



REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
Cabinet of the President

ADDRESS

by

H.E. Mr. BRANKO CRVENKOVSKI,
President of the Republic of Macedonia

on the occasion of the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference,

Paris, October 22nd, 2007

Honorable Director General,
Honorable Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to express my distinct pleasure and honor for the possibility to address the UNESCO General Conference for the first time in the history of my country. UNESCO is by all means one of the most important international organizations assuring the cooperation among states in one of the most significant areas: investing in human capacities. Education, science, cultural heritage left as a legacy from the previous generations, represent a set of skills indispensable for further progress, now and forever.

The Republic of Macedonia, being a small European country is well aware of the significance and success achieved by the United Nations system throughout its years of existence so far. This year, the Republic of Macedonia provides a particular contribution thanks to the fact that we hold the presidency of the UN General Assembly. We are aware of our responsibility for global issues and therefore during this year of presidency of the General Assembly shall be put on one of the most concerning global issues: sustainable development and climate changes, issues specifically raised before UNESCO as well.

The General Conference should provide the unconditional support to the policy and main objectives of the Organization. In this sense, I would like to congratulate the Director General on his efforts to modernize UNESCO and on his strive to promote the promotion of the management system of the Organization, which I believe shall achieve maximum results. Therefore, the potentials of UNESCO member states as part of an organization for education, culture and science should be directed towards the realization of the UN Millennium goals, and in particular, promotion of living standards with the help of scientific observations and dedication to the education of people for modern civilization needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was this particular need for education that was in the focus of the last General Conference on development goals and challenges of UNESCO, emerging from the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000. At the beginning of the millennium, it was the place where the essential aim was set, providing the most important message for humanity in the new millennium: "Education for all by 2015" (EFA = Education for all). The main task of UNESCO is to provide conditions for every man, woman and child in the world to learn how to read and write. This necessity is as important as the necessity for universal access to drinking water, peaceful life without fear for one's life and existence and in general, the ability to live one's life in dignity.

Almost all the UNESCO member countries have developed their own tailored plan for development of education, and each member country has committed to immediate implementation of this essential goal. It is clear today that in the modern, rapidly and

continuously changing world, there is no message more important than this one. It requires full dedication of every member of the Organization and a commitment for immediate action; it requires full political dedication and will, and indispensable cooperation. Only results emerging from the commitments and effective actions of all member countries shall provide a guarantee for the realization of the targeted goal: "Education for all by 2015".

This is vital for all the members of the Organization, and in particular for the countries in development, in their efforts for keeping up with global tendencies. Hence, UNESCO must continue to provide maximum support to the countries that need it, especially in these times of rapid changes and development. The Strategy of Education for all is to establish a direct connection among the countries in development and the developed countries, with a view of raising the level of support and investment where these are most necessary.

In the Republic of Macedonia, primary and secondary education is mandatory for every young member of our community. The availability of appropriate education and programmes for vocational education and training makes the Republic of Macedonia compatible with the educational standards of developed countries.

Distinguished delegates,

One of the key achievements of UNESCO is the fact that it reunites countries with various and rich civilization experiences and cultural heritage. The mutual respect of our diversity has always been one of the major qualities of our organization, UNESCO. Only together, by learning about our differences through cooperation and cultural recognition, can we strive towards common projects and specific activities. Due to these reasons, Macedonia was particularly active within UNESCO in the organization of forums for dialogue among civilisations.

I consider the series of meetings dedicated to dialogue among civilizations to be an excellent example of the way in which countries with different cultural and civilisational background should interact. Our cooperation is concentrated first and foremost to the region, and I would like to take this opportunity and express our satisfaction with its intensiveness and efficiency. In this regard, I would also like to express our respect and recognition for the work of the UNESCO Regional bureau for Southeast Europe seated in Venice. Their contribution to the cultural heritage in the region has been of extraordinary importance.

Allow me as well to express my gratitude to the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, as well as to the Republic of Italy whose engagement and dedication were decisive for the successful work of the Regional Bureau. One of the results derived from this cooperation will also be the Southeast Europe Center for digitalization of cultural heritage, foreseen to be opened by the end of this year.

Indeed, this center will be a logical step in connecting history and culture to modern tendencies such as digital and information society - the reality in which we live today. My country accepted the challenge emerging from UN's call for bridging the digital gap between the developed world and the world in development and committed itself to becoming a regional leader in the area of information and communication technology. We believe that with the inclusion of this global tendency in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia, we shall contribute to the improvement of its socio-economic progress, since only this approach can add to our competitiveness in world economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Due to its geographical position, the region where I come from is one of the richest in terms of cultural heritage. Numerous are the material cultural proofs for the existence of various civilizations. On our territory, on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, UNESCO recognized Ohrid and its surroundings as one of the places in the world having enormous cultural potential. This is the reason why this region was placed on the first list of World cultural heritage as one of the earliest settlements in Europe.

For centuries, the tranquility of one of the deepest lakes in Europe has represented an inspiration for a number of talented frescoes and icon painters, old craftsmen and architects, as well as for spiritual people and teachers, gathered in the ancient Ohrid University. I believe that this place with rich cultural and spiritual tradition will also be an inspiration for all of us in the region for long-lasting peace and cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ohrid was not recognized by UNESCO only as a cultural entity, but also as one of the bigger historical centers for development of literacy and education, and therefore we propose an initiative regarding education and research in the area of water resources. Water is indeed one of the most important natural elements shared by all of us. We also share water with the other living and non-living beings on the planet. However, water is not shared with other celestial bodies, it is an exclusivity of our planet Earth. This is why it is rightfully placed very high on the list of priorities of the international organization.

The issue of water is different in various parts of the globe: beginning with excessive exploitation of surface water, through distortion of its quality, up to the distortion of water as a natural habitat. Every year, we are reminded by Nature, through great natural disasters, that poor water management might lead to disasters, for which we are also warned by the ancient biblical texts, but also by texts from other civilizations.

The fundamental concept of sustainability and development is the basis for resolution of such issues. The key for their resolution, on the other hand, is learning that water is something that belongs to everyone, something we all share, and that therefore, it is up to us to expand our knowledge about water.

The huge water potential that Macedonia has, as well as the issue of drinking water that is beginning to arise, inspire us for an initiative which we will try to finalize by the next General Conference. This is namely a proposal for establishment of a UNESCO Category 2 Center for education and research in the area of water resources.

Distinguished delegates,

UNESCO is an organization for education, culture and science, and the key message of its founders is contained in its name - we should all learn to understand our differences, to share civilizational and cultural values and experiences in order to promote living standards by means of scientific observations.

My expectation from the participants in this 34th UNESCO General Conference would be for all of them to provide unconditional contribution for tracing the following steps to be made in the direction of inciting the hope of everyone on this planet - and convince them that each of them becomes an active creator of a better future.

We have no choice, and there is no alternative to the close cooperation among states and peoples with a view of achieving the ideals of the Organization. It is our civilizational obligation and duty. My country is dedicated, committed and contributes to these ideals, so that they become our reality.

Thank you.