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Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

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

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the Engagement of Youth for Promoting Culture of
Peace and Sustainable Development**

Islamabad, 6 February 2014

Excellency Minister of State Mr Baligh-ur-Rehman, Federal Ministry of Education,
Excellency Mr. Muhammad Asghar, Rector, National University of Science and
Technology,

Distinguished scholars,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalam alaikum.

I was indeed deeply honored to receive the distinction Hilal-e Pakistan which
testifies to the longstanding and precious cooperation between UNESCO and
Pakistan.

And I am deeply honoured by this opportunity to speak at the *National University for
Science and Technology*.

When I was preparing for this visit, I was looking for the driving force behind the
energy of the students of this university.

Defining Futures.

I believe the motto of this university says it all.

This expresses the ethical role of all universities today, as places for learning, for
creating knowledge, for shaping the future.

It is inspiring to stand before you today, before this assembly of women and men dedicated to science and technology.

The great Muhammad Ali Jinnah once said – and I quote:

The prosperity and advancement of a nation depend upon its intelligentsia. I particularly appeal to our intelligentsia and students to come forward and rise to the occasion.

This is also UNESCO's conviction.

It is our belief in the power of human dignity.

It is our belief that, in this new age of limits, we must make far more of the greatest renewable energy we have, which is human ingenuity.

This is essential for all countries – it is essential for Pakistan.

Pakistan stands today at an important juncture, when society has demonstrated the will to nurture democracy and ensure its continuity, through a peaceful transition between two civilian governments.

This is a lesson to the world and a new dawn for Pakistan – similar to the logo of this University, with the book of knowledge lighting up the darkness.

Challenges remain, of course, but Pakistan has vast resources to meet them, and one of its most precious strengths lies with *you*, with the young generation.

Over 110 million Pakistanis are under the age of 29.

This is a deep wellspring of ideas and innovation that must be nurtured and developed fully.

UNESCO stands by you and with Pakistan in this task -- to design and implement policies addressing the needs of young people.

This starts with advancing quality education for all girls and boys, all women and men.

This is the purpose of the *Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education* that Pakistan launched with UNESCO in 2012, with a contribution of 10 million dollars from Pakistan – and I am very pleased to have signed an agreement this morning with you, Mr Minister, that spells out how the fund will be used to increase access, to improve quality and to make the education environment safer for girls.

This will contribute immensely to the culture of peace.

Education is essential for engaging young women and men in the decisions that affect their future – to foster new skills of participation, to strengthen the values of responsibility and solidarity – in what also you are fostering here.

Around the world, young women and men are driving change for human rights and dignity, for improved conditions, for decent jobs, for participation in decision-making.

This is also a new quest for a culture of peace.

Here in Pakistan, the voices of young women and men are strong and clear.

This is the voice of Malala.

This is the voice of Aitizaz Hasan, aged 15, who saved the lives of his classmates by tackling a bomber outside his school.

This is what we call a culture of peace in our communities.

A new generation is rising -- and Pakistan is investing across the board to unlock the full potential of this country's youth.

UNESCO is accompanying this movement forward, through capacity building, through teacher training, through the design and implementation of effective policies.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Pakistan for the high profile launch of UNESCO's 2014 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* in Islamabad a few days ago, on the issues of teaching and learning.

The report shows how much investing in education, especially in science and technology education, must be a priority, as drivers of sustainability and development, as answers to the questions facing all countries today – including Pakistan.

And this is also fostering a culture of peace.

Pakistan is blessed with immense natural resources, and we need the power of science and technology to make the most of these assets for the benefit of all.

We need more scientists, more engineers, more researchers -- to craft new solutions to health challenges, to anticipate disasters, to eliminate poverty.

As one of the most water stressed countries in the world, Pakistan needs innovative solutions to produce food more effectively, to improve waste water management – this is the thrust of UNESCO's cooperation with this University, through our joint project on echo-hydrology.

At the same time, UNESCO and Pakistan have been working over the last three years, to upgrade the country's flood forecasting and early warning systems, with the support of Japan -- and we organized a training workshop for senior flood managers from all provinces here at this University in 2011.

This is also fostering culture of peace.

Pakistan has the world's third fastest growing telecommunications market, and we need technicians to sustain this growth – this is also an opportunity to reach the marginalized, to provide them with access to education, culture and freedom of expression.

This is why UNESCO has joined forces with Nokia in Pakistan, to mobilize the potential of new technologies, to support rural female teachers in early childhood care and education.

If we can make a difference in Pakistan, we can make a difference in the world – because Pakistan is among the most populated countries on earth.

At the global level, UNESCO is hosting the United Nations Secretary-General's new *Scientific Advisory Board*, which we launched last week in Berlin, Germany, with the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon -- to strengthen the links between the sciences and policy for sustainable development, for poverty eradication.

UNESCO's last *World Science Report* paints a picture of rapid change across the world -- with the rise of a multi-polar landscape, with new scientific hubs emerging across the North and the South.

Pakistan can become one of these global scientific hubs.

This calls for a better access of women to science, to make the most of every source of creativity and innovation.

This calls for greater cooperation and knowledge sharing, including across the South, to bridge disparities between countries and within them.

This is all the more important as countries strive towards the Millennium Development Goals, and as the international community shapes a new global sustainable development agenda to follow 2015.

Education, along with science, technology and innovation, must have a central place in this agenda.

We need education to develop new skills for a new world.

Fundamentally, we need education to build healthy, inclusive, equitable and open societies.

Just as nation-building is more than laying roads and constructing dams – education, fundamentally, is about values.

It is about learning to live together, to respect the views of others, to consider free debate as a way to enrich the society as a whole.

It is about citizenship, including global solidarity.

It is about fostering respect for human rights, including freedom of expression – and Pakistan is a pilot country in UNESCO's work to enhance the safety of journalists.

This is why you are so important, dear students.

You are the leaders in strengthening society, in rejecting all forms of extremism, in countering prejudice and discrimination.

This is the meaning of the opening words of the UNESCO Constitution:

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

Education is the strongest foundation for the defences of peace.

The history of Pakistan is a living example of how society can flourish on diversity, through dialogue, mutual understanding and exchange.

The remains of the city of Makli, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, provide unique insight to civilization in Sind -- they bear witness also to the wealth of influences from Hindu architecture, from Persia and from Asia.

The palaces and mosques of the Shalimar Palace are a vibrant fusion of Islamic, Persian, Hindu and Mongol influences.

The historic Taxila, which I hope to be able to visit tomorrow, stretches back to the 6th BC.

This is not just heritage from the past – this is an open book to understand and nurture the interaction of different cultures today.

UNESCO is committed to working with Pakistan to safeguard and to share this heritage, within this country and across the world.

So, dear young friends,

Youth, science, and tolerance -- these three principles come together in this university.

Soon, dear students, you will be researchers, scientists, entrepreneurs, political leaders.

Above all, you will be citizens, and you will shape this country and its future.

And as you do, I hope you will be guided by the words of the great poet and thinker Dr Allama Iqbal:

*Sabaq Phir Parh Sadaqat Ka, Adalat Ka, Shujaat Ka, Liya Jaye Ga Tujh Se Kaam
Dunya Ki Imaamut Ka*

[Focus hard on the lesson of truth, of justice and courage! You will be expected to lead the world]

Thank you.