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Address by
Mr Koichiro Matsuura

Director-General
of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

on the occasion of the Award Ceremony
of the 2004 UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education

Bangkok, Thailand, 23 March 2005

Distinguished Professor Vitit,
Distinguished President of the International Jury,
Distinguished Permanent Secretary-General of the Thailand National Commission for
UNESCO,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here today on the occasion of the Award Ceremony of the 2004 UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education.

I would like first of all to extend my warm greetings to the winner of the 2004 Prize, Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, a world-renowned scholar who has made an outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights.

I also extend a warm welcome to the four winners of the Honourable Mention distinction of the Prize: Professor Anatoly Azarov, Director of the Moscow School of Human Rights; Professor David Jan McQuoid-Mason, Professor of Law at the University of Natal in Durban, South Africa; Mr Dag Nygård, Chairperson of The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief; and Dr Pablo Zavala Sarrio, Director of the Peruvian Institute of Education in Human Rights.

My particular thanks go to Professor Abdelfattah Amor, President of the International Jury of the Prize, who has traveled here from New York, where he is chairing the 83rd session of the Human Rights Committee. Thank you so much for coming.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Thailand, especially the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology and Mr Korn Thapparansifor, distinguished Minister, for jointly organizing with UNESCO and hosting the 4th session of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST). My warm thanks go to the Thailand National Commission for UNESCO and Mr Prapatpong Senarith, its Secretary-General, and to Mr Pongpol Adireksarn, distinguished Minister of Education, for their contribution to the success of this Award Ceremony.

Last but not least, I wish to welcome the distinguished Chairperson of COMEST, Professor Jens Erik Fenstad, and the members of COMEST as well as the many distinguished personalities who have joined us on this occasion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Commitment to human rights, to the respect for the dignity of all human beings and the equal rights of women and men is enshrined in UNESCO's Constitution. This

commitment has been reaffirmed by the Member States of the Organization on many occasions.

To reinforce UNESCO's contribution to the promotion and protection of all human rights for all, the General Conference of UNESCO, at its 32nd session in 2003, adopted the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights. This strategy pays particular attention to the advancement of human rights by integrating a human rights-based approach into all its programmes, by promoting research on human rights, by reinforcing standard-setting, by undertaking monitoring and human rights protection activities in its fields of competence, by strengthening partnerships and, of course, by promoting human rights education.

UNESCO contributed to the implementation of the World Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). A number of positive developments were achieved within the Decade but much remains to be done. While some countries have well-developed educational programmes for promoting awareness of and respect for human rights, elsewhere human rights education for children, young people and the general population needs to be strengthened considerably. To encourage these efforts, the World Programme for Human Rights Education was proclaimed and launched on 1 January 2005. Its first phase (2005-2007) is devoted to the integration and implementation of human rights education within national school systems at the primary and secondary levels. This is an area of particular interest and concern for UNESCO.

In UNESCO's perspective, human rights education is important not only for the promotion and protection of human rights but also for education itself. In particular, human rights education should be seen as part of the content and purpose of quality education for all (EFA) and within the framework of the fulfilment of the right to education.

The UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education was established in 1978 to mark the 30th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Prize should encourage the promotion of human rights through education, training, research and dissemination of information. The aim of the prize is to contribute to building a universal culture of human rights, based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity. It should serve to promote understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship so that everyone may participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law.

The Prizewinner and the Honourable Mention recipients we are honouring today have made an outstanding contribution to the creation of a universal culture of human rights. Their resolute commitment and tireless efforts in favour of moulding attitudes

and behaviours based on respect for human rights have been acknowledged in their own countries and abroad.

Professor Vitit, you have devoted your entire life to the cause of human rights. The Jury and myself agreed that you combine the qualities of a scholar, a researcher, an educator, a policy-making adviser and a grass-roots human rights activist who upholds the universal values of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. You are known as an author of hundreds of publications on various issues, including the rights of the child, the rights of women and the rights of refugees.

Throughout your professional career, you have been actively involved both in formal and non-formal human rights education. As Professor of Law at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, you have been teaching international law, international human rights law and humanitarian law for more than twenty years. You are well-known in universities and human rights institutions of Asia, Europe, Canada and North America, where you have worked as a visiting professor. You are widely appreciated for your efforts in organizing legal literacy and human rights programmes for rural populations, as well as for promoting mutual understanding, dialogue and tolerance between Buddhist and Muslim communities. You have made a significant contribution to the education of professionals having special responsibilities in the protection of human rights, primarily the police, military personnel, prosecutors, judges, immigration officers, civil servants, etc.

As an eminent expert on human rights, you have participated in many conferences and seminars organized by the UN system, other intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations. In 1990-1994, you were Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. You are Chairperson of the national Sub-Committee on the Rights of the Child. You have made a major contribution to Thailand's first report presenting the activities of your country relating to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As member of various committees of Thailand's National Human Rights Commission, you have made a remarkable contribution to drafting human rights legislation, elaborating Thailand's First National Human Rights Action Plan and evaluating the implementation of social, economic and cultural rights in your country and the Asia and the Pacific region. You are an expert and adviser to many UN bodies and member of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation on Human Rights. Since July 2004, you are serving as Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

In your human rights activities, you have always sought to promote respect for human rights world-wide, both in developing and developed countries. You have

always done your best to alert public opinion about the exploitation of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, primarily children and women, as well as about increasing impoverishment and extreme poverty. You have always defended and promoted the principles of the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of all human rights - civil, cultural, economic, political and social. You have significantly contributed to advancing the understanding of the inherent link between human rights and peace, security and democracy.

Professor Vitit, it is therefore a great pleasure for me to award you the 2004 UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education and to present you a cheque for the sum of 10,000 dollars and this wonderful bronze sculpture – the trophy of the Prize, created by the Japanese artist Toshi and graciously donated to UNESCO. My warm congratulations to you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have now great pleasure in presenting the four Honourable Mention laureates:

- Professor Anatoly Azarov, Founder and Director of the Moscow School of Human Rights. This non-governmental organization has contributed significantly to the advancement of human rights and democracy in the Russian Federation. It has translated and adapted for the Russian public manuals and video-materials on human rights designed for students and NGOs. These human rights teaching materials were disseminated not only in schools, universities and civil society organizations, but also in prisons so that detainees could also learn about their human rights. The Honourable Mention is awarded to Anatoly Azarov for his important personal contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights;
- Another Honourable Mention goes to Professor David Jan McQuoid-Mason, Professor of Law at the University of Natal in Durban, South Africa. The Honourable Mention is awarded to him in recognition of his many and long-standing activities for the promotion of human rights and democracy. His creative and innovative actions designed for various actors - in particular school children, university students, medical personnel, personnel of penitentiary institutions, police officers, and community associations – have contributed significantly to the building of a climate based on respect for human rights and democracy in his own country, South Africa;
- The next Honourable Mention is awarded to the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, an international network of representatives from faith communities, NGOs and academia. The Honourable Mention is awarded in appreciation of the Oslo Coalition's innovative activities for the integration of education for tolerance and understanding among peoples of different

religions into school programmes. Its project “Teaching for Tolerance and Freedom of Religion or Belief” has been particularly successful in this regard. The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief is represented at the Ceremony by Mr Dag Nygård, its Chairperson;

- The fourth Honourable Mention goes to the Peruvian Institute for Education in Human Rights and Peace. This independent educational association receives this distinction in recognition of its long-standing contribution to the advancement of human rights in Peru, in particular for its efforts aimed at disseminating knowledge on human rights and democracy among indigenous peoples through its project Frontera Selva. The Peruvian Institute of Education in Human Rights is represented at the Ceremony by its Director, Dr Pablo Zavala Sarrio.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to express once again my sincere gratitude to the President of the International Jury, Professor Abdelfattah Amor, and to ask him to convey my sincere thanks to the other five members of the Jury, representing all regions of the world, for having devoted their time and expertise to consider all the candidatures submitted for the 2004 Prize and for having given me their wise advice.

I express my warm congratulations to the Prizewinner and to the Honourable Mentions Laureats. Their work is truly outstanding. I wish that they and all of us enjoy every success in the much-needed efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to build a universal culture of human rights.

Thank you.