UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
Mr Federico Mayor

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

on the occasion of the presentation of
the 1993 Felix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize

UNESCO, 6 July 1994
(The Director-General began his address in French)

Mr President of Côte d'Ivoire,
Mr President of Portugal,
Madam Prime Minister of The Republic of Turkey,
Mr Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal,
Distinguished Prize-winners,
Mr President and members of the Jury,
Mr President of the General Conference,
Madam Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome to UNESCO today so many eminent persons who have come to celebrate with us the presentation of the 1993 Felix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to the three prize-winners who, in the eyes of the whole world, symbolize the return of peace to the Middle East - Mr Yitzhak Rabin, Mr Shimon Peres, and Mr Yasser Arafat.

I would like first to greet Mr Henri Konan Bédié, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, who has come to demonstrate his attachment to the enduring nature of the Felix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize and to the ideals pursued by UNESCO.

I should like to greet Mr Mario Soares, President of the Portuguese Republic and a member of the some months' standing of the international jury for this Prize, to which he has kindly lent the support of his great competence and of his vast experience in the search for peace.

I also wish to greet Ms Tansu Çiller, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, whose presence demonstrates the great importance that her country attaches to the current peace process in the Middle East.

I should also like to greet Mr Habib Thiam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal, who has come to bring the congratulations of the Senegalese Government and nation to the three prize-winners.

I am also happy to welcome Mr Mohammed Salem Ould Lekhal, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mauritania, representing the Head of the Mauritanian State, Mr Allal Sinaceur, Minister of Culture of Morocco, representing His Majesty King Hassan II, and Mr Ambassador Fedotov, representing the President of the Russian Federation, Mr Boris Yeltsin.
Finally, I would like to thank the President of the General Conference, Mr Ahmed Saleh Sayyad, and the Chairperson of the Executive Board, Ms Attiya Inayatullah, for coming to take part in this ceremony.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Rarely has UNESCO had greater reason for rejoicing. In this House, which is that of concord and fraternity between men, we welcome with great feeling these three illustrious prize-winners who have managed, by their clarity of vision, courage and determination, to ensure that the path of peace will prevail.

When on 13 September 1993, after half a century of conflicts, the world learnt that the Washington agreements had been signed, immense hope arose everywhere, hope for the dawning of peace in the Middle East. Since then, by a path that has undeniably been narrow, tortuous and difficult, this hope has been turning into a reality.

We appreciate the importance of this historical event as well as the extraordinary inner power of the men who made it happen.

(The Director-General continued his address in English)

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My thoughts turn on this occasion to the ceremony held here two years ago at which Mr Nelson Mandela and Mr Frederik de Klerk received together the 1991 Felix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize in recognition of their efforts to bring into being a democratic and united South Africa. Since that memorable date of 3 February 1992, dialogue, courage and reason have prevailed and South Africa has embarked on the great adventure of reconciling its differences in peace and justice.

On behalf of UNESCO, I congratulate this year's three prize-winners on having laid the foundations of peace in their countries and wish their courageous enterprise the same success as that which has attended the efforts of Nelson Mandela and Frederik de Klerk in South Africa.

I should add that, if this Prize is a tribute to the exemplary initiative of three outstanding leaders, it may also be seen as an encouragement to the communities they represent to take up the challenge of peace. For, as UNESCO's Constitution affirms, a secure peace is one that is rooted in the hearts and minds of men and women who are prepared to accept its difficult accommodations, to cultivate tolerance and to accord to others those basic rights they claim for themselves. I do not doubt that the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, drawing on rich traditions of civilization to overcome long and deep divisions, will prove equal to this historic challenge.

In doing so, they will be making a major contribution to peace worldwide. Soon it will be time for us to plant olive trees on our borders. The memory of the future will prevail over the memory of the past. And in our diversity we shall follow the same paths: from a culture of war we shall move to a culture of peace - to be lived by our children and by our children's children.