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Organización  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

## Closing Remarks

for Irina Bokova  
Director-General, UNESCO

**For a side-event organized by the Norwegian National Commission for  
UNESCO and the MOST Programme**

**Rio, 20 June 2012**

Excellencies Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I apologise for not being able to welcome you to this Side Event, but I was taken with a UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Event on the theme of “*Know our Ocean, Protect our Marine Treasures, Empower Ocean Citizens.*”

I wish to thank the National Commission of Norway for UNESCO for co-organizing this event on the “*Social science support to policies promoting the social dimension of sustainable development,*” with UNESCO’s Management of Social Transformations Programme – best known as MOST.

This reflects Norway’s longstanding commitment to sustainable development.

We all know the *World Commission on Environment and Development*, chaired by former Prime Minister Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, prepared the 1987 report “Our Common Future” that had so much influence on Rio twenty years ago.

The thrust of that Report remains relevant today.

Norway has also taken a leading role in UNESCO, in calling for greater focus on the social dimensions of climate change.

I wish to thank Mr. Jan Monteverde Haakonsen, Vice-President of the MOST Intergovernmental Council, for this initiative today.

Our sincere gratitude goes also to the Government of Brazil.

*Agradeço profundamente os nossos anfitriões brasileiros por sua hospitalidade e liderança.*

We are living an era of great change, of promise and uncertainty.

We must address difficult new questions – about the societies we wish to create, about forging new approaches to sustainability.

The challenge we face is to better understand ourselves and the world we inhabit.

The social sciences are vital here -- to develop better policy in response to needs and challenges.

This is a core issue for sustainability in the century ahead.

This point was made clearly in the Report by the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, *Resilient People, Resilient Planet*.

Recommendation 51 of the Report called for strengthening the interface between policy and science, to “*improve data and knowledge concerning socio-economic factors such as inequality.*”

This is also why the Secretary-General asked me to convene an Ad Hoc Group to advise him on the science-related recommendations of the Report of the High-Level Panel.

The core role of MOST is to encourage the development of knowledge networks on the issues of social inclusion and social transformations in ways that bridge science and policy.

The first principle of the 1992 *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* stated:

*Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.*

Twenty years on, this has never been more urgent.

Public policies must draw on the social sciences to build the green, knowledge societies we need for the century ahead.

This was the key message of UNESCO's 2010 *World Social Sciences Report*.

It was the goal that guided the five-day *Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development* we organized last week in Rio – in partnership with the *International Council for Science*, the *International Social Science Council*, the *World Federation of Engineering Organizations*, the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and innovation and the Brazilian Academy of Sciences.

We need also greater dialogue and collaboration between the social and natural sciences.

When we examine oceans, freshwater, or biodiversity, we are studying natural systems that operate according to physical laws, but that are essentially shaped -- sometimes for the worse -- by human action.

Human needs, in turn, depend on the sustainable management of ecosystem services.

All of this calls for new partnerships between the sciences and new bridges between the sciences and policy.

This must lie at the heart of our efforts to promote the values we share, of peace, justice, solidarity and human dignity.

Sustainability calls for new technologies and new economic policies – but it requires also new ways of understanding the world and new ways of acting to shape it.

This is the basis for building the future we want for all.

Thank you.