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Address  
by  
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(UNESCO)

to the World Food Summit

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Mr Chairman,  
Distinguished Representatives of the Prime Minister of Italy  
and of the Director-General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Food is a fundamental human right. Hunger linked to poverty is today the most basic challenge to human conscience. Our task here at the World Food Summit must be to ensure that food security for all is placed at the top of the international political agenda.

World hunger is not - not yet - a problem of planetary undercapacity but one of unequal access. Except for unexpected catastrophes when emergency food aid is required, the issue is not one of humanitarian assistance but rather of better sharing - of knowledge, technology, resources, land - to ensure food subsistence for all human beings. However, food aid from the affluent countries has fallen by half since 1993. There is something inherently scandalous about regional arrangements in the developed world that lead to a reduction of food production and to protectionist measures reflecting a lack of vision and foresight in an increasingly interdependent world. We are all in the same boat: the world is one or none. The role of this Summit must be to help nurture a new conception of world agriculture and a new commitment to **global** food security.

**Food for all** presupposes **education for all**. Self-reliant development - which is the best guarantee of food security - crucially depends on extending and improving educational provision. Through its Education for All programme, UNESCO and its UN partners (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Bank, WFP and WHO) are engaged in a worldwide campaign to bring basic education within the reach of all, with special emphasis on high-population developing countries where illiteracy rates are highest. The priority targeting of women and girls - who make up 65 % of the total illiterate population - is particularly relevant to food security in view of women's important role in agriculture in the developing countries and the well-established link between education and the reduction of fertility levels. UNESCO is also exploring new forms of distance education for intensive skills training in rural areas through its **Learning without Frontiers** programme, and is promoting nutritional education and integrated population and environmental education among its 185 Member States.

Such educational initiatives will need to be strongly supported by the international community if we are to find a long-term solution to the problem of world hunger. There are still more than 500.000 human settlements without electricity, isolated, unreached by the growing network of information highways. We must be aware of all the advantages to be derived

from these highways; but we must also ensure that these advantages are available to those who presently are confined to the subways of our information-rich world. Reduction of population movements within and across frontiers is just one of the benefits that will flow from improving the quality of life in rural areas.

Just as it has been instrumental in raising agricultural yields over the last three decades, so **science** will be vital in increasing food production to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population over the next three decades and beyond. UNESCO's international science programme is contributing to this effort in a number of important ways. Support for research aimed at improving nitrogen uptake will help to reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers and thereby contribute to agricultural productivity and environmental protection. In the same context, facilitating the practice of on-the-spot analyses will avoid the unnecessary pollution and soil degradation produced by the use of excessive amounts of artificial compounds (fertilizers, herbicides, etc). Biotechnology and plant genetics constitute one of the most important contributions of UNESCO's scientific programmes to endogenous capacity-building, which is essential to achieving the aims of this Summit. Another activity relevant to agriculture is the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 launched in Harare two months ago, which seeks to promote and develop renewable energy sources, with particular emphasis on clean-energy technology and modern energy services for rural areas in the developing world.

The availability of fresh water will obviously be a precondition of meeting additional food requirements in the century to come. UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (IHP) promotes scientific co-operation to improve the assessment and management of this most precious resource. Better sharing of water is emerging, at the dawn of the new century, as a major global issue. Aqueducts should be included with highways and pipelines among the most important public works to be undertaken in the years to come.

I should like to conclude by focusing on a topic that is central - as a means and as an end - to all the activities of the United Nations system: **peace**. The best way of moving towards peace is through prevention. Peace is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of all human rights. War means no education, no food, no housing. We cannot at the same time pay the price of peace and the price of war. The price of peace includes disarmament and the reallocation of resources to the promotion of sustainable human development. Failure to pay the price of peace will result not only in increased hunger in the world but - very probably - in resource conflicts that could threaten peace everywhere. Investments in universities (as in

education in general) require a reshaping of national priorities. External financial support can have a trigger effect, but the exercise of fundamental rights cannot depend on external assistance. We are at a turning point in the transition, from the reason of force to the force of reason, from a culture of exclusion and war to a culture of peace. And food security is crucial if we are successfully to negotiate this transition. World food security is truly a question of global security.

This is why UNESCO is strongly committed to play its part, with the broadest possible range of partners, in implementing the results of the World Food Summit and in particular the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and its Plan of Action.