



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,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of the World Science Forum**

Budapest, Hungary, 5 November 2009

His Excellency László President Sólyom, of the Republic of Hungary,
His Excellency Stjepan President Mesić, of the Republic of Croatia,
President of Hungarian Academy of Sciences Pál linkás,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguishes Delegates,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address you this morning for the opening of the 2009 World Science Forum, focusing on "Knowledge and Future." This is the fourth such Forum to be organized. It has special significance, marking as it does the 10th anniversary of the landmark 1999 World Conference on Science.

I had the immense pleasure to come to Budapest to speak at this Conference as a Member of the Japanese Delegation, just months before taking over the Director-Generalship of UNESCO. Like the 2,000 other participants from across the world who attended this signal event, I gained an unprecedented insight into the transformative power of scientific knowledge in promoting peace, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

It was the success of the 1999 World Conference, and the clear need it revealed for open multistakeholder discussion on science in today's world, that inspired UNESCO and its partners to launch, in 2003, these biennial Forums.

Every Forum is a collective achievement. I would like to begin by expressing my deepest appreciation to President Sólyom for hosting this important gathering. It is thanks to your commitment and vision that the World Science Forum-Budapest has become a major international event, attracting decision-makers, scientists, young researchers and other partners to debate the role of science in responding to global challenges.

As always, my sincere gratitude also goes to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in particular its President, Professor József Pálincás and his team, for their excellent work in staging this year's Forum. My special thanks likewise go to ICSU and the European Commission for their constant support to these meetings.

This is the third time that I have had the honour to address the World Science Forum. Over the years, these events have done much to promote innovative approaches to advancing scientific knowledge and sharing its benefits more widely. Of course, the crucial importance of scientific knowledge is not new, and knowledge has long been recognized as a driver of change. However, the magnitude and complexity of the problems we confront today – from extreme poverty and deepening inequality, to climate change, environmental degradation and increasing vulnerability to resource scarcity and natural disasters – make the effective mobilization of knowledge, notably scientific knowledge, more important now than ever.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ten years after the 1999 World Conference, this Forum is an opportunity to take stock of our progress in mobilizing science for social and human development. It is also an occasion to explore new challenges that have emerged over the past decade, and their implications for the world of science.

You will recall that the 1999 Conference culminated in the adoption of two major documents: the Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge, which established a basis for the alliance between science and society for the 21st century; and the Science Agenda - Framework for Action, which set out guidelines to orient the work of the different partners involved.

Over the past decade, these documents have provided valuable guidance to the international community, including UNESCO, in navigating the new challenges and opportunities created by scientific and technological progress.

Since 1999, the world has seen the rapid advance of knowledge societies and knowledge economies. There has been great hope and ground-breaking developments, often linked to new communication and information technologies. As a result, all countries, whatever their level of development, have been obliged to review and reorganize their capacities for accessing and benefiting from this advanced knowledge. For those with weak or non-existent capacity in this area, the risk of marginalization has accelerated sharply.

It is clear that without serious efforts to strengthen their scientific knowledge base, many developing countries will not meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

This means: building capacity in science and technology; setting up of centres of excellence; facilitating the diffusion and use of new scientific and technological knowledge; and ensuring the full participation of all members of society in scientific progress. Countries also need to promote a better understanding of the critical role of science and technology in development, and put in place coherent science policies that target national development needs.

Since 1999, guided by the outcomes of the World Conference on Science, UNESCO has reoriented its work to support Member States in these areas.

We have bolstered our action in the field of science policy advice, especially in Africa. Today, we are collaborating with over 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa to develop robust national strategies for science, technology and innovation.

UNESCO is also helping Member States strengthen their human and institutional capacity to address key development needs, from freshwater and ocean management, to the mitigation of natural disasters.

We have furthermore reinforced our action in science education, working with Member States to develop national networks for innovation, based upon centres of scientific excellence, supported by institutions of higher education, and linked to

the world of industry and private research through new science and technology parks. UNESCO is also helping Member States mobilize the potential of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to foster networking and knowledge exchange. ICTs can enable countries to pool their expertise and more effectively tackle common challenges.

UNESCO will be listening carefully to the debates at this Forum to see how we can gear our interventions to better meet national development priorities. In this regard, I am very pleased that Mr David Hepburn, the President of UNESCO's General Conference, our top decision-making body, is with us here in Budapest.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The global financial and economic crisis has given renewed urgency to these efforts, and calls upon us to be more strategic in our approaches.

The crisis has already had a devastating impact on economic growth and employment. The World Bank has spoken of a "development emergency", with developing economies losing access to some 700 billion dollars as a result of the global economic meltdown. In 2009, an estimated 55 million to 90 million more people will be living in extreme poverty than anticipated before the crisis. About 60% of the gains in global poverty reduction since the turn of the century are likely to be wiped out between 2008 and 2009.

The financial crisis has further strained the public exchequer in many countries leading to reduced public spending in the social sectors, adversely affecting progress towards development goals. What we need to analyse and address now are the consequences of the financial crisis on private and public research; the effects of the financial crisis on national and international research policy, and on investments in knowledge.

A time of crisis provides opportunities for reflections such as these and to create positive change.

It is my firm belief that knowledge and innovation are key to overcoming the present crisis and for laying the foundation for sustainable growth, future competitiveness and societal wellbeing.

Now is the time to build a new financial architecture with a knowledge perspective. UNESCO has been looking at the implications of the crisis for international cooperation in general, and in particular for UNESCO's knowledge-based domains – namely education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

Just last month, during the 35th Session of UNESCO's General Conference, we organized a plenary Ministerial Forum on "Investing out of the crisis and maintaining progress towards internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs" through action in these knowledge sectors. Many Ministers present here today took part in this debate.

Participants strongly affirmed that greater attention should be given to the direct and indirect impact of the crisis on knowledge. They argued that despite – indeed because of – the crisis we must redouble our efforts towards knowledge creation, sharing and management.

For example, we know that this crisis must be an opportunity to spur greener, more sustainable growth. Measures to stimulate the economy must go hand in hand with policies that support low-carbon development. There have been many discussions on the form such a "new green deal" should take. However, there can be no doubt that greater investment in scientific research and knowledge must be part of the solution. Through research in clean energy, new water technologies, and sustainable manufacturing practices, science can and must drive the innovation to create greener technologies and greener economies.

UNESCO will continue to advocate energetically for greater investment in science and technology, in particular in developing countries. This is an essential foundation for economic competitiveness, for sustainable development and for long-term environmental security.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, as we commemorate Budapest + 10, I remain more convinced than ever that scientific knowledge holds the key to addressing global challenges and forging a better world. The principles embedded in the 1999 Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge remain valid. "The sciences should be at the service of humanity as a whole, and should contribute to providing everyone with

a deeper understanding of nature and society, a better quality of life and a sustainable and healthy environment for present and future generations". Now, more than ever, we need to renew this commitment.

As many of you will know, next week I will leave the post of Director-General of UNESCO. It is my profound wish that the World Science Forum-Budapest will continue to be a source of inspiration for all those committed to using knowledge to achieve sustainable and equitable societies for all. I know that my successor, Mrs Irena Bokova, will be paying very close attention to the outcomes of this meeting

The future, and the way we deal with challenges today and in the coming years, is our responsibility. It is up to us to tackle difficult issues, such as climate change environmental degradation and poverty, using knowledge as our guiding light. Thank you very much.