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MESSAGES
CLOSING SPEECHES
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INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Wednesday, 8 September 1965
INAUGURAL ADDRESS
BY HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY
THE SHAHINSHAH

Mr. Director-General,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to our capital, on my own behalf and on behalf of the whole Iranian people. My compatriots are justly proud that their country has been chosen as the seat of the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, for they are deeply conscious of the importance as well as the nobility of the purpose which has brought you here, namely, the eradication of illiteracy, that scourge which, like a cancer, constantly undermines the progress of peoples.

The presence in the world of over 700 million adults who cannot read or write constitutes a permanent challenge that must be taken up.

Seven hundred million adults means two-fifths of all men and all women over the age of 15. If to this figure we add the number of children who do not go to school, we reach the staggering total of perhaps more than 1,000 million. For at present more than 45 per cent of those under the age of 15 receive no schooling; while of those who do go to school many, lacking the means, do not complete their studies and soon sink back into illiteracy.

Such, ladies and gentlemen, is the unhappy situation with which we are faced at the very moment when mankind has just made so tremendous a leap forward in science and technology.

Never before has there been so intense a feeling of living through such decisive changes. Around us, in front of us,
within us, everything is changing. From all sides new facts are coming to reverse old proofs. New discoveries are being made at an ever-increasing pace and are opening up prospects of unimaginable progress to man. Distances are daily shrinking, so bringing the nations together that our universe becomes truly planetary. Our world is detaching itself increasingly from the past. Indeed, one of its essential characteristics is that discriminations which once seemed natural are becoming intolerable, and men are becoming even more aware of the legitimacy of their rights.

There was a time when it seemed natural for the wealthy nations to take the weaker peoples under their protection. Today, in the international community, the smallest countries are the equals of the largest.

There was a time when the existence of empires and colonies was accepted. Today, the idea of colonialism has been condemned by everyone, including even those who benefited by it.

There was a time when racialism found willing defenders. Today, racial discrimination has been wiped out in most parts of the world and the principle of equality is gaining ground every day.

There was a time when wars of religion were rife. Today, respect for the beliefs of others is overcoming intolerance.

There was a time when a minority benefited from natural resources while the masses were sunk in the most abject poverty. Today, social and financial legislation combats privileges and endeavours to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth.

The spirit of the times, admirably embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is dedicated to proclaiming equality of rights for all the inhabitants of our planet.

Nevertheless, as a great philosopher has said, we all live in one world and yet we are not contemporaries. If we examine the different structures of society and living standards of peoples, we can identify a whole range of social forms that goes from the atomic civilization to the Bronze Age.

It is true that great efforts have been made, nationally and internationally, to modernize backward countries, and the idea of
development has become the guiding principle—I might almost say the myth—of our age. There is no country which has not embarked on a programme of useful investment and undertaken to make the necessary sacrifices. However, and it is a disheartening thing to note, these efforts seem to be falling into stagnation. The gap which separates the rich nations from the others is constantly growing wider.

There is a simple reason: development is not a purely economic problem. It implies factors other than money, being based on a much more valuable asset: human capital. And this can be developed only through education.

It is surprising that it took so long to recognize this. By looking back into the past we can see that, throughout history, a dialectical process has constantly taken place between economic and social development on the one hand and education on the other. Nevertheless, it is mainly since the Second World War that planners have become increasingly aware of the fact that their task is not purely economic but encompasses all social life. The wholly recent idea of educational planning, with the elasticity necessary to adapt it to economic planning, eloquently underlines the role of education in general development.

Education is no longer considered today only as one of the human rights or as a means of enabling man to extend his culture, but also, and above all, as a productive investment.

Expansion in the developing countries thus appears under a new light; these countries not only lack financial resources but are also handicapped by the inadequacy of acquired knowledge. For them, literacy is a bottle-neck which must be cleared.

These are truths which we Iranians have learned in the crucible of action; it was in studying ways of speeding up our development plans that we took the full measure of the problem. We undertook agrarian reform and ended the feudal régime in the interests of the peasants. We introduced up-to-date laws to ensure that workers will share in profits. We have carried out, and continue to carry out, large-scale works of all kinds, our aim being to bring our country in record time to the level of
the advanced countries. But the revolutionary reforms we have
promulgated for this purpose in the various sectors of the economy
can bear fruit only if the intellectual level of the whole population
is substantially raised. It is true that previous administrations
had already taken up the struggle against ignorance, but their
methods were conventional. A universe speeding up like ours
cannot wait for natural cycles to work themselves out; it demands
new methods.

Three years ago we established the Education Corps to take
charge of the literacy campaign and accelerate the extension of
primary education to the most remote parts of the country. The
Corps is composed of young recruits and part of the funds for
it is provided from the budget of the armed forces. An evaluation
of the Corps’ first three years justifies our optimism, and the
results encourage us to continue the experiment and extend it in
scope and size. The momentum our economic and social deve­
lopment has gathered has led us to adopt still further measures.
We had to attack the problem at the root as well as from above.
We also had to extend adult literacy. A National Literacy Cam­
paign Committee was established to speed up this movement.

But regardless of the scope and the great scale of our national
effort, we must not forget the vital truth that literacy, exactly
like development, is an international problem which concerns
us all.

The contemporary world is one in which all progress
and every threat, all problems and every solution, affect all
nations, regardless of their degree of advancement. Now more than
ever, the idea of the interdependence of peoples must prevail; we
are together, we must live together and work together. Faced
with an evil which affects half mankind, the other half cannot
remain indifferent, because it, too, is involved. The existence of
an enormous mass of illiterates, root cause of the inequality
which splits mankind into two separate segments, is a constant
menace to social peace, to peace itself.

Illiteracy is thus a problem which, by its very nature, must
be considered on a world scale and universally tackled.
That is why, on the occasion of the thirteenth session of the Unesco General Conference, I sent a message to the Member States of your Organization and proposed that this Congress be convened.

Ladies and gentlemen; the struggle to eradicate illiteracy is a historical necessity. It represents, for the developing countries, the passage from the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century; on it, in our world as a whole, equilibrium and mutual understanding depend. And nevertheless, as we know, there is still, here and there, the individual who does not agree. Some economists—happily, they are fewer and fewer—draw up balance sheets which show a loss; according to them, literacy will yield little. Their mistake may lie, not in their calculations, but in the fact they overlook that even scrap iron can be made to work again if sent back to the foundry. Money spent on literacy is fully justified because it transforms illiterates into full citizens and proportionately increases their productivity.

Moreover, education is becoming a necessity of our times in the developing as in the advanced countries. The increasing use of machinery and technology demands a rising level of intelligence. The better our instruments become, the more skilled technicians we need to operate them, engineers to build them, inventors to perfect them. Against such a background it hardly needs recalling that illiteracy involves an inadmissible wasting of intellectual energy for the whole of mankind.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, is it not intolerable that, at the very time when the advance of knowledge has opened up to man the way to outer space, more than a thousand million unfortunate people should still be deprived of the most elementary advantages of science and technology? Is it not inadmissible that, on the eve of interplanetary travel, more than a third of all men should be unable even to read? There is here, you will admit, a notorious injustice which must be righted.

Today, thanks to international co-operation, we are able to organize powerful forces to combat natural catastrophes. No longer does an earthquake, flood or epidemic occur without there
being an immediate manifestation of international or bilateral solidarity in favour of those hit by the calamity.

Happily, the mobilization of men of good-will has become a feature of our age. This also goes for other matters with which we are here concerned. I have proof enough of this in the encouraging replies of the Heads of State to the message on this subject which I had the honour to send them last year.

It is thus feasible to arouse public opinion throughout the world. It remains for us to think up ways and means of mobilizing resources and energies. Will this second stage be more difficult of achievement?

I think not, because—and I am sure you will share my optimism—man's national and technical resources are such that our task is feasible. The first necessity is that the countries afflicted by this evil should devote part of their revenue to fighting it, on the basis of realistic plans and by using the most expeditious methods. However, national action, without which nothing can be done, could well prove fruitless unless there is a concerted effort throughout the world.

The need to exchange experience is urgent, to study problems in depth, to co-ordinate national efforts. An international institute for this purpose might be worth considering; however, I do not wish to anticipate your deliberations.

Another obvious fact emerges: most of the nations which are still afflicted with illiteracy usually lack the necessary financial resources. Here again, solidarity can and must come into play. International and national sources of finance are of course limited, but there are possibilities which should be considered. I should like to draw your attention to one which we have successfully exploited in Iran in connexion with the Education Corps and which might also extend to international co-operation.

I refer to military expenditure. In 1962 it was estimated at over $120,000 million. On the basis of the expert calculations of literacy costs, less than one-thirtieth of the annual military expenditure would suffice to rescue 700 million men from ignorance. Of course, the eradication of this social evil will take
much more than a year. But for this very reason we are entitled to raise a question: is it so very fanciful to ask the governments of the world to devote each year, for a period still to be determined, a negligible proportion of their military budgets to this great work of international solidarity? An annual figure of $120,000 million is equivalent to approximately $312 million a day, or $13 million an hour. Is it too much to ask every country, over a period of twelve months, to forgo a few hours of military expenditure in order to finance one of the historic enterprises most conducive to world peace and to the happiness of mankind?

We, for our part, agreed to this effort at the national level and are ready to extend it to the international level for the benefit of all peoples. For, as I have already said, illiteracy is a worldwide scourge, the eradication of which calls for a general effort commensurate with the world’s interest in it.

Such, ladies and gentlemen, are the remarks I wished to submit for your consideration now that you are about to begin discussion of one of the most onerous and noble tasks that man has ever undertaken for his true emancipation. I hope that your deliberations will help to produce original and expeditious solutions to this problem. I offer my most sincere wishes for the full success of your work.
REPLY BY MR. RENÉ MAHEU
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO

Sire,

Before Your Imperial Majesty withdraws may I be allowed —speaking on behalf of Unesco which I have the honour to serve, and assured of being the interpreter, in however inadequate terms, of the unanimous feeling of this Congress —to express to you our profound gratitude.

Gratitude for the generosity and courtesy of hospitality worthy of the oldest traditions of this country which is overwhelming us with its attentions, generosity that began long before this meeting, since the Iranian Government has assumed the entire cost of the preparation and organization of the Congress, for which the Secretariat of Unesco has assumed intellectual and technical responsibility.

But gratitude also and above all for the understanding and support which Your Imperial Majesty has always accorded the Organization's efforts in this most vital of all sectors, the fight against illiteracy, in which the stake is the dignity of men who are numbered in hundreds of millions, and for the constant source of inspiration and encouragement that this active sympathy has constantly represented for us.

This Congress stems from a proposal and an invitation which the Iranian delegation, led by the very distinguished Prime Minister, then Minister of Finance, presented during the thirteenth session of the General Conference in Paris ten months ago, at the same time as Your Imperial Majesty addressed to the
world's Heads of State and to myself a message which can be described, without flattery, as historic. The General Conference was unanimous in welcoming this proposal and incorporating it in the programme with a view to implementation this year.

The presence in this room of so many eminent persons who occupy positions of great responsibility in their own countries and have come from all corners of the earth to represent eighty-six States, as well as representatives of the highest international bodies and the most venerable spiritual authorities, shows eloquently how fitting was the initiative taken by Your Majesty and how closely it met an essential need of mankind today.

An initiative and a response of this kind would alone be sufficient to honour an enlightened monarch. I believe that at a time when the Iranian people and their many friends throughout the world are preparing to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of a reign devoted to progress, there could be no more auspicious introduction than the success of this Congress in the pursuit of the lofty aims which Your Majesty has set himself. I should like to take this opportunity of paying tribute to you in advance.

In the noble message with which you honoured the official opening ceremony this morning, Your Majesty has just given us further proof of the high-mindedness of your views. For this too I beg to offer my deep gratitude.

The delegates assembled here will, I have no doubt, find much to think about and new sources of inspiration in these words. For my part I must say I was particularly struck by Your Majesty's anxiety to see that the international community should be supplied with the necessary resources to finance the great movement of solidarity so obviously necessary if the efforts being made by the developing countries in difficult, often (even) heroic, conditions are to have practical results in keeping with the magnitude of the problem: great ills demand drastic remedies.

As you have said, Sire, and this I firmly believe, the technical means exist, the resources also; all that is needed is the will to use them in the service of man for his emancipation and the improvement of his lot and not for his destruction. And in this
regard, as Your Majesty said, it is certain that the use of even a negligible part of the money that at present goes on military expenditure would make it possible to finance the final eradication of illiteracy, within a relatively short time.

That a voice so authoritative as that of Your Imperial Majesty should have put forward, before this international forum, this idea which is really an appeal—and how moving an appeal—when, not far from here, we see to what use arms are being put in the very place where education is so sorely needed—here is something that must touch our consciences. May this idea, this appeal, be taken up as it deserves: this is my most cherished wish.
Mr. Prime Minister,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, I should like to thank His Imperial Majesty for the words of welcome and encouragement that he was good enough to address to this World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy.

It is in fact more than gratitude that I should like to express, and I think that I am faithfully recording the profound feeling which, listening to him, was experienced by us all, who come from so far afield and belong to such different cultures, when I say that, from the opening of this Congress, His Imperial Majesty made to resound in our midst the voice of a great people among the peoples of the world.

Listening to His Imperial Majesty, I could not help recalling the thousands, the tens of thousands, of modest and tireless men who, in response to their sovereign's appeal, have for years devoted themselves to teaching their less-favoured countrymen to read and write.

I recall the message addressed by the Shahinshah to the living forces of his country in October 1962, calling upon them to form a powerful Education Corps which very rapidly, at his instigation and under his leadership, was to produce encouraging results. His Majesty summoned them, I recall, 'to crush the demon of ignorance and to spread literacy throughout the towns
and villages of Iran in a veritable national war' in which His Majesty would be the tireless standard-bearer.

Now, armed with the experience gained and the success achieved, the standard-bearer calls upon an army many times stronger to carry forward the good fight on a world scale. This Congress provides a most eloquent testimony to the fact that this fight has already started and is constantly gaining ground.

As Chairman of the Unesco Executive Board I should like to say that I feel an almost personal pride in the efforts and sacrifices made by the peoples of the world to provide everyone with the sacred right to education. For the struggle against illiteracy is only one aspect of the battle against the inequalities of access to education that the Unesco Member States, with the support of their international organization, have so courageously joined. It is thanks to this battle that, since the establishment of Unesco, adult literacy work has gradually ceased to take place at a purely local level, inevitably limited, to become at the present time one of the chief concerns of the international community in the same way as hunger, underdevelopment and peace.

It has been repeated over and over again that illiteracy is proof that the rights of man are not yet respected and that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has yet to be implemented throughout the world.

It has been repeated over and over again that illiteracy is a brake on the economic and social development of the modern world. It has frequently and eloquently been stated that the existence of illiteracy is an obstacle to the integration of mankind and to national cohesion, because the world remains divided into two camps; one which has access to cultural benefits and another, much larger, which has access only to an oral civilization. It has often been shown that illiteracy prevents immense numbers of people in the developing countries from gradually adapting themselves to a rapidly changing world and joining in a national culture; and it is true that the individual can evolve towards world culture only to the extent that he is authen-
tically attached to his own national values since, as we all know, true international understanding and co-operation are based on exchanges between national values enriched by their mutual differences. The reason why so many of us are gathered here in Teheran is because modern man is firmly convinced and fully aware of the need to pass resolutely, massively, from words to deeds.

Illiteracy, as a result, has become an authentic world problem; a world problem since it concerns all countries without exception; a world problem because the high current rate of illiteracy is as harmful to the countries it affects as to those that are rid of it; a world problem because it cannot be solved without contributions from both the developing and the advanced countries, without the co-ordination of national, multilateral and international efforts; a world problem because a sense of universal solidarity is beginning to emerge and develop in a sector that long lacked one.

To illustrate the immensity of the task of our Congress and the urgent need for the solidarity that must at all costs be developed, we need only quote three figures: our modern, civilized world includes at least a thousand million illiterates or semi-illiterates; in a world which has already made enormous efforts to increase school attendance, the total number of school-age children actually attending school is less than 44 per cent; in spite of the increased number of new literates, the illiteracy rate rises by 1 per cent annually.

These figures speak for themselves. They apply to the world as a whole, to countries that include a large number of illiterates and to those that have hardly any.

The first requirement of the developing countries, in which the percentage of illiterate adults usually varies between 60 and 90 per cent, is an increase in this co-operation and solidarity. There is no need for me, in this forum, to emphasize how difficult it is for modern man to achieve unity because of the gap which so deeply divides the world, from the point of view of both development and general education.
Many lessons can be drawn from a figure supplied by U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations: between 1960 and 1962 the national per capita income in the advanced countries increased on an average by $100, whereas in the underdeveloped countries it rose by only $5.

How many problems are arising and how many will arise for the entire world and in particular for the advanced countries, if the nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Arab world are unable to advance rapidly because of ignorance, lack of knowledge, shortage of skilled labour and the absence of the technical skills needed for more productive and better paid work. If the major problems of today are to be solved and life is to be lived in peace and prosperity, we must all accordingly strive to eliminate this gap and help to make mankind less differentiated, more homogeneous and more united.

The immense efforts the nations are making in the struggle against illiteracy are in themselves a first manifestation of international solidarity; for it is obvious that the large-scale effort of any single country is to some extent a contribution to the needs of the nations as a whole.

But another form of solidarity in the struggle against illiteracy is appearing. This consists of a systematic exchange of experience between the countries affected, the co-ordination of their efforts, and the attempt to find solutions which they may be able to employ in common. An excellent example of this kind of practical joint action is offered when we come to the languages used in literacy work, for mass communication, and in providing access to culture. In many countries, the writing of languages which have remained oral is a problem. The Unesco Executive Board has already considered the question of alphabets for the national languages of West Africa. Co-operation in seeking solutions to linguistic problems is indispensable and may become an essential element in tightening the links between nations and peoples.

However, international solidarity in the struggle against illiteracy must inevitably involve countries that have long been rid
of it. Their active participation is appreciated not only because of their considerable financial and intellectual resources, and the valid experience which they can place at the disposal of the developing countries: their participation is becoming more and more necessary because mankind has now entered a phase in which the development of some is affected by the development of all.

It is to be hoped that this Teheran Congress will provide a powerful incentive to the enlarging and reinforcement of this solidarity.

It is in any case unthinkable that the efforts and the facilities of the international community, its organizations and institutions should not also be made to serve international solidarity. The equilibrium of the international community and the aims which the United Nations and all mankind have set themselves are compromised by the present level of education amongst the masses. Logically, all this should inevitably produce far-reaching changes in the world’s attitude to the struggle against illiteracy. Everything that the United Nations as a whole, its Specialized Agencies, and particularly Unesco, have done up to now; the first signs of an increase of the activities in this regard of the regional Economic Commissions and intergovernmental organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, the Arab League, the Organization of American States; and the activities of the international non-governmental organizations—all this constitutes a promise of fresh progress. From the opening of this Congress we can feel certain that this new current will grow in force and magnitude and bring us to final victory in the struggle which, without exaggeration, can already be qualified as historic.
Your Excellencies, 
Ladies and gentlemen, 

I should like first to join the Chairman of the Executive Board in greeting you, on behalf of Unesco, and thanking you for responding in such great numbers to its appeal. I also wish to say that the Organization attaches special importance to this Congress, included in its programme, thanks to Iran’s initiative and generosity, at a turning-point in its action to combat illiteracy. There is, I think, no better way for me to demonstrate the importance of the Congress than by trying to explain its implications and principal aims, as I see them, here at the outset of your deliberations.

The first implication, as your very presence here makes abundantly clear, is that the eradication of illiteracy is acknowledged to be a problem and a duty that concern mankind as a whole.

In this respect, the Congress represents the sequel to the long process of investigation, thought and affirmation by which the international community, in its highest and most authoritative deliberations, has, over the past few years, acquired, at the same time as an increasingly precise knowledge of the evil, an increasingly clear awareness of its own responsibilities with regard to it, until finally the great design of ridding mankind of illiteracy for ever was conceived.

The starting-point of this process was resolution 1677 (XVI),
by which the General Assembly of the United Nations, in December 1961, invited Unesco ‘to make a general review of the question of the eradication of mass illiteracy throughout the world, with the object of working out concrete and effective measures at the international and national levels for such eradication’ and ‘to present a survey of the position in the world with regard to the extension of universal literacy, together with recommendations on the measures which might be taken, within the framework of the United Nations, for co-operation in the eradication of illiteracy’.

On the basis of the approval given by the General Conference at its twelfth session in 1962, I had the honour to present the Unesco survey to the General Assembly of the United Nations in November 1963. In the light of that report, the General Assembly, by resolution 1937 (XVIII), took the decision—one might say the historic decision—to invite the Secretary-General ‘to explore ways and means of supporting national efforts for the eradication of illiteracy through a world campaign and any other measures, if appropriate, of international co-operation and assistance, both non-financial and financial’. This established the principle of international co-operation which might develop, in scope and nature, into a world-wide effort to eradicate illiteracy, based on what the countries directly concerned were actually doing themselves.

The task of finding the best ways and means of giving practical effect to this decision of principle fell to Unesco. This is what I sought to do in 1964, through close consultation with the appropriate institutions and agencies of the United Nations, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, and by devoting deep thought and, if I may say so, a great deal of imagination to the problem within the Secretariat. This dual effort led to the decisions taken by the General Conference at its thirteenth session, in November 1964, which set forth the Organization’s position and represent the first step in a large-scale international effort for the gradual eradication of illiteracy.

These decisions are contained in resolution 13C/1.271, and are grouped round three main points. In the first place, in
Section A of that resolution, the General Conference approved the experimental literacy programme that I had proposed in the light of the studies and consultations I have just mentioned. As you know, this experimental programme consists in providing assistance, with the help, inter alia, of the Special Fund, over a period of five years starting in 1966, to a few States, selected according to specified criteria; they are to be helped, at their request, in carrying out pilot literacy projects planned on a selective sociological basis and with a view to integrating literacy with development. Secondly, in Section B, the General Conference, at the invitation of the Shahinshah of Iran and on the proposal of the Iranian delegation, decided to convene and organize the present Congress in Teheran. Its essential purpose is to sustain, stimulate and, above all, bring into order, around certain guiding ideas and generally accepted standards and methods, the vast concourse of national efforts now being made which, after the limited experimental programme and in the light of the lessons it will provide, is to expand into a world campaign or, in other words, a concerted effort that will be planet-wide. Finally (Section C), on 19 November 1964, the General Conference adopted a declaration which sets forth certain fundamental principles calculated to guide and inspire Member States in their activities—national, bilateral, regional and international—and addresses a solemn appeal to the governments and peoples of these States to redouble their efforts and join forces in order to eradicate illiteracy in the shortest possible time and so open 'the doors of knowledge and history' to all men.

Circumstances did not permit the United Nations General Assembly, at its nineteenth session (1964-65), to examine the report which the Secretary-General, pursuant to resolution 1937 (XVIII), had in agreement with myself prepared for it on the measures decided or recommended, by Unesco and others, and which, in particular, expresses support for the experimental programme adopted by the General Conference. The General Assembly's examination of the report had to be deferred until the next (twentieth) session in 1965.
Last July, however, the twenty-eighth International Conference on Public Education, meeting in Geneva, considered the problem of world illiteracy, which it had not been possible to discuss at the twenty-seventh Conference in 1964. It adopted recommendations clearly setting forth a number of directives and standards for the implementation of literacy programmes, which I have considered it proper to include among the working papers prepared for this Congress.

The first aim of the Congress, in my view, is to intensify and deepen the world's awareness of the problem and its acceptance of responsibility.

The statistical information summarized and analysed in the documentation prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the information supplied by Member States, imperfect though it is—and it should be one of the first concerns of international cooperation in this field to improve such statistics, especially from the point of view of comparability—at least enables us to take the measure of the evil we have decided to eradicate and see just how necessary and urgent it is to take energetic action for this purpose.

At first sight, the trend seems encouraging. The percentage of illiterates in the total population, which in 1950 was between 40 and 45 per cent for the world at large, would probably be between 38 and 43 per cent in 1962. We must not, however, be misled. Although the percentage of illiterates is falling, their number in absolute terms is rising all the time. It is estimated that, for Unesco's Member States as a whole, there were some 35 million more illiterates in 1962 than in 1950. While the expansion of schooling has been fast enough to catch up a little on the total increase in population, it has by no means caught up completely and the short-fall is still substantial because of the rapidly rising birth rate.

It is particularly important to realize that an estimate of the percentage or number of illiterates in the world as a whole means very little because of the very great inequalities in the geographical distribution of illiteracy. While the current illiteracy rate in
Europe is between 3 and 7 per cent, in Africa it is probably 78 to 84 per cent. The real truth is not to be found in global additions and averages: it is more readily grasped if we say that at present, on the most optimistic assumptions, eight adults out of ten in Africa, five out of ten in Asia, are illiterate, whereas in Europe and North America illiteracy has almost disappeared.

No less striking is the inequality between the sexes. Throughout the world, the illiteracy rate among women is higher than among men. But it is in those very regions where the general percentage of illiteracy is highest that the gap between the percentages by sex is greatest. For instance, in the 15 to 44 age group: in Africa, 69 per cent of the men are illiterate as against 87 per cent of the women, or a difference of 18 per cent; in Asia, 41 per cent as against 61 per cent—a gap of 20 per cent; in the Arab countries, 65 per cent as against 88 per cent—a difference of 23 per cent.

I should like to dwell for a moment on this glaring disparity. No real human progress is conceivable without the emancipation of women and their access to education on a footing of equality with men. This is the most elementary moral requirement for the undivided dignity of our race, and it is likewise in the most obvious interest of society. For, apart from the fact that the mother's role in the education of the children is a vital one—educate a man, it has been said, and you educate an individual; but educate a woman and you educate a family—it is clear that no country, particularly among the less advanced, which are precisely those where labour forms one of the mainstays of the economy, can face up to the manifold tasks of development if bereft of the active assistance of half its population. Indeed, the level of development of a country, measured by any yardstick, always coincides almost exactly with the degree of education of its women and of their participation in the economic and social life of the community.

From this brief analysis of world illiteracy, summary as it is, we can see what is so grave in the situation. In my view, what is most serious is not the magnitude of the evil as a whole, daunting though that is, for I do not think it is beyond the material and
technical resources now available to mankind to deal with it. Yes, I am convinced that man is perfectly capable of eradicating illiteracy entirely from the earth in, say, a generation, if he really wants to, for he has the means. What is really grave is that the evil is so unevenly distributed, and that, as it occurs in exactly the same areas as underdevelopment, and forms an integral part of underdevelopment, it appears as one of the causes and one of the most unmistakable indications of a profound injustice in the stake of man today. Injustice—herein lies the scandal and herein lies the danger.

Scandal to the conscience troubled by any denial of the universality of human rights. The right to education is one of those sacred rights. What has brought you here is first a matter of justice: that of guaranteeing to every man the minimum education that is his right.

And it is a danger for peace, peace which is today imperilled in several parts of the earth, and particularly in this great continent of Asia, shaken by violent tremors. Yet, however sharp the individual conflicts of interests, ideologies or—still worse—passions that set one State against another, they are as nothing when compared with the permanent menace to the future of civilization constituted by the radical differences, material and intellectual, in the living conditions of peoples that result from and are maintained by underdevelopment. The worst danger to peace is the possibility of a division of mankind into two parts so far removed from each other that no amount of good-will, tolerance or even charity can any longer hope to bring them together without being suspect to both sides; a division into those who make history and those who suffer it, those who master nature, share out the world’s riches among themselves, and set out for the stars, and those who remain fettered in their inescapable poverty and the darkness of ignorance. And let no one say that the powerful are powerful enough, the rich rich enough, the learned learned enough to take responsibility for the fate of the weak, the poor and the ignorant and satisfy them with the crumbs from a now overladen banquet. The point is
precisely that no man—and no people—should have to let another shape his destiny; and it is on this ground, in the name of freedom, in the name of dignity, that education is a universal right, the right to enlightenment.

But if the first aim is to develop awareness, in yourselves and others, of the problems of illiteracy in its realities and its implications, your deliberations should not, I think, stop there. I hope that the Congress will pay no less attention to examining the conditions, analysing the concepts, and seeking the means of action calculated to bring about a radical improvement in the situation. The purpose of this Congress is not to study illiteracy, but to eradicate it. You are gathered here not merely to observe the state of the world, but to change it—in short, to think out a line of action, also on a world scale, and if possible, to launch the attack.

For this decisive step from knowledge and awareness to decision and action it seems to me there are certain favourable circumstances which did not exist to the same extent twenty years ago, which may not last, and which, consequently offer an opportunity that we should exploit to the full.

First, it is a fact that peoples afflicted with a high percentage of illiteracy want very much to rid themselves of it, regardless of the cost in terms of effort and sacrifice. This is vital because, without motivation, as the social scientists say, education, and especially adult education, is impossible. There is no doubt that, in the case of literacy, the motivation does exist. I can vouch for it and so also can the whole Secretariat, through its close contacts with the Member States. I hope your Congress will confirm the same, and so dispel the last doubts of any remaining sceptics. You know better than anyone that this is no more-or-less artificial movement, nursed and guided by the authorities but, on the contrary—say it out—a deep-seated, passionate aspiration of peoples exercising a constant pressure on governments.

This aspiration is undoubtedly connected with the great
wave of political emancipation which has broken over the world in the last two decades; hence its marked civic, ethical, and indeed ideological colour. Economic motivation must now be added to this first motivation, so as to root the will to action in the very fabric of society.

Many governments and many agencies, undertakings, or associations, public and private, are already turning this mass potential to account and conducting more or less extensive literacy campaigns with their own resources. Let there be no doubt about it: it is to these often heroic efforts that—despite the population explosion—the relative progress I referred to a while ago is due. I should like to take advantage of this solemn occasion to pay a well-deserved tribute to these voluntary movements, whether institutionalized or spontaneous, officially recognized or obscure, proceeding with the system of the professional or the enthusiasm of the amateur. The results, of course, vary greatly in quantity and quality, but they have been consistently encouraging whenever determination and perseverance have been combined with a minimum of organization and technical means. It is indeed true that it always pays to put our trust in man.

A moment ago I mentioned technical means. The other major factor, besides the motivation of the masses, which encourages me to think that circumstances are favourable for a worldwide literacy campaign is that modern technology has given man means, of practically unlimited range, for the spread of knowledge and for intellectual intercourse. I refer, of course, to the press, films, radio and television, whose current utilization for purposes of day-to-day information, entertainment, or even merely business, should not cause us to overlook their immense possibilities as outstanding instruments for adult education and culture. I refer, too, to the new techniques of programmed instruction in which machines are used, not to replace the teacher—for if there is one place in which there is no substitute for the human element, it is education—but to relieve him of all the mechanical side of his work and at the same time enable him to bring his
intellectual influence to bear on a much greater number of pupils. I am convinced that these different media, if put to proper use, can enable education to bring about the technological revolution which other disciplines, such as medicine, have already accomplished and which alone can enable it to cope with the enormous problems of quantitative expansion and qualitative reform resulting from the growth of population and our rapidly advancing knowledge.

The spread of literacy in turn gives those who command the media of mass communication an opportunity of placing themselves squarely at the service of man and of proving that their aim is to emancipate, not condition him. For let there be no mistake: the increasingly widespread use of these media, which are occupying an ever larger part of the leisure moments of modern life, is leading us rapidly to a critical juncture. Unless we take care, we shall have a form of communication—which is inevitably a form of education too, and even of culture—based purely on images, visual and sound, which will develop, parallel but independent, alongside instruction based on writing. This dualism endangers the spiritual unity of civilization because of the deep psychological differences that separate the two processes of mental training, one of which—that based on the image—appeals mainly to feeling, emotion and reflex response, while the other—based on writing—is, on the contrary, essentially an exercise in critical thought. Modern education, particularly for young people and adults, must merge and combine these two processes, these two mental universes, in an integrated teaching method for continuing education.

Time is short, for communication by image offers technical facilities to those who provide it—and, even more, psychological facilities to those who receive it—so much superior to those of instruction by writing, which is inseparable from effort, that it constitutes a redoubtable temptation: in fact, the temptation of facility. This temptation is particularly strong for the masses who, as the combined result of their illiteracy and the existence of strong traditions of oral transmission of knowledge and ideas,
still stand aside from instruction by writing. These people may very well move from oral tradition to the image, or combine the two processes, and so achieve a certain appearance—and I use the word ‘appearance’ advisably—from having assimilated modern civilization, without having gone through the stage of comprehension through writing. This is already happening in some countries. If this tendency were to develop unchecked, the motivation which now exists in favour of literacy would very soon disappear and, almost without realizing it, we should find ourselves in a situation in which the cleavage in the conditions of man’s existence, which I mentioned just now as the greatest danger threatening mankind, would be irrevocably confirmed by an irreducible intellectual split: conditioning as opposed to education.

It is therefore extremely important that we should seize the present opportunity, while it still exists, of running the two processes together, from the outset, by using communication media and techniques for mass literacy work, instead of diverting the people from the literacy effort by offering only the temptations of entertainment.

Having regard to the social and psychological context of motivation and the existing technical means, your Congress is called upon to consider both the problems of organization and administration, and those of methods and techniques, involved in any large-scale literacy programme. I hope that, after a wide-ranging exchange of information and ideas on your various experiences, you will be able to formulate certain general statements and conclusions on these problems that may serve as criteria and guidelines for future efforts. After the first objective, which is essentially psychological, this, I feel, is the second main objective—a technical one—which the Congress should be set.

This Congress of Ministers, however, cannot be treated as a committee of experts, even though the delegations which go to make it up include many eminent specialists. Lastly and most particularly, therefore, I should like to invite the Congress to
focus on recommendations relating to questions that are essen­
tially within the purview of governmental or intergovernmental
authorities.

This Congress is not, of course, a plenipotentiary conference;
itself resolutions, therefore, are not *ipso facto* binding on the govern­
ments represented here. Nor is it a constitutional organ of the
international institution which decided upon and convened it,
namely Unesco: the Organization is not therefore bound auto­
matically to carry out its decisions. The Congress is, however, a
conference of States. As such, it is fully entitled, in accordance
with regular international practice, particularly in Unesco, to
make recommendations to Member States, and to Unesco itself
or any other United Nations agency. It is, of course, impossible
to prejudge what action the States or the Organization will
consider they should or can take on your recommendations.
This will, no doubt, depend largely on the value of those
recommendations and the quality of the debates that give rise
to them. At the outset of your discussions, however, I wish to
state that, for my part, I am fully prepared, so far as my powers
allow, to bring to the attention of the competent bodies, at the
right time and by the appropriate procedure, any recommenda­
tions addressed to Unesco which seem to me consonant with its
objectives and within its means, now or in the near future.

What then are these matters on which I am asking you to
express your views? They are the choices to be made regarding
the practical approach to problems and the orientation of our
efforts to solve them—what has been called the strategy of literacy.

In the light of the painstaking studies and consultations carried
out during the last eighteen months, the Secretariat is submitting
certain theses on these matters which are set out—I hope, as
clearly as possible—in the working papers. I now put them
before you for examination and approval. Allow me to summa­
rize them.

One general idea underlies them all, the principle of integra­
tion: integration of literacy programmes in general educational
action, integration in the general development effort and, natur­
ally, in that of assistance to development. All too often, efforts for the promotion of literacy have suffered from basically faulty planning or basically defective organization, with the work being conducted somewhat apart from the educational system proper and without reference to development plans, as a separate self-justifying and self-sufficient undertaking. Far from considering the world campaign to eradicate illiteracy as an independent movement, we, on the contrary, have in mind concerted action closely and organically linked with the over-all advancement of mankind in the circumstances of the day. Only if literacy is grafted on to the vital forces which govern reality can it become a reality itself.

With regard to the first point—the integration of literacy programmes with the educational system as a whole—we believe that the false dilemma of choice between literacy for adults and schooling for children must be ended once and for all. We are firmly convinced that, far from being mutually exclusive, the two operations are not only complementary but interdependent, so that both must be taken up and carried on through a systematic, global effort which will naturally take due account of all the country's needs and resources.

Generally speaking, adult education, which used to be a marginal activity, is coming to occupy a more and more important place within the educational system. At the same time, that system is tending increasingly to expand and to allow for the diverse situations and requirements of various age groups, in accordance with the now generally accepted idea of continuing education, the principle of which is that the educational process should be adjusted to the process of life itself in every aspect.

More especially, it must be recognized that the spread of literacy in the adult sector with which children and young people are in contact is a prerequisite for the full intellectual effectiveness of school education and for smooth relations between the different generations as society progresses. Improvement of the cultural standard of adults is one of the essential factors in achieving satisfactory school results, for the constant contribution of their
elders’ experience and example helps to foster and develop the education of the young. The upbringing of the rising generation and their gradual training to shoulder all the responsibilities of adulthood depend on continual communication between those who exercise such responsibilities now and those who are preparing to assume them. No such communication is possible, however, between educated adolescents and illiterate adults. The relations between illiterate parents and educated children are impoverished and distorted, making the transfer of responsibility difficult and even chaotic.

There must, of course, be a special administrative organization and distinctive means and methods for adult literacy work. It cannot be contested that adult literacy work is something quite specific, very possibly calling for a certain degree of autonomy in the organizational machinery dealing with it. This is one of the matters on which you will probably wish to decide. The principle of integrating literacy programmes in the educational system as a whole is in no way at variance with this specificity or with this autonomy. All that is required is that both should be considered and provided for as part of general educational planning, covering all the needs and possibilities of the community as a whole. This is a point of vital importance, on which the missions that Unesco sends out to governments, at their request, to advise on planning are laying increasing stress and, I am happy to add, with increasing effect.

The other form of integration needed, with still more telling effect, is the integration of literacy programmes in over-all development. Just as illiteracy is an integral part of underdevelopment, so the promotion of literacy must be an integral part of development; this is the basic axiom which distinguishes and governs the approach and the strategy which we are recommending to you; it also sums up the concept of functional literacy. We recommend it to you with greater confidence because it has been unequivocally adopted by the many regional conferences to which we have submitted our ideas during the past year, including the special conference on the problem of illiteracy.
in Africa, held at Abidjan in March 1964, not to mention the meetings of the United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa, and for Asia and the Far East, and the conferences of National Commissions for Unesco of the countries of Asia and Oceania, and of the Arab States, to which this question was submitted. I hope that this Congress will confirm the attitude we have adopted—of vital importance, in my view—which has already been endorsed by the General Conference.

What does all this mean in practice?

To begin with, it means that literacy work should unhesitatingly be introduced into economic activity, in which it should find a framework, an outlet and, if not its essential justification—which is ethical—at any rate its main direct efficacy.

Business undertakings and co-operatives can easily provide a framework for regular literacy-promotion activities. In most cases, a very few practical adjustments and very little additional expenditure would be enough to make the material facilities, the organization, and the psychological atmosphere which both forms of enterprise have created, each in its own way, for the fruitful development of the joint effort, available for the purposes of literacy teaching; all that is needed is to see the possibilities and determine to use them. The contemporary structures of modern labour organization, which make more and more allowance for the worker's needs and broad aspirations, quite naturally offer a well-prepared terrain and a ready-made apparatus for the promotion of literacy—a prime need and a deep aspiration.

Conversely, literacy must also find an outlet there if it is not, as all too often happens, to remain an alien, marginal activity without real roots in the world of labour. Its potential value in the improvement of labour must therefore be recognized, and it must be given the means of making its contribution. At the basic manpower level, where literacy has its place, it must be recognized as one of the factors entering into productivity, and its contribution must receive the various forms of economic recognition attaching to any increase in productivity—first and foremost an increase in earnings. More exactly, workers who
have learnt to read and write should systematically be given more interesting and better paid work—because they are better workers in consequence of being literate, and not out of a sort of charity to be put down to overheads in respect of the employers' public relations and in the interests of an easy conscience. Literacy should be reflected in the worker's pay packet as well as in the firm's productivity figures.

All this, which may be of decisive importance in practice, implies a double change in the basic ideas concerning literacy work.

On the one hand, educationists and educational administrators must adopt the concept of what is called functional literacy, in other words, literacy programmes designed, thought out and conducted not for their own sakes but in relation to the development that they make possible. Here I am particularly anxious not to be misunderstood. In saying that literacy should be viewed as a means of development and not as an end in itself, we do not in any way mean to cease demanding education—with literacy as the minimum—as an intrinsically justified human right. Nor do we contemplate sacrificing the humanistic potential of this first, primordial intellectual emancipation to utilitarian requirements. The real, and only, necessity is to adopt an approach, in the practical process of effectively implementing this right and building up this potential, which immediately links both these things with the realities of the adult's economic life, so that practical conditions are directly improved and that improvement, in turn, makes it easier to raise the educational standard. In short, we have to insert education into the practical scheme of things, to give the spirit its due place in man's life today, and to incorporate right in history.

There can be no doubt that this approach, like any concrete, practical, historical approach, involves an order of priorities determined by the economic conditions, problems and choices inherent in development. The nature of functional literacy automatically leads us to discard the idea of a frontal, global attack aimed at reducing and even eliminating illiteracy by an
effort spread equally over all situations simultaneously, and to adopt instead a selective approach which deliberately concentrates first of all on the points where circumstances are most favourable and on the undertakings offering the best return, and which progress by gradual extension. We have no wish to conceal the fact that this involves a choice. On the contrary, we hope that the manifold and important implications of this choice will be clear to everyone, since it is a choice, demanding a certain courage on the part of the rulers, which must be made advisedly. The point which must be grasped first and foremost, however, is that it is simply a strategic choice, i.e., one concerned purely with the order of operations in time and the direction of efforts in society, and in no way implying a scale of values: it is a matter of practical policy, not of ethics.

This is the change—I repeat, a strategic one—that we are asking educationists and educational administrators to make in their basic ideas on literacy. At the same time, however, and for the same reasons, deriving from the integration of literacy with development, we are asking economists and those responsible for the economy to make a corresponding and convergent change, which consists in treating literacy work, in theory and in fact, as a productive investment. Integration in development will have become a reality when development plans no longer include literacy programmes under consumption expenditure or (which amounts to the same thing) under unproductive 'social' investments but, instead, give them a place (varying, obviously, with each individual case) among productive investments. It is here that the decisive mutation must take place which will provide the natural, genuine and, I would say unhesitatingly, the only solution to the problem.

I have deliberately laid stress on the economic factors of development because they provide the ossature on which literacy should be hinged if it is to be properly integrated with development. I need hardly say that we attach no less importance to social and cultural factors. Let no one here feel the slightest uneasiness on this score; Unesco has not suddenly sold its soul
The purpose of its endeavour to fit its action into the economic scheme of things is not to subordinate the former to the latter but, on the contrary, to humanize economics as far as possible by making its mechanisms subject to the options dictated by social and cultural considerations.

In the case of literacy work, these considerations play a particularly important part in determining the motivations and the forms of recognition entering into the process. It is therefore essential that those in charge of any literacy programme should collaborate closely with the representatives of the various movements and institutions whose influence and very existence are directly linked with the principal social and cultural components of the community. Here I am thinking primarily, and specially, of religious authorities and denominational institutions, and of all movements serving a professedly humanistic ideology. Their understanding, support and indeed co-operation are essential, and Unesco is pleased that it has received so many encouraging assurances in this matter from the most varied quarters.

More generally, we want our effort to attract the active support of all organizations which seek to fulfil the aspirations of a given sector of society, as part of the general progress of the community. I need mention only women’s organizations and youth organizations; it must be quite clear to everyone that they can play a vital part in the great movement for the liberation and advancement of man that the eradication of illiteracy represents.

These, then, are the basic general ideas emerging from our painstaking consideration of the whole body of Member States’ and Unesco’s own experience. The purpose of the experimental programme decided upon by the General Conference is to test these ideas systematically, in practice by carrying out certain pilot projects which, though certainly limited in number and range, are yet sufficiently varied and substantial to warrant conclusions that may be of general application.

This experimental programme—to run for five years from 1966—is now being launched with the aid, *inter alia*, of the
Special Fund and the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. In this connexion I should like to pay public tribute to the breadth of vision and magnificent spirit of co-operation displayed by my excellent colleagues, Mr. Paul Hoffman and Mr. David Owen, who immediately responded to my requests with a comprehension and a generosity for which I wish to thank them on behalf of the Organization.

If, as I think it will, the experiment succeeds and vindicates our policy of integrating literacy programmes with development, it will enable us to determine the priority to which literacy programmes are entitled, firstly, in national development plans; secondly, in bilateral aid and co-operation programmes; and, thirdly, in international programmes of aid for development at the three—now clearly defined—levels of technical assistance, pre-investment and investment. I think that, when this is finally established as clearly and precisely as we can desire, the major problems preliminary to the launching of concerted action by the international community for the eradication of illiteracy, including the problem of finance, will be solved on a regular, continuing basis.

Will the resources made available as a result of this integration and assignment of priority be sufficient to meet the needs? That is another question to which it is perhaps too early, as yet, to give a reply. We still have so much to do to plan our strategy, perfect our techniques, and organize the carrying out of this world-wide effort. The most that we can say of this particular instance of development is what is already known to be true for development as a whole—what emerged, in particular, at the last session of the Economic and Social Council, in July, when the Secretary-General's report on the progress (or lack of it) achieved half-way through the Development Decade was discussed. In the first place we can say that foreign aid, as at present conceived and practised, is inadequate, both in quantity and, still more, in type, to solve the problem of underdevelopment. We must resolutely adopt a quite different line of action, which is to organize the world through free but systematic international
co-operation—work for which the agencies of the United Nations system are eminently suited, by reason of their objectivity and disinterestedness. Secondly, we can say that an economy fundamentally devoted to development and one which holds itself obliged first to meet heavy expenditure on armaments, may have occasional common interests, but can never be profoundly in agreement or achieve enduring harmony: a choice usually has to be made.

Mr. President,

Apart altogether from these considerations which go beyond the strict limits of the question of literacy promotion, although they are entirely relevant to its context, there is no doubt that, in the course of development of international co-operation, this World Congress on the Eradication of Illiteracy is being held at the right time. Marking, as it does, an awakening to a problem affecting mankind as a whole, it represents the affirmation of a desire for justice which comes as a timely correction to a serious and dangerous deficiency in the equilibrium of our civilization. As an occasion for examining ways and means, this Congress can make a critical review of methods and techniques whose efficiency is for the first time commensurate with the problems and needs to be dealt with. Finally, concerned as it is with working out a strategy, it should be able, by profound study of lines of thought which are obviously converging more and more, to recommend a common approach, a common weight of importance, which in turn should lead naturally to concerted effort and the pooling of available resources.

Once all this is possible—as it was not in the past—there is no longer a moment to lose. Hundreds of millions of human beings are looking to you for the commencement of their spiritual deliverance.
SPEECH BY DR. HADI HEDAYATI
IRANIAN MINISTER OF EDUCATION
PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Before proceeding to the next item on the agenda, permit me to express my most hearty and sincere thanks for the mark of the confidence you have just shown in me by electing me president of the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy.

On assuming the chair I must make a confession: I feel slightly at a loss in facing this brilliant gathering of so many important persons and eminent experts who certainly have equal or better qualifications for the task. I feel sure that through me you intended to pay tribute to the Iranian people as a whole who, under the leadership of His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah are struggling to eradicate throughout the entire country the terrible evil of illiteracy. I am therefore fully aware of the honour that has fallen to me.

I am equally aware of the heavy responsibilities that are now mine, and I can assure you that the reason why I accept them is because I know that I can rely on your friendly co-operation and your unlimited indulgence.

Our age has witnessed a great many international conferences, in the course of which certain traditions have gradually grown up regarding the qualities needed in a president. Nowadays, the first requirement in a president is that he should direct the discussions with impartiality and objectivity, ensure that the rules of procedure are respected and keep to the time-table.
While realizing the difficulty of fulfilling all these requirements, I promise to do everything within my power to follow established usage and not to let you down.

At this point, I should like to make a remark which seems to me to be realistic. The president is no more than a delegate entrusted with special powers. He is an extension of the Congress, and must be a reflection of its wishes. While he can set the tone for the delegates, they in their turn can impose a certain style on his work. Thus there is a constant dialectical exchange between delegates and president. This is a great consolation to me as I begin my duties. Your own outstanding qualities and great competence ensure that my task will be an easy one. For this I should like to thank you in advance. By working together in a spirit of co-operation, we shall be able to bring our discussions to a successful conclusion.

Thus I accept the duties with which you have just entrusted me in the hope that they will be characterized by close collaboration. I should like now to ask your permission to make a special request. Each of you represents his government here, but at the same time you belong to the intellectual élite of the whole of mankind. What I wish to ask is that during the debates you will constantly bear in mind that in speaking on behalf of your countries you are also speaking on behalf of all other men.

The problem that we are here to discuss concerns our planet as a whole. Illiteracy is a scourge which helps to widen the gap between the educated and the uneducated. Its eradication is a prerequisite for mutual understanding between all peoples of the world, whether they belong to the advanced or the developing countries. We must try to overcome it together, working hand in hand. The fact that States which have got rid of illiteracy are taking part in this Congress alongside those which still suffer from it is the best proof of the truth of what I say. As stated in the excellent working paper prepared by the Secretariat, the convening of a Congress such as this was unthinkable only a few years ago. It reflects an increasingly strong sense of the interdependence of peoples. It is up to us to make the necessary effort
to ensure that it marks the decisive turning-point that hundreds of millions of men, living in ignorance, have been awaiting with impatience. It is up to us to keep our discussions at a high technical level and to attempt to draw up plans for practical action in the short time available to us.

I feel sure that each of you will contribute to the success of this historic undertaking.

Our agenda is an extremely heavy one, so I will put an end here to the remarks that I wished to make. With my apologies for having taken up your precious time, dear colleagues and friends, I wish to repeat my gratitude for the trust you have placed in me and to proffer my warmest wishes for the success of this Congress.
MESSAGES
TO THE CONGRESS

Wednesday, 8 September 1965
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI SHAHINSHAH OF IRAN

I have the honour to extend cordial greetings to Your Majesty on the opening, in the city of Teheran, of the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy.

The people and Revolutionary Government of Cuba have given a sympathetic reception to Your Majesty’s praiseworthy initiative in bringing together in your country’s capital eminent representatives of the whole world who are interested in finding adequate and effective means of eliminating one of the gravest ills of mankind.

The concern of the Revolutionary Government of Cuba to eradicate illiteracy has been expressed in actions of undeniable importance. The experience acquired in the literacy campaign, which constituted a veritable national mobilization and in a single year rid Cuba of this pestilence, can provide data and a model for any similar undertaking and we should be delighted if it helped in any way to achieve the aims of the Congress Your Majesty has convened. The Cuban delegation has instructions to offer its most cordial and effective help for the purposes of the Congress.

Feeling sure that the proposals which will be made will provide a basis for speeding up the literacy work that a large part of mankind needs today, I should like to express my best wishes to Your Majesty for the success of this noble undertaking.

Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado
Your Congress is convening at a strategic moment in the great campaign modern man is waging against the forces of ignorance. Wherever it exists, illiteracy is a barrier to man’s spiritual advancement and his economic development. It is particularly appropriate, therefore, that you should gather in Teheran at this time, in response to the generous invitation of His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran, and under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to explore methods of eliminating illiteracy.

It is right that your distinguished gathering should consider this problem on a world-wide basis. We in the United States fully support your purpose. In our own society, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 establishes an adult education programme to wipe out the vestiges of illiteracy which still remain with us.

We intend to further the objectives of the Unesco literacy programme and the efforts to achieve them through collective consultation and deliberation. And I am happy that this Congress, an outstanding example of such consultation, should take place in 1965—International Co-operation Year.

I wish you every success in your work.

Lyndon B. Johnson
MESSAGE FROM HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA

We are pleased to see the intensive and continuing co-ordinated efforts being made by national and international bodies on the eradication of world illiteracy, realising the immense challenge that illiteracy is bringing about. In bringing millions of peoples of the world to the access of ideas in written language as well as to the betterment of world social and economic development as a whole, we hope that the deliberations of your Congress will result in beneficial ways and means to the solution of this grave problem and in further strengthening international co-operation in this line. Our thanks are due to His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran for taking a leading role in this regard and for having the Congress held in Teheran. We wish the Congress every success.

HAILE SELASSIE
On the occasion of the opening of the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy we pay tribute to your joint work for man’s liberation. We wish every success to this important meeting whose consequences will inevitably have happy effects for the peoples of the world who aspire to happiness, progress and education. We are convinced that literacy is an important factor in economic and social development, permitting the effective application of the universal concepts of human justice, social equality and true peace. We have undertaken a systematic national mass literacy campaign. On this solemn occasion we should like to address our gratitude to Unesco, the international organizations and the governments of Member States for their help in ensuring the success of our undertaking.

Ahmad Sekou Touré
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

I am happy to send my greetings and best wishes to the World Congress of Ministers of Education meeting in Teheran from 8 to 19 September, under the aegis of His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah, to consider the eradication of illiteracy throughout the world. Considering that mass illiteracy is a scourge afflicting humanity as much as hunger and disease, its eradication is of fundamental importance for the economic, social and spiritual betterment of man.

The right to education is one of the fundamental rights of man and Unesco has been rightly charged with the responsibility for the world campaign against illiteracy. I hope that as a result of the work of the conference, the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies will afford all possible assistance to the countries where illiteracy is a blight, in order to conquer it speedily with a determined effort during the Development Decade. The Government of India will participate to the fullest extent in the World Campaign for the Eradication of Illiteracy and will extend to other countries whatever help they can give.

I congratulate His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah for his recognition of the magnitude and urgency of the problem and for his humane concern which have led to the convening of this conference. I hope that the representatives of all the nations assembled in Teheran will work with unity of purpose and action to achieve their objective.
I regret to say that owing to circumstances beyond our control it has not been possible for my Minister of Education to attend this conference for which we had made the necessary preparations. I wish the conference all success.

S. Radhakrishnan
MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER
OF JAPAN

At this juncture when mass illiteracy still persists in many parts of the world, it is of momentous significance that the Ministers of Education of the Member States of Unesco meet in conference in Teheran to work out a plan for its eradication.

In tendering my warmest appreciation for the most gracious offer of His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran to hold the World Congress and for the toils of Unesco in organizing it, I ardently hope that the Congress will achieve brilliant results.

EISAKU SATO
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALI

The people and Government of Mali are following the progress of your work with interest and hope. Welcome your efforts to find effective means of eliminating illiteracy in order to promote economic and social development. Thank Unesco and all international and governmental bodies for this work of fundamental importance to developing countries.

Modibo Keita
MESSAGE FROM HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF NEPAL

I have great pleasure in sending my cordial greetings to the distinguished Ministers of Education and other delegates participating in the World Conference on the Eradication of Mass Illiteracy, and in paying tribute to His Imperial Majesty the Shah of Iran for his initiative in convening this important conference in Teheran.

As nearly a billion men and women all over the world are illiterate, illiteracy is an international evil of gigantic proportions. It is a continuing challenge and impediment to the promotion of human progress and civilization. It is therefore fit and proper that, in the interest of world peace and prosperity, governments and peoples of the world should be dedicating themselves to the eradication of this evil in accordance with one’s means and circumstances, within the framework of Unesco’s world literacy campaign, and through this conference, making greater efforts in this noble task.

I extend good wishes to this Congress, and hope that it will succeed in considering the problem of illiteracy to the fullest possible extent, and devise most effective means and strategy for the total eradication of mass illiteracy.

Mohendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva
MESSAGE FROM THE 
PRESIDENT OF PAKISTAN 
TO HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY 
MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI, SHAHINSHAH 
OF IRAN

Your Majesty,

On behalf of the Government of Pakistan and on my own, I congratulate your Imperial Majesty on giving a lead to the world campaign for universal literacy by having a World Congress of Ministers of Education organized in Teheran. It is through the personal interest of your Imperial Majesty and the generosity of your government that Unesco has been able to hold this Congress.

Some 700 million people, nearly half the adult population of the world, are still unable to read and write. Most of them live in Asia and Africa. In a world of science and technology they are isolated, dispossessed and handicapped by a sense of inferiority among their fellow-men. They constitute a serious obstacle to economic and social progress. Literacy will give them a sense of dignity and self-esteem; it will help to develop national resources and finally it will promote understanding and peace in the world.

It is, therefore, gratifying to see that the world movement for eradication of mass illiteracy is gaining momentum through national efforts and intensified international co-operation, promoted by the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies, particularly Unesco.

The Teheran Conference constitutes an important step forward in this world-wide movement. I have no doubt that the deliberations of the Congress will be fruitful and its recommendations will provide guidance, direction and help to governments
and to national and international bodies in combating the menace of mass illiteracy in various regions of the world. May God bless the Congress with success.

I take this opportunity to renew to Your Imperial Majesty the assurance of my highest consideration, mutual friendship and continued co-operation.

With warmest regards.

Mohammad Ayub Khan
On behalf of the Council of State of the Socialist Republic of Rumania and on my own behalf, I have the honour to convey cordial greetings to the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, organized under the auspices of Unesco following the initiative taken by His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

I should like to assure all participants of my deep sympathy for the great cause which inspired this Congress, whose task is to discuss the problem of eradicating illiteracy throughout the world and the methods by which this humanitarian mission can be accomplished.

The Rumanian people have learnt by experience the beneficial effects of eradicating illiteracy through the far-reaching transformations that our country has undergone in all spheres of economic, political, social and cultural life. The Socialist Republic of Rumania is determined to make a continuing contribution to the efforts now being undertaken throughout the world with a view to finding the most effective means of eradicating illiteracy in order to further the economic and social progress of all peoples, to bring about wider understanding and mutual agreement, and to safeguard peace.

I should like to wish the Congress every success in achieving to the full the noble task it has undertaken.

Chivu Stoica
The World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, which has been convened in Teheran to examine an important problem whose solution is essential for the social, economic and cultural development of many countries, has received the full attention of the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and of the people of my country. The Czechoslovak delegation is authorized to inform the Congress of our experience in establishing a school and out-of-school educational system and to offer its co-operation wherever the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic could contribute to the literacy efforts. I should like to extend my personal good wishes and those of the whole Czechoslovak people for the success of the work of the Congress and to express the hope that this assembly of Ministers of Education of the Member States of Unesco will constitute an important stage in an effective work of international solidarity designed to guarantee an inalienable human right, the right to education.

Antonin Novotny
As your historic Congress begins its work, I should like to convey to you my warm wishes for its full success. The eyes of all the developing peoples are upon you. In their struggle against illiteracy, they hope your meeting will help to outline on a world scale the basic principles of a generous and effective action against one of the main factors in underdevelopment. All peoples must rely first on their own determination, but as participants in a struggle that is universal since it aims at man's liberation by developing and enriching all his faculties. The world-wide illiteracy campaign must be one of the imperatives of the international ethic. Advanced or backward, all peoples are united in this struggle which represents one of the great challenges of our time. Always in the van of any worthy struggle, Unesco has provided counsel and assistance. May this Congress, held at the initiative and under the high patronage of His Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran, open the way to human advancement, ever fuller and more concerted.

HABIB BOURGUIBA
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
OF THE SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF YUGOSLAVIA

It is with great pleasure that I have the honour to address greetings to the participants in the World Congress of Ministers of Education wishing them much success in their work and their efforts to eradicate illiteracy and solve one of the burning problems of the contemporary world. The struggle against illiteracy has today become an imperative of socio-economic progress in the world, especially that of the developing countries, responding to the hope of mankind for a better life, a happier future and world peace, for which reasons we support all international actions having this aim. I wish to assure you that Yugoslavia is following the work of your important meeting with lively interest, believing that it will make a considerable contribution to the eradication of illiteracy, that heavy legacy from the past.

Josif Broz Tito
We are very grateful to you for your kind letter inviting the Holy See to take part in the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy which, in accordance with the resolution adopted by the Unesco General Conference, will shortly be held in Teheran. By sending as our representative at this meeting a delegation headed by our dear son, Monseigneur Giovanni Benelli, Permanent Observer of the Holy See at Unesco, we mean to show the importance that we attach to your deliberations, to stress our hope that they will mark a decisive stage in the struggle against one of the great scourges of our time, and to demonstrate that the Catholic Church for its part, while carrying out its religious mission, is constantly concerned with raising the cultural and social standards of the men to whom it addresses its message, regardless of race, class or origin.

While in the past peoples have undoubtedly founded real cultures without mastering the art of writing, and while modern means of audio-visual communication offer tremendous possibilities, no one can deny the irreplaceable contribution of literacy, an incomparable source of progress for both men and society. It constitutes for mankind a fundamental factor in social integration and personal enrichment, vocational advancement and continuing education, and is at the same time an ideal instrument of economic progress and development for society. Without literacy—and this should also be stressed—man would be unable
to enjoy the great treasures of Oriental and Western literature, in which, as we all know, the Bible occupies a special place. Nor could he learn the art of discrimination and the mastery of thought which, by allowing him to apply his critical faculties to news and propaganda, make him truly free, ready to assume his destiny and to take part in social life in full lucidity and awareness.

This means that in order to achieve its aims to the full, literacy work must not remain an isolated process or a mere technique, but should take its place in the main stream of human advancement. This very ideal has for centuries inspired the Church’s work and led it—not without effort and sacrifice—to propagate reading and writing while spreading the Gospel. It is therefore happy to collaborate today with national and international organizations—and particularly Unesco—in bringing to the illiterate masses of the world the opportunity for human and social progress which is at present denied to them. For we are here concerned with the whole development of man and mankind, with a view to making available to all the truth, including both scientific truth—a major factor in culture and in economic and technical progress—and moral and spiritual truth, which alone can satisfy man’s highest aspirations.

We sincerely hope that the Teheran Congress, both through its work and its effect on international public opinion, will surely lead to a greater awareness of this grave problem and inspire a common determination to solve it by the best available means. The honour for making this Congress possible will belong to Unesco, while all peoples will be indebted to His Imperial Majesty the Shahinsah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Emperor of Iran, for promoting the Congress and helping to make it a reality.

It is therefore with great pleasure that we offer our best wishes to you, Sir, to the President of the Conference, to the noble people who are your hosts, and to the highly qualified delegations in attendance, and that we call down God’s blessings on all the efforts devoted to the eradication of illiteracy.

Paulus P. P. VI
MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

I should like to convey my best wishes for a successful meeting to all members of the Congress who have come together in Teheran at the gracious invitation of His Imperial Majesty the Shah to discuss the challenging problem of illiteracy, which still afflicts so many Member States of the United Nations. In past years the United Nations General Assembly has stressed the vital role of education, including the need to increase adult literacy, in the over-all strategy of development which is essential if the modest targets set for the Development Decade are to be transformed from aspirations into reality. The forthcoming session of the General Assembly will again be taking up the question of literacy and will, I feel certain, look forward to studying the fruits of your conference. In addition, co-operation is proceeding satisfactorily between the United Nations Special Fund and Unesco about how the Special Fund can most effectively lend support to the experimental stage of Unesco's world literacy programme. It is only through the joint efforts of individual countries and the world community, which will certainly be stimulated still further by your labour, that we can hope to wipe out illiteracy throughout the world.

U Thant
The International Labour Organisation, established to promote more social justice in the world, was bound to recognize the vital interest of the subject of this Congress for all those who, in any sector, are contributing to man’s advancement, for history is there to prove that poverty and ignorance, wherever they exist, endanger the prosperity of all.

The exploits of science, which in this second half of the twentieth century seems to be defying nature in order to prove the infinite power of man’s genius, are also showing up for what they are the lamentable conditions in which hundreds of millions of human beings still live, deprived of that dignity which we call human.

The new techniques science has provided in industry and agriculture demand more and more qualifications from workers in modern society. Every working man must understand his work, and no serious vocational training is conceivable without a good basic education, while no community can afford to leave unused a source of potential intelligence and manpower essential for its development.

The current International Labour Organisation programme tends to accord increased priority to the development of human resources especially through the creation of higher-level productive employment and the improvement of workers’ skills. Consequently a larger place is being accorded to literacy work
in appropriate activities of the organization, which means mainly those carried out in co-operation with Unesco, and not only in the form of practical activities but also studies and research.

The work of reducing and eradicating illiteracy thus forms an integral part of the ways and means of preparing for their working life those young people who have missed school and so have not found their right place in the working world.

Hence the concept of literacy is already being expanded, in the form of 'functional' literacy, to cover vital needs at the vocational level, and the debates of your Congress will, we believe, certainly open up many new prospects of co-operation between our two organizations.

I therefore hope sincerely that the appeal you will be making to the world's conscience will be heard, so that the various United Nations organizations, each in its own sector, can contribute to the general effort under the United Nations Development Decade and that, together, we shall open up a new road to humanity.

**David Morse**
CLOSING SPEECHES

Sunday, 19 September 1965
Mr. President,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured to be taking part today in the closing meeting of your great Congress, and to have this opportunity, in my capacity as Prime Minister, of bringing you the greetings and gratitude of the Iranian people. Our country is fully aware of the importance of your work and we are gratified at the significant results which you have achieved in so short a space of time. This is the first occasion in the history of the world that a Congress of such wide scope and with so high a level of representation has been held on the question of literacy promotion.

Others, better fitted than I, will draw the lessons from this Congress and will sum up, better than I could do, its main conclusions; but I would ask you to allow me to emphasize one point which seems to me to be the keystone of the problem—the link between literacy work and general development. Our country, like many of those represented here, has begun the great battle for development. We very soon perceived that in this field the traditional methods could not do all that we required. If we were to follow the conventional models, we should need many years to reach the present level—the 1965 level—of the more advanced countries.

A very great danger would lie ahead of us: when we had finally left the ground and reached our cruising speed, the more advanced countries would already have entered on another age. And while America and Europe were already venturing among
the stars, we should continue to crawl on the surface of our own planet! The gulf between us, far from narrowing, would have widened to a disturbing extent.

We were therefore obliged to choose short cuts which could take us more quickly to the only worth-while goal—to reach the threshold of the third millennium at the same time as the so-called rich nations. Such is the formidable challenge with which history confronts us; and it is a challenge, ladies and gentlemen, which we have resolutely accepted by embarking on the revolutionary reforms decreed by His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah, who has decided to attack the basic causes of underdevelopment, or, in other words, the central problem of structures.

The old agricultural patterns have vanished under the irresistible pressure of land reform; the industrialization and modernization of agriculture have been given priority in our economic plans, and large-scale projects are under way in all the country’s provinces.

The aim which we have set ourselves, however, does not consist solely in transforming the physical nature of our country by increasing the number of industries and creating artificial lakes and irrigation networks. It does not consist solely in increasing production at all levels. Our aim is, first and foremost, to break down feudal ties and transform the relationships between men. From our point of view, development has a much broader significance than is ordinarily ascribed to it. It is not merely a matter of building dams and erecting factories. How simple everything would be if it were! All that would be necessary would be to draw up the specifications and order the necessary parts from the more advanced countries.

In point of fact, the problem is far more complex: in our view, underdevelopment—I use the word advisedly because we must not allow ourselves to be frightened by words—is primarily a state of mind, an outmoded concept of existence. If progress is to get under way, the first necessity is to transform man himself and his mental structures. He must be aroused from the age-old apathy which was once his lot. And it is then that the problems
of education suddenly come under a new light and take on a paramount importance. The greatest obstacle to our development lay not in the absence of material resources, but rather in the appalling scourge of illiteracy. It is impossible for a country to enter the age which is opening up to mankind when 75 per cent of its population are illiterate! The clear-sightedness of our Sovereign has enabled us to shake off the yoke of ignorance. The spreading of knowledge is not only a matter of justice but is the indispensable prerequisite for development. The novel solution devised by our Sovereign in the form of the Education Corps, and the efforts we have made through our National Literacy Committee, entitle us to hope that in about ten years' time—in the time needed to carry out two development plans—illiteracy in Iran will be a forgotten thing.

Our aim is not simply to teach our fellow-citizens to read and write but also—and above all—to equip them to make a greater contribution to their country's advance and to enable them to put the knowledge thus acquired to good use. To embark on the path of development means creating new needs and helping the peoples to become more and more demanding. We are not afraid of such a programme, because a country lives through and for the mass of its inhabitants.

It is the needs and desires of the Iranian people which inspire our Sovereign in working out basic reforms. The generations to come will thus be increasingly efficient, increasingly competent, and hence able to give an ever greater impetus to the drive for development. But in our new world, endowed with rapid means of communication, enriched with a vast treasure of science and technology, the distances between nations are vanishing and the problems confronting the world's peoples are much alike. The second half of the twentieth century has made countries more interdependent than ever before, and common problems call for common solutions.

The problem of the struggle against illiteracy and the promotion of development represents just such a question, one which concerns everybody, the more advanced nations no less
than the backward ones. It was for this reason that His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah deemed it necessary last autumn to send a message to Heads of States and to the Director-General of Unesco recommending that this Congress be held. At that time, I had the honour to be chairman of our delegation to Unesco—I was then Minister of Finance—and by choosing me for that office, the Iranian Government sought to underline its conception of literacy work as something bound up with economic development. The time needed for organizing the Congress, and the programme of other international conferences, led the delegations assembled in Paris for the thirteenth session of Unesco’s General Conference to select September 1965 as the date for this Congress—a date which happened to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah’s accession to the throne.

One of the great thinkers of our time, ladies and gentlemen, has observed that there are significant coincidences in the world; and I am inclined to believe that this coincidence of two important dates is one such, and is deserving of mention. I should like to take this opportunity of telling you that the Iranian people are very proud of, and deeply touched by, the tribute which you have paid to the person of our Sovereign and the great work he has undertaken, more particularly in respect of the struggle against illiteracy. May I in turn, on behalf of the Iranian Government and people, convey to you our gratitude for the very important results of your work, for I am certain that this Congress will go down to history as a decisive turning-point in the international effort to eradicate illiteracy. In the space of a few days, you have been able, in a spirit of complete co-operation, to consider the main lines that the work should follow and the main types of possible solutions.

Your recommendations will be of the greatest value to all those throughout the world who are struggling against illiteracy, and I am sure that they will make it possible to speed on this great struggle which mankind has to wage on the road to its complete emancipation. You may be confident that we shall
study the report of your meeting closely and shall endeavour to make the best possible use of it. His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah has already decided to establish a prize of 1 million old French francs, to be awarded annually to the person or institution having made the most significant contribution to the struggle against illiteracy. The prize will be placed in the hands of Unesco, which will be responsible for awarding it.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think I may say without exaggeration that your Congress has marked a decisive turning-point—as it was expected to do. When you decided to come to Teheran, you made an important engagement. This meeting in September has now taken place and has already borne its first fruits. I should therefore like to convey my most sincere and cordial congratulations to you.

In conclusion, I should like to tell you how happy the people and Government of Iran have been to welcome you to their country. I hope that you in turn have enjoyed your stay—unfortunately all too short—among us. Allow me to wish you bon voyage as you leave for your respective countries, and to ask you to convey to your governments and your peoples the cordial greetings of the Iranian nation.
Mr. President,
Mr. Prime Minister,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The Teheran Congress now drawing to its close will, I am confident, mark an important date in the history of Unesco and, on behalf of the Organization which I have the honour to serve, I wish to take this opportunity of telling you of my great satisfaction and my profound gratitude.

I should like, first of all, to tell you how impressed I have been by the spirit which has constantly inspired your work, both in commission and in plenary meetings, enabling you, as the Rapporteur of the Third Commission mentioned earlier, not only to adopt resolutions concerning international co-operation but to give a remarkable illustration throughout this Congress of what such co-operation can be in practice.

I ask no better proof of this than the admirable report which you have just adopted unanimously, and which very clearly sums up the abundant harvest represented by the eighty or so recommendations formulated by the commissions. Dominated by the general conclusions drawn up by the Drafting Committee, whose purpose is to bring out the main guiding ideas underlying those recommendations, the report in itself already represents a tremendous step forward. But it also provides a sound basis for still more far-reaching conquests and I should like, Mr. President, to mention briefly the essential points which, I feel, distinguish the satisfactory outcome of your work.

In the first place, I feel that considerable progress has been
made on the conceptual level, both as regards the definition of
the elements of the problem and as regards the analysis of methods
and techniques calculated to furnish solutions meeting the re-
quirements of the various situations. If we compare the ideas con-
tained in the conclusions which you have unanimously approved
and the state of uncertainty in which, to be candid, we found
ourselves eighteen months ago, we cannot but rejoice at the
progress made. For an Organization like Unesco, in which ideas
play a key part and form the essential basis of our work, it is of
paramount importance that so many Ministers of Education and
high educational officials should have agreed here on a certain
number of clear concepts—accepted, at any rate, as working
hypotheses—and provisional conclusions: in other words on the
essential framework of any international co-operation in a field
such as the one with which this Congress has dealt. These concepts
are doubtless many-faceted, but it is precisely because of this
that they can help to clarify a wide diversity of situations, and
one cannot but be struck by the convergence of ideas which
became so freely and spontaneously apparent as the discussions
advanced, despite the very wide variety of experience on which
they were based. For my own part, I regard this development
as an essential aspect of your work and as an assurance of
future progress.

But I should also like to emphasize the importance of a
second point. Over and above the identity of views apparent
in your conclusions with regard to the nature of the problem
involved and the appropriate methods for its solution, you have
reached agreement on the strategy required for the work to be
done, at both national and international level, to eliminate
steadily and as rapidly as possible the world-wide scourge of
illiteracy. The striking unanimity which you have displayed in
this respect, and your realistic approach to the examination of
the essentially practical problems arising in connexion with the
organization and co-ordination of the efforts to be made in the
various countries, as well as in connexion with international
co-operation, have given me the greatest satisfaction. What
emerges from your resolutions as a whole—and, more especially, from the eighteen paragraphs of the general conclusions that preface them—is the conception of concerted action which should make it possible, I believe, to bring into play the means needed for the successful completion of a great undertaking. I am extremely glad that the intellectual progress I mentioned a moment ago should have been accompanied, if not by decisions, at least by a body of convergent opinions regarding the guiding principles of the work to be done. If the factors and forces which should enter into the strategy that you have devised were in fact to operate, I believe that the necessary conditions would then exist for the eradication of illiteracy from the face of the earth in a relatively short space of time. It remains, of course, to put this strategic plan into effect—that is a question of determination—but, without making any claim to foretell the future, I personally should be very much surprised if, after a congress of this importance, we were not very soon able to see the first tangible effects of your recommendations. Alike in the case of Member States where illiteracy is rife, of countries anxious to help such States under their own bilateral assistance programmes, and of international agencies and other bodies conducting multilateral aid programmes, I should be extremely surprised, I repeat, if the responsible authorities, each in its own field, were not to give literacy work the priority which you recommend, and were not to bring about that vital integration of which the Prime Minister of Iran has spoken in such clear terms: the integration of literacy work with national development plans in general and with educational plans in particular.

To ensure that a strategic plan of such scope as the one you have devised is carried out, however, mankind as a whole must recognize what is involved. So thoroughly have you appreciated this point that only this afternoon, after a detailed discussion, you decided to bring about a mobilization of world public opinion so as to enlist the support of men's hearts and minds and encourage people of good-will everywhere to join in the concerted action which you recommend. This is the third important aspect
of your work which I feel should be emphasized, since this psychological action, dealt with in your last resolution, gives to all those previously adopted by you the ethical dimension necessary to the success of the gigantic undertaking to which we shall be applying ourselves together. This, too, gives me the greatest satisfaction, for, just as there is a realism in respect of means—which is the most classic form of realism, to which I referred earlier when paying tribute to the realism of your strategic plan—so also there is a realism in respect of ends, which is, in my view, the higher form, and which is sometimes known as idealism.

The solemn and urgent appeal that you have thus decided to make to all those having any responsibility for the guidance of minds and of opinion has in any case, I am delighted to say, met with an immediate and encouraging response, since the Prime Minister of Iran, on behalf of His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah, told us only a few moments ago of his decision to place a prize at the disposal of Unesco each year, to be awarded to an individual or institution having made a particularly distinguished contribution to the struggle against illiteracy. I have noted this offer, Mr. Prime Minister, with the greatest respect and gratitude and when I submit it, as our regulations require, for the Executive Board’s approval, I shall propose that the prize be named the ‘Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Prize’.

Since I have referred to the Executive Board—whose distinguished Chairman will no doubt address you later—I should like to outline briefly how I see my own responsibilities in regard to the application of the recommendations and resolutions that you have adopted.

As I pointed out in my opening address, this Congress is not a conference of plenipotentiaries and its resolutions cannot therefore be legally binding on governments. Nor, since it is not an organ of Unesco, can it commit the Organization; but it is none the less a conference of States and, as such, fully entitled to address recommendations to the Member States and to the Organization. As far as the Member States are concerned, it is for you, ladies
and gentlemen, to convey the unanimous desires of this Congress to the governments which have sent you here and, even more important, to report to them on the spirit in which your work has been conducted so that, acting with full sovereign powers, either individually or collectively, they may endeavour to put into practice the principles which you have formulated and to achieve the objectives which you have laid down.

As far as Unesco is concerned, in my capacity as head of its Secretariat, I hereby undertake to place the matter as soon as possible before the appropriate authorities of the Organization—the Executive Board and the General Conference—so that they may decide on the practical action to be taken on your recommendations. Although time is very short, I expect, in the first place, to submit the question to the Executive Board, whose 71st session is to begin very shortly, with the meeting, on 28 September, of the Finance and Administrative Commission. I am certain, moreover, that the Chairman of the Executive Board, who is with us here today, will readily authorize me to use the emergency procedure so that an item relating to the Teheran Congress may be included in the agenda of the 71st session, and that I shall accordingly be able to obtain forthwith the authorizations of principle that I shall need if I am to take various measures which seem to me to be required promptly—in other words, before the Board, at its May 1966 session, proceeds to the detailed consideration which the important and extensive report of your Congress will demand.

I do not believe that the Executive Board, at its 71st session, will actually have time to examine this report in detail, but I hope that, in the light of the document I shall submit to it, it will be able to reach a decision on my proposals concerning action to be taken during the months ahead, when Unesco will, among other things, be convening two major conferences on education. The first of these will be held in Bangkok next November and will bring together the Asian Ministers of Education. The second will be held in Tripoli in the spring of 1966 and will be organized for the Ministers of Education of the Arab States. At these
meetings—which will be followed in June 1966 by the Conference of Latin American Ministers of Education in Buenos Aires—the Organization, with the assistance of qualified representatives of the governments of the regions concerned, will give attention not only to the problems peculiar to each of these regions but also to broader problems of world-wide significance. It is most important, therefore, that the report of the Teheran Congress be included among the basic documents for these conferences, and hence that the Executive Board should apply itself forthwith to the question of the literacy campaign.

I should like to take this opportunity, Mr. President, of telling you how grateful I am that you should have invited me to act as the spokesman of your Congress before the United Nations General Assembly which, as you know, has before it a report that the Secretary-General was requested to prepare, in collaboration with myself, under the terms of a resolution adopted by the General Assembly in December 1963. Circumstances prevented discussion of this report in 1964, but it is very soon to be examined by the Second Committee of the General Assembly and, if the Executive Board authorizes me to do so, I intend to go to New York myself in order to present, as a supplement to that report, the recommendations on literacy and adult education which the twenty-eighth Conference on Public Education adopted in Geneva last July, and the conclusions which you have just formulated here in Teheran. The General Assembly, which is not concerned with the technical aspect of the problem but with its considerable importance on the economic, political and moral levels, will thus be able to see exactly what progress has been made since the question was first submitted to it, and possibly to adopt such measures as it considers the situation calls for.

Such, Mr. President, broadly outlined, are my reasons for feeling the keenest satisfaction at the excellent work done by your Congress, and such the immediate prospects which seem to me to be opening up before us as regards the practical action which all of you, I know, wish should follow it. To go further
would be to enter the realm of speculation and this I do not wish to do. I am sure, however, that the competent organs of Unesco, i.e., the Executive Board and the General Conference, will make it an object to take decisions, based on your Congress's recommendations, which will enable international action to move on to a new phase.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I should like to say a word about the vote of thanks just adopted by the Congress—thanks addressed partly to the Secretariat and therefore giving evidence of an excessive generosity. It is an honour for the Secretariat to serve, and we consider ourselves amply rewarded so long as our work has met with your approval. But while the men and women of the Secretariat feel that they have done no more than their duty, they will none the less be profoundly touched, I can assure you, by the terms in which the Congress has paid tribute to them.

For my own part, I should like to associate myself unreservedly with the thanks extended in the same resolution to Iran. We have all been deeply moved, Mr. Prime Minister, by the hospitality and the welcome which we have met with here, and we leave far richer than we were on arrival: richer in knowledge, impressions and memories. We are also leaving with heightened courage, for all we have seen at this Congress and throughout your great country has been a source of inspiration to us and has confirmed us in our deep conviction that victory is always sure when we put our trust in man.

It was indeed fitting, ladies and gentlemen, that it should be here in this ancient land of civilization, where, from the dawn of history, man dedicated the altars of his mountains to the worship of fire, and later elevated into a religion his meditation on the eternal struggle between good and evil, symbolized by light and darkness—it was fitting, Mr. Prime Minister, that it should be here, on the gracious invitation of your Sovereign, that a flame should be lit which will not be quenched, and that so many governments should solemnly undertake to strive that there be no more darkness in the minds of men and that mankind be wholly compound of light.
Mr. President,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with sincere emotion and inexpressible pleasure that I come to this rostrum at the end of these days of work crowned, as all those who have spoken before me have taken pleasure in recording, with success. This success is due to several factors: it is due above all to you, the delegates, to the fact that all countries have come to appreciate that illiteracy is a scourge. For years past, ever since Unesco was first founded, all countries have been seeking ways of doing away with this scourge—such is the word, the only word, to qualify illiteracy—and symposia, meetings and conferences have been held by Unesco; it has sent experts throughout the world, it has organized services to combat illiteracy, but there was one thing lacking—that world-wide awareness, that universal awareness, which has been apparent at this Congress. This success is due to the fact that all the delegations are made up of men and women fully conversant with the problem, who have studied and experienced it in their respective countries. In the commissions, again, other experiences have been studied, and it is for this reason that we have achieved such magnificent results.

This Congress has been described as historic; it is now, in fact, the results of this Congress which are historic, results which demonstrate an appreciation of the problem of illiteracy not only in the countries where it is still rife but even in those countries where it has long since been eradicated and where it is viewed
from afar as a natural phenomenon, like one of those typhoons which, striking certain countries, leave them themselves untouched. All these countries have come to recognize the problem and are ready to contribute their aid. Personally, I believe that, although this assembly does not have full powers of decision, Ministers representing States, heads of delegations representing sovereign countries, were not speaking idly when they said that their countries were undertaking to do all they could to provide resources, to increase the budget available for the struggle against illiteracy. It is my belief that, now that we have the means, we shall be able to go ahead with the work; that the success we have achieved here will be translated into practical achievement, and that the part to be played by Unesco and, first and foremost, by the Secretariat is now becoming clearer.

The Executive Board will study all this, I am confident, because it is represented here not only by its chairman but by seven members who, by a marvellous coincidence, represent all the cultural, geographical and even ideological regions of the world; and it will certainly respond to all the requests that the Director-General of Unesco may make. I am certain, I repeat, that the States will honour their signatures—for surely the fact of raising one's card to indicate 'I am in favour of this resolution' is tantamount to a signature—and that the Director-General will secure all the means needed to begin this struggle against ignorance.

It has been maintained from this rostrum that it is improper to say that illiteracy is the first thing to fight against. I hold the opposite view, because all evils have their roots in illiteracy. Someone said that illiteracy was a danger to illiterates. It does indeed place them in danger because, in their ignorance, they do not know how to guard against sickness and disease, they cannot find, or develop, the resources they need to live; hunger and disease alike are rooted in ignorance. With science and knowledge to help them men will be able to defend themselves against all these evils; they will learn the rules of hygiene. Hence, the struggle against illiteracy must be given priority.

I do not wish to take up too much of your time, especially
as you have just heard the Director-General's characteristically profound and precise analysis of the results of our work, but I should like to sum up by saying that I think the success we have achieved has been largely due to the working conditions and other facilities provided for us (it is most important to be able to arrive on time, to have all the necessary means, etc.) and, generally speaking, to the superb and faultless organization which the Government of His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah has placed at our disposal. You have all expressed your thanks already, and I should like to join you in repeating those thanks yet again and in conveying our congratulations to the government for having arranged this Congress to coincide with such a notable anniversary, thus enabling us to witness so many demonstrations of popular rejoicing, to attend the evening of prayer—which impressed me, personally, very much—and placing our meeting under the happiest of auspices.

Besides all this, the Congress will leave behind the resolution that 8 September be proclaimed International Literacy Day. This will remain in all our countries, and more will be heard of it. It will be, as it were, a flame to keep alive the struggle until there are no more illiterates in the world; and this will be due to our meeting, to the proposal made by His Imperial Majesty, conveyed to the General Conference of Unesco by the Iranian Minister of Finance, Mr. Hoveyda, the leader of the Iranian delegation to the thirteenth session. I said at the time that I was most happy that a country should have sent a Minister of Finance to an educational meeting; and that it was an example which all countries might well follow because, without finance, we are paralysed. Fortunately, Mr. Hoveyda, now Prime Minister of his country, is still with us and it is above all thanks to him that the Congress has proved so successful. I should like to thank you all and to conclude by saying that Iran has just bestowed the title of 'Aria Mehr' on His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah, a title which signifies 'The Light of Iran'. I believe that, as a result of this Congress, Iran itself may claim the title of 'Dounia Mehr', 'The Light of the World'.

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Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, convened by Unesco on the initiative of His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah, is drawing to its close. After eleven days of strenuous work, of abundant and fruitful discussions, of lofty inspirations and generous proposals, I think we can say, with all due modesty, that we have reached the end of a great Congress. It will have marked a decisive stage in the struggle against this scourge by which mankind is afflicted and which hinders its development and the achievement of the noblest aspirations of our time. In the course of a very broad examination, we have considered all the aspects of illiteracy and of literacy work throughout the world. We have laid bare the roots of illiteracy and spoken of its consequences; we have examined the lessons of the past and analysed actual experiences. We have sought means and solutions. We have devised a new strategy for the campaign against illiteracy. We have considered the needs and methods of international co-operation, which is essential if illiteracy is to be wiped from the face of the earth. We have made our contribution to the decisive combat which must be waged by mankind. If humanity is to become one family, it must do away with the chasm which divides the world into two groups—the haves and the have-nots—and it must help the developing countries.

At the conclusion of our discussions, there is no need to revert
to the themes so clearly dealt with in the documents which we have adopted. With your permission, I will merely draw your attention to certain key points in your deliberations which open up new prospects in this undertaking—so difficult, but also so noble and so essential to mankind in its striving towards greater fraternity and greater justice. In my view, ladies and gentlemen, our discussions have been highly successful in three respects. Firstly, we have laid down clearly and unequivocally the content henceforth required for the educational system. In the face of the false dilemma—school education or adult literacy programmes—we have insisted that the eradication of illiteracy should be carried out simultaneously on two levels: that of general provision of schooling for the younger generation, and—wherever the problem arises—that of literacy teaching and functional education for adults as those in whose hands now lies the present and future of their country. The Congress displayed such unanimity on this point that the conclusion, in my view, is destined to mark a turning-point in the educational policy alike of the various countries and of the international community. We are entitled to hope that the time is now past when literacy work was treated as a peripheral activity, endowed with infinitesimal funds and sacrificed to other forms of education. We are entitled to hope that it will be given a higher priority as a consequence of a necessary balance and a close integration between the different types of school and out-of-school education, to the end that the modern world may achieve the synthesis it demands—namely, lifelong education.

Then, we have thrown fresh light on the reasons why literacy work must be an integral part of economic and social development plans no less than of educational plans. The implementation of development plans which the younger nations are pursuing with growing determination and courage calls for ever more active and effective participation not only by the leaders and the élite groups, or even by specialized personnel, but also by the broad masses of the population—women no less than men—on whom the success of such plans depends. These men and women
must feel themselves to be involved in the new tasks, they must be prepared for them and must be better equipped from the vocational angle to carry them out. Adult literacy can ensure this; and it is because we recognize this role that we have finally abandoned the concept of rudimentary and elementary literacy teaching and have defined it as functional. Another consequence of this approach is that literacy work can no longer be left solely to teachers nor be mainly dependent upon private and voluntary endeavours. It is a matter for governments; it represents an element in general policy. But, this being so, all private and voluntary endeavours, the co-operation of people's organizations, trade unions, workers' groups, vocational, religious and cultural bodies, women's associations and youth movements, together with the participation of all the anonymous voluntary workers, are essential to an undertaking in which all sectors of all countries should be mobilized.

Lastly, our Congress has recognized with the utmost force that illiteracy is not only a national scourge but also a worldwide scourge which affects the entire international community. Recognition of this fact represents a magnificent assertion of international solidarity in a sphere where co-operation has hitherto been insufficient. There was general agreement in admitting that illiteracy cannot be a matter of indifference to those countries which have long since shaken off its yoke, for they, too, suffer from it. The whole world finds its progress hindered by the existence of hundreds of millions of adult illiterates whose number, moreover, is constantly growing. One of the practical results of our Congress should be an expansion of international co-operation in this sphere, an increase of bilateral and multilateral assistance, an intensification of exchanges of experiences between one country and another, a concentration and harmonization of the efforts made by the international community. It is my hope that the era of valiant campaigns conducted by countries fighting almost single-handed in an atmosphere of comparative indifference, and with aid in no way proportionate to their efforts, will now make way for more concerted action. In regard to co-
operation, we have adopted clear guiding lines, have formulated specific recommendations addressed to the various competent authorities, and have suggested solutions. We may legitimately hope that these recommendations and suggestions will be examined with the attention which their purpose merits and that they will be followed by acts.

Such, then, are some of the encouraging reflections which our discussions have inspired in me. But, while we have grounds for being rightly satisfied, we should realize that the real work is only now beginning and that success will be measured more by the effectiveness of our achievements rather than by the wisdom of our words. To these few remarks which I was anxious to make on the results of our Congress I should add that these extremely important results were brought about in record time. This noteworthy achievement, ladies and gentlemen, was primarily made possible by your readiness to co-operate in the conduct of our work in a spirit of complete understanding. Thanks to your prompt response to what I asked for at the beginning, all of us together have presided at this Congress. Notwithstanding all our good-will, however, we could not have completed our work in time if we had not been assisted by an extremely competent and efficient secretariat. This remark applies likewise to the interpreters, whose skill has been beyond all praise.

I am confident, ladies and gentlemen, that all of you here will join with me in paying tribute to the whole of the Unesco Secretariat, which has done a magnificent job.

In conclusion, I should like to thank you once again for the confidence and support which you have given me throughout these proceedings, and for the soundness of approach, the honesty and the objective conciliatory and co-operative spirit by which our deliberations have been distinguished.

I should also like, personally, to thank Mr. Bowers and Miss Friderich, whose assistance has been of the greatest value to me. And lastly, I should like to address myself particularly to the Director-General of Unesco, Mr. René Maheu. To the thanks we
extend to him for having convened this Congress in response to
the proposal made by His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah, and
for having lent the Secretariat's assistance, I should like, on
behalf of you all, to add my gratitude for the part which he
himself has played. By the richness of his ideas and the clarity
of his statements, he has made a major contribution to the happy
issue of our deliberations. By the warmth of his words he has
convinced us that Unesco, constitutionally competent to assume
the basic responsibility in the struggle against illiteracy, will not
only devote its resources to this mighty task but will do so with
all its heart. It is on this note that I should like to conclude,
because it is a note which I feel has dominated the discussions.
Throughout the Congress, the direction of our work has been
determined on the one hand by the rational search for solutions,
required by so novel and uncharted an undertaking, and by the
analysis of the problems to which it gives rise, but, on the other,
by the abiding conviction that all men are committed to this
task since mankind itself is at stake. For this immense
endeavour, made with what are still such modest means,
perseverance, ingenuity and sound management will be
essential, but, besides these, there must also be unremitting
intellectual precision, ceaseless concern, boundless sympathy
and much hope.

Before bringing the session to a close, ladies and gentlemen,
I should like to tell you once again how much I, as president,
have appreciated the high standard maintained in your discus­sions, and your devotion to the cause of literacy throughout the
world. Thanks to your competence, your sense of proportion and
your courtesy, this Congress has marked a decisive turning­
point in the struggle against ignorance. It now remains for us to
proceed to action. We shall all, I am convinced, exert ourselves
to that end.

Before I conclude, I have pleasure in mentioning that Her
Imperial Highness, Princess Ashraf, is present at this closing
meeting. I think I speak for you all in presenting our respects
and our gratitude to Her Highness for her untiring efforts on
behalf of the cause to which the Congress wishes all success—the cause of literacy.

I thank you most warmly for your collaboration and I now formally declare the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy closed.