



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**

**17 October 2008**

Echoing the proclamation by the United Nations of 2008-2017 as the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, I reaffirm UNESCO's determination to act as effectively as possible in the fight against poverty worldwide, and to harness all the competences of the Organization to the achievement of this objective.

Our determination to fight against poverty calls for wide-ranging and multidimensional reflection. Poverty, as we know, is at one and the same time a question of access to resources, equity between men and women, the distribution of wealth and the sharing of knowledge.

UNESCO, with its intellectual and ethical mandate within the United Nations system, is taking an active part in this fight, which lies at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals. It also upholds the idea that poverty is a matter of human rights, including the right to education, the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific and technological progress, the right to preserve cultural diversity, and the right to information.

More generally, this is first and foremost a fight for education for all of good quality and, let us hope, throughout life, which we must pursue. It must be aimed, in particular, at ensuring that the most underprivileged, especially girls, go to school. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that 70% of the 1.4 billion poor people in developing countries are women, and that among the 774 million illiterate people in the world, more than 60% are women. Furthermore, in many regions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the number of poor people has increased over the last decade.

Knowledge is a key to sustainable development. This is not only a question of universal access to knowledge, but also of gender parity, literacy, teacher training, intercultural understanding, and the promotion of quality education.

Fighting against poverty thus entails proposing new ways of disseminating and sharing knowledge; it also means fostering dialogue between the various systems of knowledge and cultures, and creating new opportunities for development.

Effectively mobilizing the international community is both a necessity and a matter of urgency. We need to take practical, effective and sustainable action. UNESCO, alongside the entire United Nations system, and its partners, is fully mobilized to respond to these challenges.

Koïchiro Matsuura