UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address
by
Mr Federico Mayor

Director-General
of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

at the inaugural session of
"Beyond ECO–92"

Manaus, 10 February 1993
The forces that oppose change are immense: interests of all kinds, inertia, lack of vision, and the feeling that change is something external to us, something to be accomplished by others in a process of which we are critical spectators. Change must take place in each of us, every day. Only the sum of all individual transformations can succeed in overcoming the obstacles to collective change. Help the transformation of each mind and heart to take place and the urgent changes that today appear impossible will become reality.

Mr President,
Governor,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to be with you here in the "home of ecology" as the State of Amazonia was referred to during the Earth Summit, here in the green city of Manaus, which has much to tell us about the relationship between the natural and cultural environments and about the approach we should follow in the follow-up to UNCED - the implementation of Agenda 21.

I am particularly glad to address such a distinguished gathering of social scientists. The Earth Summit has produced a tidal wave of recognition (hopefully environmentally friendly!) of the need for transdisciplinary approaches to the critical problems facing us, as individuals and societies, at the end of the 20th century. The social sciences have a central role to play in providing the substantive targets and time frame to bring about the necessary transformations. Their analyses and research will be essential to understanding and coping with the changes we must operate particularly in our behaviour. They will be necessary to strengthening our capacities and adapting institutions to the pressing needs of our time; to transferring the emphasis with resolution and persistence from the economic aspects to the social ones; and to giving to culture the priority it deserves in the political agenda both at national and international levels.

Man-made environmental disasters are the result of a variety of factors, such as distorted price systems that do not reflect environmental costs, poverty, inadequate education and lack of democracy. Hazards such as climate change and ozone depletion arise primarily from the wasteful and self-indulgent patterns of production and consumption in the rich countries, as an unintended consequence of the same processes that have produced their wealth. In poor countries, shortages of capital and trained manpower severely limit the possibility of switching to other economic activities when the natural resources can no longer sustain existing ones. Many of these countries find themselves locked into a vicious circle which was exacerbated by the wrong approach and measures too often adopted in trade and economics at the international level during the 1980s. A world economy that transforms developing countries into exporters of capital to rich nations (in the period 1983-1989, creditors in the rich countries received net debt-related transfers of $242 billion from the poor countries) necessarily implies destruction.
of the environment and resources on which developing countries depend for their future. At the same time it increases the global gap, the world polarity, the threats to common security. As in the case of capital, a net talent flow from South to North is an imperative indication that change must take place before a social explosion demonstrates once more that the short-sighted were too influential and the far-sighted too silent. It is not a question of the developing countries only. In terms of real welfare, the results are very meagre in the most advanced countries. The '60s are too far and too close to be forgotten.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends and colleagues,

What does "beyond ECO 92" mean to us? It means that words must be translated into deeds. That the time for decisive action has come. That we cannot continue to condone, by our silence or our inaction, the poisoning of the air, water and soil, the heritage of our children and of future generations.

"Beyond ECO 92" means first and foremost effecting radical changes in our industrial and trade patterns. From the point of view of economics, we need to value the carrying and absorptive capacities of the Earth's natural systems as economic resources if we are going to maintain them. This has to be reflected in national accounting systems. Original models that ensure that producers trade at realistic prices must be developed. We have to remember that in the long term investment in the environment will generate more resources that it consumes.

Economics - in this as in most contexts - merges into ethics. Scarcities of natural resources, both quantifiable and non-quantifiable, such as air, water, arable soil, or comfort and well-being, require trade-offs, choices that take us into the moral domain. Moreover, these choices are global in their implications. We have come to realize that planetary interdependence does not mean universal benefit. In 1960, per capita GNP in the richest 20% of countries was **30 times** higher than in the poorest 20%; by 1989 it was **60 times** higher. The LDCs share of world trade has fallen in two decades from 0.8% to 0.4%. Official development assistance currently represents 0.35% of the world's combined GNP (compared with the UN target of 0.7%); but, because 70% of ODA is bilateral, the richest 40% of the developing world receives **twice as much aid per capita** as the poorest 40%. Basic education, primary health care, safe drinking water, family planning and nutrition programmes receive only 6.5% of ODA. I quote these figures simply to underline that, from the point of view of sustainable development, our world is condemned to be "one or none".

All this adds up to some very difficult decisions for politicians and decision-makers - decisions that need to be taken on the basis of a rigorous assessment of all the scientific factors and, at the same time, in the light of values that
transcend economics. Yet - as I have emphasized above - the required changes will be the sum of individual change, not merely the result of political decisions. We all have an ethical responsibility in this matter. Our liberty is the liberty of self-government: it does not mean permissiveness but rather being in charge of our own destiny and - I believe - seeing that destiny as linked to the distinctive forces of creativity that express themselves through us. What we need perhaps more than anything else at the present time is an active cosmovision.

In this International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples, here in Manaus, our thoughts naturally turn to the harmonious relationship the indigenous people of the Amazon have for so long developed with their lands and environment. Their example underlines how different forms of social organization may arise as a direct response to biodiversity. Similarly, the "cultural forest" concept and the establishment of anthropogenic forest islands by groups of indigenous Amazonian populations illustrate how different forms of social organization can cause changes in the original biodiversity of a landscape. Sociodiversity and biodiversity thus reveal themselves to be two sides of the same coin - so to speak. Indigenous peoples have invaluable lessons to teach us in our search for ways of overcoming environmental degradation throughout the world, and we need to take stock of the particular contributions each sphere of culture has to make.

At the same time, we have to find ways of harmonizing our cultural diversity. We today witness the way in which human communities are tearing themselves apart in the name of diversity. Hatred, intolerance and violence are also formidable enemies of the environment. The environmental awareness of the civil society has made an important contribution to the emergence of new democracies. And through the unprecedented involvement of non-governmental actors, the Earth Summit has contributed to the consolidation of participatory democracy worldwide.

The challenge after Rio is to maintain the momentum of commitment to sustainable development, to transform it into policies and practice, and to give it effective and co-ordinated organizational support. It is important in particular that the Summit should mark a step towards the establishment of greater international solidarity. Nothing less can help foster the development of the marginalized people of the Earth, can motivate people to turn away from wasteful consumeristic lifestyles. In ecology too, the global view is essential. For example, we need a global evaluation to place the use of the Amazon's resources in perspective. How are the world's total resources to be used in a sustainable way? Resources after all, cannot be regarded as untouchable, to be preserved as in a museum. The point is that resources should be used rationally, that is to say, sustainably from a planetary viewpoint. It is essential that people everywhere become aware of these issues and, thinking globally, assume responsibility for local sustainable development.
Within the overall United Nations effort, UNESCO has a broad and substantial contribution to make to the complex educational, scientific and ethical problems posed by the challenge of sustainable development. Education at all levels, formal and non-formal, is essential in moving, through increased knowledge and improved capacity-building, towards sustainable development. The ECO-ED Conference that took place in Toronto in October 1992 represents a hallmark in this respect. It is these kinds of new modalities of action that can transform obsolete practices into very successful ones.

Reducing population growth, improving urban and rural living conditions and increasing economic growth all depend on access to knowledge and the transfer and sharing of knowledge. For the 1994-1995 programme and budget exercise, an interdisciplinary and inter-agency co-operation project on environment and population education and information for human development has been set up in UNESCO to make sure that natural and social sciences as well as education contribute substantially to the process of global change. Our Organization will also further develop its unique international network of biosphere reserves as sites for conservation, research and management.

The great and growing importance in this context of cities and their regions has been recognized in UNESCO programmes for several years past. UNESCO's four intergovernmental scientific programmes on the environment and natural resources will be enriched by the establishment of MOST (Management of Sustainable Transformations), an international social science research programme which joins the intergovernmental science programmes in taking up the challenges of human sustainable development. MOST will foster policy-relevant knowledge and capacity-building on issues such as coping with the sustainable management of cities as well as with economical, technological and environmental transformations at national and regional levels. The UNITWIN programme, including the UNESCO Chairs scheme for fostering learning in development and environment, will further lead to the establishment of important university networks, of which UNAMAZ is a striking example of successful South-South co-operation.

With imagination we must re-discover the essence of our missions, of our goals. With imagination we must find new avenues to reconcile economic development with respect for the environment - for instance, through cultural tourism. We are trying to address new challenges and threats with old remedies. More than the revenue per capita what really matters is the capita per revenue, with a fabulous multiplier effect. Yes, what matters today is talent and a measured sense of risk.

I would like to conclude by conveying to you a message from the President of the Inter-American Development Bank, Mr Enrique Iglesias, who wishes to assure you of his willingness to continue his long-standing support for your activities in the Amazon.
Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainable development is indivisible. It is a process based on partnership and sharing, in which we are all students and teachers at the same time. It offers the opportunity for a joint learning process of global dimension which takes into account that we are faced with interlocking problems. Our first and foremost task has to be to radically reduce poverty and ignorance and injustice in order to preserve peace in the world, without which nothing is possible. But we have also to ensure that co-operation is placed above parochialism, mutual respect above domination, and solidarity above selfishness. This is the challenge and opportunity that "Beyond ECO-92" represents.

This is what must be done to make the Amazon "Senhora da sua grandeza" as Candido Mendes said in his inspired speech at the opening of this meeting. I wish you great success. Your success will be the success of all of us.