in this session of the Leaders' Forum especially the Heads of State and Governments, who were present to launch the debates with inspiring and thought provocative speeches.

As you all recognized, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education For All (EFA) goals succeeded in catalyzing a global humanist awareness in all countries, among Governments as well as civil society. Peace, prosperity and harmony cannot be attained without efforts to address the needs of people living in poverty or in the margins of society. Progress was made. But much remains to be done.

One lesson you draw from the successes and limitations of the MDGs is that sustainable and equitable development cannot rest solely on economic policies; it calls for approaches that put humans at the centre. It calls for new models through which people can be equipped with the tools that help them develop their own potential for creativity and dialogue.

In the debate, many Ministers deepened all these leading thoughts on how to best promote sustainable development and lasting peace through a truly global development agenda. From these exchanges, it is easy to conclude that UNESCO's mandate is more important than ever. Yet, our Organization does not have the resources that can match its universal ambitions. We will make efforts from all UNESCO stakeholders to give it the means to really build the defences of peace in the minds of people.

In closing, allow me to stress how much the quality of the debate has depended on the skilled and poised moderation of H. E. Mr Shashi Tharoor and M. Stephen Cole, whom I thank most profoundly for their contribution. Let me also inform you that the Secretariat will shortly issue an information document capturing the major points and suggestions made at the Leaders' Forum. This document

will then inform our further discussions on the post-2015 development agenda throughout this session and in particular at the Joint Commission meeting scheduled to address this item.

ANNEX
BACKGROUND
DOCUMENT



UNESCO MOBILIZING FOR AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE POST-2015 AGENDA

through education, the sciences,
culture and communication and information

To set the course of humanity on the path of a sustainable, equitable and peaceful future, the United Nations family has launched an unprecedented broad debate at national, regional and global levels. As an organization dedicated to building the defences of peace in the minds of people and to facilitating the free exchange of ideas, UNESCO has a special responsibility to contribute to the preparation of a global development agenda which will, from 2015 on, provide governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders with a framework for action based on a shared vision. As a meeting of decision-makers at the highest level, the UNESCO Leaders' Forum offers a unique opportunity to formulate innovative messages and guidance to contribute to the post-2015 development agenda through interventions in the fields of education, the sciences, culture and communication and information with a special focus on the global priorities of the Organization, Africa and Gender Equality, as well as the needs of youth, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

→ Setting a universal and pluralist agenda for peace and sustainability in the twenty-first century

With the adoption in 2000 of the Millennium Declaration, the United Nations General Assembly set forth a humanist vision for the century ahead – a pledge to craft a different, more just and prosperous world, without poverty or violence and where all people live in dignity. The vision took shape in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with its time-bound and measurable goals and targets.

This agenda contributed to lifting millions of people out of extreme poverty, bringing millions of boys and girls into the classroom, improving women's lives and fostering access to food, health, sanitation for millions of individuals in the

poorest places of the planet. There has been remarkable progress – but it has been uneven and insufficient.

As noted by the members of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the 13 years since the Millennium Declaration have seen the fastest reduction in poverty in human history. Bearing those successes in mind, the rise of emerging economies and Middle-Income Countries (MICs), as well as the sustained rates of growth in many developing countries, including in Africa, expectations are that extreme poverty could be completely eradicated within the coming decades. Two years prior to the 2015 finish line of the MDGs, the international community has expressed its determination to make all efforts to that end with a bold and ambitious post-2015 development agenda. The task is clear: focus where needs are greatest, help countries accelerate progress towards the 2015 MDG goals and targets, and shape a new long-term agenda to follow. This agenda should build on achievements and tackle new challenges.

UNESCO is an active and committed proponent of the MDGs, fulfilling its mission, which “contributes to the building of peace, the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information” (UNESCO Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021). As a laboratory of ideas, a standard setter and a catalyst of international cooperation providing policy advice and capacity development to its Member States, UNESCO is fully engaged in the global conversation on how the international community can channel the energies of humanity on a sustainable course beyond 2015.

Both the substance and the shape of the agenda will matter. The next agenda is expected to focus on the overarching objectives of the United Nations, which are expressed in the UNESCO Constitution as “international peace and the common welfare of mankind,” and advancing sustainable development, as stipulated at the Rio+20 Summit in 2012. A new development agenda will need to be based on universally accepted values and ethical principles, including those encapsulated in the Millennium Declaration and the Rio+20 Outcome Document, *The Future We Want For All*, which envisions the goals of the next global agenda as “*action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate,*

limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.”

Since global environmental challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss or ocean degradation, are borderless and as societies are increasingly interconnected and interdependent, the future global development agenda must be universal, relevant for all countries and for a wide range of non-governmental actors. Universal applicability should, however, not preclude the formulation of specific goals and targets against which countries can be held accountable. These requirements have been clearly acknowledged by the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel which concluded in particular that the development agenda should first and foremost encapsulate “A New Global Partnership”, moving beyond the traditional dichotomies of North-South, East-West, as well as donor-recipient. Pluralism, inclusive participation, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding should be part and parcel of such a new global partnership for peace and development. As the MDGs succeeded in catalysing unprecedented collaborative efforts, the post-2015 global development agenda must be a reference for all actors engaged in development activities, from the international to the local levels, notably governments, civil society organizations and the private sector.

→ **Review and renew the current development framework of human development**

The MDGs are an unfinished business. The 2013 edition of the MDG Report underlines that the unmet goals remain within reach, but that additional efforts are required to achieve them. The MDGs succeeded in convincing world leaders and governments that development cannot be narrowly equated with economic growth and rather must aim at improving the conditions of life of all.

The strength of the MDGs is to have translated these universal values into a simple and transparent set of concrete and measurable goals and targets aiming at poverty and hunger eradication, universal access to primary education, reducing child and maternal mortality and improving maternal health, promoting gender equality and empowering women, combating HIV/

AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development. This proved instrumental to allow priority-setting in national and international development policies. Significant results have been obtained. The number of people living on less than US \$1.25 a day has declined by around 700 million, from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 1.2 billion in 2010. Access to safe drinking water has improved for 2 billion people. Under-nourishment has decreased from 23.2% of the population in 1990-1992 to 14.9% in 2010-2012. About 3 million children's lives have been saved yearly and the number of children out of school declined by almost half, from 102 million to 57 million between 2000 and 2011.

However, the world finds itself at a pivotal moment, which calls for stronger collective action to meet the 2015 promises and shape a bold post-2015 vision as progress has been uneven. For instance, most significant advances in poverty reduction have been concentrated in Asia, also due to China's success. In sub-Saharan Africa, despite a relative decrease of poverty rates, the absolute number of people living in poverty has increased. In many places, the people suffering the most from poverty and discrimination based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, or otherwise have often remained mired in disadvantage. Another challenge lies in the persistence of inequalities in many MICs where economic growth has yet to translate into social inclusion. Inequalities are a key concern also in many countries as girls and women continue to be denied equal access to education, equal representation in economic, social and political decision-making processes and are frequently subjected to gender-based violence or excessive maternal mortality risks.

Deficits remain in access to quality education despite the immense progress of developing countries in increasing enrolment and attaining universal primary education. More than 126 million children of primary and lower secondary age are out-of-school and some 130 million children in primary school are failing to acquire basic literacy skills. Moreover, millions of young people and adults, particularly women, are not provided the education and training to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes they need for a successful transition to adult life and decent jobs.

The world is not on track, because public action on education has been fragmented and inadequate. The failure to invest a critical mass of human and financial resources simultaneously in access and quality education and learning undermines progress towards providing quality education for all.

Poor learning outcomes, inadequate skills and high levels of unemployment among today's youth call for a stronger national leadership, innovative partnerships and concerted international support towards building and strengthening education systems which provide quality and relevant education and learning in a lifelong learning perspective, from early childhood development to higher education, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development.

In addition to intensified efforts at the national level towards accelerating progress of countries that are furthest behind in achieving the EFA goals, mobilizing high-level political will should succeed in delivering the promise of education for all. The United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), created in 2012, reaffirms education as a human right for all and recognizes the central role of education as a basic building block of every society. By focusing on three priority areas – to get every child into school, to improve the quality of learning, and to foster global citizenship – this Initiative aims at galvanizing stronger commitment to education among global leaders and accelerating progress towards the MDG 2 (universal primary education).

There should clearly be a convergence, within the post-2015 global development agenda, between the six EFA goals, adopted in Dakar in 2000, and the education-related MDGs. Already, the discussion on the future education goals has been marked by important landmarks, such as the consensus reached at the 2013 Global Consultation on Education in the post-2015 Agenda held in Dakar (March 2013)¹ for a new education goal, namely “equitable, quality education and lifelong learning for all”, especially for girls and women, as a key element in the future development framework.

¹ Making Education a Priority in the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/389575>

In 2011, women represented two-thirds of the estimated 774 million adult illiterates worldwide. The quest for equality in education must be directly related to gender equality and women's empowerment. In many countries, women and girls are still denied access to education – sometimes violently. The MDGs had set a high standard by dedicating a stand-alone goal to gender equality but further and renewed efforts will be needed in all development policy areas since development cannot be achieved without unlocking the potential of girls and women. Women remain underrepresented in many key areas, such as in science, where, globally, women account for only 27% of the world's researchers. As stated in the Rio+20 outcome document, "gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustainable development and our common future." Through education, the sciences, culture, information and awareness-raising, governments, civil society and the private sector have a role to play in changing attitudes and behavior, and ending inequitable practices everywhere. Various types of discrimination constitute structural causes of gender inequality, along with violence against women, unequal participation in private and public decision-making, unpaid work and disregard for their daily concerns, including reproductive health and reproductive rights. Gender equality is an objective in and of itself but it is also a strategy to achieve all internationally agreed development goals. The next development agenda should acknowledge the cross-cutting dimension of gender equality so as to ensure that women have equal access to resources and opportunities.

The focus of the MDGs on a few easily measurable goals and targets led to other key dimensions of human development being left out from international attention. Thus, to move forward, the new agenda needs to harness the power of cross-cutting multipliers – this is another lesson of the MDGs.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) are such an accelerator largely ignored by the MDGs of 2000. The galvanizing and dynamic role of STI and its contribution to sustainable development should be explicitly reflected in the next agenda for global development. Harnessing this potential can prove critical for the achievement of key development objectives, notably as regards increased access to relevant knowledge, the promotion of green technologies,

including renewable energies, and the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. In her address at the high-level segment of ECOSOC 2013, the Director-General of UNESCO reaffirmed that STI is essential for the sustainability of all development which requires creating the right innovation ecosystem, adopting and implementing integrated STI policies and action plans as well as bridging knowledge divides notably by strengthening national STI human and institutional capacities as well as the interface between science, policy and society. In particular, there must be more scientists in Africa, especially women scientists. There is a need for enhanced scientific cooperation and knowledge-sharing to improve and sustainably manage ocean resources, as well as freshwater and biodiversity resources. This will require stronger links between science, research and policy-making.

Water is a resource at the epicentre of sustainable development and peace. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the 2013 Davos World Economic Forum “... to look beyond crisis to the far horizon, the shape of the world a decade or two from now, the need to provide water, energy, food and health for an expanding human population.” He went on to warn that “most of us do not appreciate water and just take it for granted.” The global challenges of climate change, population growth and demographic pressures, economic development, and rapid urbanization are straining the quality and quantity of the world’s freshwater resources in increasingly unpredictable ways that directly impacts food security. Water scarcity already affects 1.5 billion people in the world today and an estimated 60% of the world’s population will live in water-stressed conditions by 2025. Water is equally a security and strategic factor and asset, and must remain a source and a tool of cooperation rather than the cause of conflict. It is vital to building inclusive, peaceful societies. To that end, water education at all levels through formal and informal education will be a critical component for the development of human and institutional capacities. Hence the urgency of the water-related Millennium Development Goal (MDG 7c), namely to “*halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.*”

The future of Earth depends on the ocean, as the prime regulator of climate, a key provider of economic and social services, as the largest source of

protein for humankind. It covers almost three-quarters of the Earth's surface, and yet we protect barely 1% of it. We need to ensure that in the post-2015 development agenda, science, technology and innovation will be effectively harnessed to improve ocean governance, build early warning systems and improve resilience.

As freshwater and the ocean, biodiversity is crucial to human life. More than 1.3 billion people depend on biodiversity and on basic ecosystems goods and services for their livelihoods. The vast estate of Biosphere reserves and natural World Heritage sites are living laboratories for natural ecosystems and biodiversity through science, education and participatory approaches while at the same time promoting innovative economic development that is environmentally sustainable and socially and culturally appropriate. This experience can be factored into target measures when shaping future sustainable development pathways.

Culture is another accelerator not reflected in the MDGs. Over the past decade, however, there has been a growing recognition of culture as an integral part of the broader development equation. The recent Hangzhou Declaration *Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies* adopted at the Hangzhou International Congress on "Culture: Key to Sustainable Development" (May 2013), explicitly called for "the full integration of culture – through clear goals, targets and indicators – into agreed development strategies, programmes and practices at global, regional, national and local levels, to be defined in the Post-2015 United Nations development agenda. Culture has thus become increasingly acknowledged as both a driver and an enabler to realize countries' development goals, as also emphasized at the United Nations General Assembly Thematic Debate on Culture and Development (June 2013) and at the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (July 2013). Evidence now shows that the creative economy plays an increasingly important role in the development of countries and that its vitality has significantly increased over the past decade. Culture has become a strong and viable economic sector, generating income and creating jobs as well as being responsible for a growing portion of GDP in emerging economies. Culture-led development accounts for a range of non-monetized benefits, such as greater social inclusiveness, resilience, innovation,

creativity and entrepreneurs for individuals and communities, as the use of local resources, skills and knowledge. As the United Nations system as a whole has become progressively involved in integrating culture, and is embracing a culture-sensitive approach in its development work, the post-2015 development agenda should accordingly acknowledge and integrate culture at all levels.

The post-2015 development agenda should ideally recognize the vital role that communication and information plays in promoting sustainable development. The MDGs acknowledged the existing digital divide and the unequal access to information, including to information and communication technologies (ICTs), which have since become more pronounced. As underlined at the World Summit on the Information Society (2003 in Geneva and 2005 in Tunis), and at its 10-year review (2013 held at UNESCO Paris), access to ICTs and its pivotal role in the development agenda should be clearly articulated so as to allow, in particular, broadband access for all. The transformational power of this technology can help expand access to education and knowledge-sharing, and accelerate social and economic progress. Harnessing the potential of broadband is inseparable from the development of quality multilingual content and applications. Underlying this theme must also be the focus on governance, accountability and transparency as well as the importance of fostering freedom of expression on all platforms in this regard.

→ **A new paradigm of development based on sustainability, justice, peace and participative cooperation**

The world situation and trends in 2013 are different from those of 2000. The post-2015 agenda will need to address such challenges flowing from trends in population and urbanization, environmental degradation, climate change, post-conflict and post-disaster situations, increasing inequalities and persisting poverty. The new development agenda must both achieve what began in 2000 and spur transformative change. A host of recommendations are already surfacing from the global conversation on the future development framework over the past year.

There is a growing recognition that the current patterns of production and consumption are not economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. The impact of human activities on the environment – climate change, biodiversity losses, oceanic degradation, water shortages, desertification, deforestation, unsustainable land uses – are endangering the capacity of the planet to host life and promote decent livelihoods. With respect for the needs of the present and future generations, the current rates of youth unemployment in many countries as well as the persistent inequalities affecting women and minorities are unsustainable. Today the poor and the disenfranchised are most exposed to environmental degradation as are people living in vulnerable countries, such as the LDCs and the SIDS. Poverty eradication will remain elusive if the sustainability of ecosystems and societies is not tackled in earnest.

As a consequence, the next generation of development goals will need to address and incorporate in a balanced way all dimensions of sustainability. The Rio+20 Conference reaffirmed the principles of sustainable development and highlighted the need to attain “*a green economy in the context of sustainable development.*” Such an objective can be achieved only in conjunction with the emergence of green societies based on and fostering values, attitudes and behaviours of responsibility, sufficiency and well-being and being conducive to more sustainable modes of production and consumption. Sustainability as a capacity for resilience requires economic assets and healthy populations, but it also presupposes a capacity to learn, drawing on one’s cultural heritage and pursuing social innovation. The emergence of green societies cannot be separated from that of inclusive knowledge societies, the infrastructure of which are education, the sciences, culture and communication and information. Human development and sustainable development must converge as two fundamental dimensions of human welfare. For such convergence to happen across the globe, the post-2015 development agenda must be based on the “common-and-differentiated responsibilities” principle since developing and industrialized countries share the same planet but not the same initial conditions. Because national and local contexts are diverse, it will be imperative, in particular, to recognize the indispensable role of social and cultural factors to achieve sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

A paradox of globalization is that the reduction of extreme poverty has often been paralleled by increases of inequalities in different regions of the world, causing growing concern for social stability and harmony. The world is on an unsustainable course as long as growth is inequitable and not inclusive, and, as long as according to recent studies the world's richest 8% command one half of world income. The exclusion of young people as evidenced by the growing numbers of joblessness among them, has given rise to social movements in both developing and industrialized countries. Such uprisings are a symptom of disruptive social transformations that affect all societies.

Poverty is both a cause and a result of disenfranchisement. Indeed, the voices of the poor and the marginalized are mostly unheard and unheeded, especially if they lack access to education and communication tools. Exclusion is never solely an economic phenomenon. It cuts across all the dimensions of the life of nations. In the post-2015 development agenda, the objective of social inclusion, with its roots in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, should be tied to the promotion of pluralism understood, along the lines of the *Universal Declaration of UNESCO on Cultural Diversity*, as the political recognition of the fact that globalized societies are also becoming intrinsically diverse societies where majorities and minorities have the same rights.

Development cannot be separated from peace, security and good governance. Conflicts and endemic violence impact the enjoyment of human rights and the safe access to food, water, health or education. Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, decision-makers and civil society have grown increasingly aware that freedom from violence, fear, injustice and insecurity are indispensable prerequisites for any form of progress. It is a fact that no conflict-affected country has achieved the MDGs. Violations of human rights are rampant during conflicts, notably in the form of intentional violence against women or through the abuse of children as soldiers; human and economic development is at risk in times of conflicts. As was affirmed at the previous session of the Leaders' Forum, during the 36th session of the General Conference in 2011, "*Peace and development are two sides of the same coin*" (see document 36 C/INF. 19).

Peace has long been a hidden dimension of development. Indeed, progress and prosperity are jeopardized when fear and insecurity disrupt livelihoods, creating conditions of instability and unpredictability, which further hinder sustainable development and well-being. Only peace and good governance can lay the foundations of sustainable development, bearing in mind that lasting peace and respect for the rule of law are more than freedom from violence or the enforcement of formal procedures. As stated by the UNESCO Constitution, *"a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."*

Aiming at such solidarity requires decision-makers to work jointly with civil society, placing a strong emphasis on values, attitudes and behaviours conducive to a culture of peace and non-violence, respectful of cultural diversity and human rights. A renewed commitment of the international community to intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace is essential, especially because conflicts today frequently and insidiously mobilize cultural and religious identities.

It is therefore imperative to promote cultural pluralism at all levels, highlighting thus the close links between cultural diversity, dialogue, development, security and peace. A strong call for concrete actions was set forward by UNESCO and the United Nations, with the proclamation of the period 2013-2022 as the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, with UNESCO designated as lead agency for the United Nations system. This Decade offers a timely opportunity to instil fresh impetus for intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace. The engagement of relevant actors at all levels and in all regions is particularly important, with an emphasis on the role and involvement of young women and men in the global conversations for building more inclusive and peaceful societies, in this new era of intense interconnectivity and interdependence.

As the dimensions of sustainability, equality and peace concern all countries, irrespective of their income or human development levels, a paradigmatic shift is required in the modalities of implementation of the global development

agenda, which must be truly universal, as agreed at the Rio+20 Summit, because all countries are faced with unprecedented challenges most of which ignore borders. All countries should be enabled to participate and collaborate in the design, implementation and evaluation of the future development framework. Any such universal agenda must be based on mutual respect and mutual accountability and apply equally to North and South, East and West.

Innovation will constitute an important dimension as the global economic, financial and environmental crisis compels governments, civil society and business to resort to new and more efficient ways of operating and of channelling funds to the most needed, building on the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities.

While a universal development agenda should be unanimously proclaimed by governments at the highest level, it ought to be implemented in the framework of multi-stakeholder partnerships involving governments, civil society and the private sector.

Knowledge and information will represent a core dimension in the global development agenda so as to elaborate, apply and review strategies, policies and practices in an evidence-based, future-oriented, transparent and accountable manner. The monitoring of results and impacts is indispensable to ensure the credibility, acceptability and effectiveness of a development agenda, as has been demonstrated by the MDGs, which have increased the demand for quality data. In the post-2015 period, increased access to and provision of reliable data and knowledge will be crucial as sustainable development is intrinsically complex in nature and requires a new approach to addressing the interlinked dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and their relationship to peace.

The High-Level Panel of the Secretary-General has called for a “data revolution for sustainable development”, to improve the quality of statistics and information available to all development stakeholders, including governments and citizens, recommending that any new goals should be accompanied by an independent and rigorous monitoring system, with regular opportunities to discuss results at a high political level. The Panel recognized also that data

are a true public good, which, if supported by mainstreamed information and communication technologies, can allow people to have more control over their daily lives as well as their representatives.

UNESCO, as a capacity builder and a knowledge broker, is in a unique position to disseminate findings, provide guidelines and serve as a clearing house for governments, intergovernmental organizations as well as civil society organizations, which include universities and research institutions. As a capacity builder, UNESCO will assist countries, especially in Africa and low income countries, to reinforce their science-policy-society nexus and capacity to access, use and produce data and knowledge based on solid statistical information and data, which should be disaggregated by gender, age and geography, for improved transparency and accountability. A data revolution can foster development as a participatory learning process whereby stakeholders in their diversity can design, implement and assess strategies jointly for a truly global agenda aiming at a future shared by all.

In a world of limits, more must be made of the boundless energy of human ingenuity – through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information – to craft solutions that are just and sustainable. With its experience and capacities, UNESCO has much to contribute to the current debate. Conversely, Member States may wish to recognize more explicitly this important role when adopting the post-2015 development agenda.

PHOTO GALLERY





Laura Chinchilla, President of Costa Rica



Moncef Marzouki, President of Tunisia



Algirdas Butkevičius, Prime Minister of Lithuania



Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al-Nahayan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development of the United Arab Emirates



Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran



Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)



Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo, President of the Constitutional Court of Gabon



Muhyiddin bin Mohd Yassin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of Malaysia



Hossam Issa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Higher Education of the Arab Republic of Egypt



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women



Left to right : Stephen Cole, Senior Presenter Al Jazeera English, Doha and London - Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for Human Resource Development of India



Left to right : Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, Hao Ping, President of the 37th session of General Conference, Hans d'Orville Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning



High-level speakers at the leaders' forum



Hao Ping, President of the 37th session of General Conference



High-level speakers at the leaders' forum



Silk carpet entitled "Rapprochement of Cultures" donated to UNESCO by the Islamic Republic of Iran



Laura Chinchilla, President of Costa Rica is welcomed by Irina Bokova Director-General of UNESCO



Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo, President of the Constitutional Court of Gabon is welcomed by Lalla Ben Barka, Assistant Director-General for Africa Department of UNESCO

An international Platform for reflection and discussion, UNESCO has created the Leader's Forum within UNESCO's General Conference to inject from the highest level of governments new inspiration and forward-looking directions. The Leader's 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 second edition of the Forum were focused on "UNESCO mobilizing for and contributing to the post-2015 agenda through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information".

Hao Ping, President of the General Conference,
Alissandra Cummins, Chair of the Executive Board (or chairperson)
Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

Laura Chinchilla, President of Costa Rica
Moncef Marzouki, President of Tunisia
Algirdas Butkevicius, Prime Minister of Lithuania

Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al-Nahayan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development of the United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the President of the United Arab Emirates)

Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)

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