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Organización
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para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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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 World Environment Day 2009**

5 June 2009

I am delighted to join my voice and that of UNESCO in support of World Environment Day 2009. This special Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to mobilize global awareness and action for the environment. The theme this year is, 'Your Planet Needs You-UNite to Combat Climate Change'. Let me tell you what this message means for UNESCO and what we are doing to promote it.

The first imperative is to recognize that climate change will impact the very support systems on which life on Earth and everyone's well-being depends. We must respond to this call by our planet to reverse the current unsustainable trends in consumption and production that are responsible for climate change.

Second, we must act together; without the participation of all nations we cannot ensure fair and equitable outcomes. The exchange of information and lessons learned, and the formation of active partnerships between different societal actors, are essential to identifying and promoting effective ways to address climate. The slogan 'UNited to Combat Climate Change' reminds us of the ethical challenges posed by climate change. In responding to what is a global problem, we must strive for solutions which are equitable and inclusive. Our response to climate change must not further disadvantage the poorest amongst us and should always privilege the maintenance of sustainable livelihoods. In essence, we should tackle climate change in the broader context of achieving sustainable development for all.

'UNited to Combat Climate Change' also highlights how the different agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system must work together

in combating climate change. Within the United Nations system, UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization have been designated joint convening agencies for the crosscutting area of science, assessment, monitoring and early warning in addressing climate change. Recently, UNESCO and the United Nations Environment Programme signed a Memorandum of Understanding that foresees linking this scientific knowledge base with UNEP's advocacy and policy advisory role. These are some examples of how UNESCO and other United Nations agencies are seeking to strengthen their collaboration in order to meet the threat of global climate change.

World Environment Day 2009 is about empowering people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development. Therefore, and this is my third point, UNESCO will vigorously pursue its efforts to promote education on climate change and sustainable development, in particular in its role as lead coordinator of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. We will also continue to highlight the importance for broadcast and other communications media to address climate change issues in an appropriate manner. Not only must information on climate change be scientifically sound; it must also be conveyed in a way that is transparent and participatory.

Fourth, strengthening the local knowledge base of climate change and recognizing the intangible value of the environment are vital in order to implement effective solutions on the ground. I strongly believe that mainstreaming efforts to address climate change in our daily cultures must be a top priority, and one in which UNESCO is willing and well-positioned to assist.

Mexico is the host of this year's World Environment Day celebrations. I hereby join the President of Mexico, His Excellency Felipe Calderon, in underlining that World Environment Day 2009 must be an occasion to reaffirm the determination of the international community to act together in tackling one of the most demanding challenges of the 21st century – climate change.

Koïchiro Matsuura