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(UNESCO)

at the opening of the Forum on the Culture of Peace

Bamako (Mali), 24 March 1997

Mr President of the Republic of Mali,
Mr President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

Allow me first of all to thank you, Mr President of the Republic, for associating UNESCO in the event which has brought us here today - Peace Week. I must also thank you on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan and the United Nations family as a whole.

Mr President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire,

Your presence at this ceremony is symbolic both of the role you play for peace in the subregion and of the importance of your country for UNESCO. For it was in Yamoussoukro that the concept of the culture of peace was born and the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize first thought of.

As we look back over this century we can be in no doubt of the bitterness of the fruits of violence, or of the vital need to transform violent behaviour patterns into peaceful ones. We know that we need leaders who believe in peace, who strive day after day for tolerance, understanding and openness. Today, ladies and gentlemen, we have two such leaders with us.

Mali, a vast country where the Black African and Arab-Berber civilizations meet, its history studded with the symbols of civilization, is confirming its importance as a multi-ethnic and multicultural nation which has used dialogue and co-ordination to mobilize all the different elements of its population in support of peace.

UNESCO, whose basic purpose is to construct peace, supports this action, as it must, under its mandate, 'contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world'. The founders of UNESCO were expressing a very clear vision when they wrote that wars begin in the minds of men and have their roots in ignorance, exclusion and 'the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men'.

Mr President of the Republic of Mali,

Your country is unanimously acclaimed throughout the world for having effected an exemplary transition to democracy. It is therefore an honour for me and a privilege to share

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here in your debate on the future of that democracy. We are aware of the efforts made by the entire Malian nation to achieve peace and reconciliation. The national peace accord signed in 1992 between the Government of Mali and the movements in the North, the outcome of a long process of national consultation and community meetings which enabled the people to participate in it on a massive scale, is a model of endogenous conflict resolution. We are also aware of the scale of the human and material investment required to implement the economic and social programmes which came out of the accord. Rest assured that UNESCO will support you in this work of national reconstruction.

When UNESCO was founded 50 years ago, the world was emerging from the most terrible of wars, during which the human being was negated and the planet threatened with total destruction. In its wake peace and understanding between all peoples were seen as essential above all else.

Since then we have learnt that fear of another war is not enough to create peace. Peace is established by long and patient work and confidence in the human being's capacity to transcend ideological, cultural, political and economic barriers. We have also learnt that peace, development and democracy go hand in hand and that we cannot achieve one without the others. Peace, development and democracy form an interactive triangle. They are mutually reinforcing,

UNESCO attaches particular importance to this triad, as every one of its programmes, but particularly the Culture of Peace programme, bears witness. For thousands of years, humanity has been steeped in the culture of war, and the logic of force has prevailed over the force of reason. The noble task assigned to UNESCO - to construct the defences of peace in the minds of men - means transforming the culture of war into a culture of peace based on reason and a long-term understanding of the part each individual has to play in the construction of peace.

If we want to establish a culture of peace, we must be ready to recognize our failures: the ineffectiveness of the development policies adopted to date, the ineffectiveness of measures which ignore the individual and continue to engender marginality, poverty and frustration. We must recognize that the exclusion, poverty and injustice at the root of many of today's conflicts result from reductionist concept of the individual. As you said yourself, Mr President, at UNESCO Headquarters on 18 October 1996 on the occasion of the celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of Léopold Sedar Senghor, 'to each of these different questions, there is but one reply: the individual. Men and women themselves have the solution to all their problems'. We must rethink development. But there can be no development without peace, or social justice, or the shared belief that all the citizens of a nation, whatever their level of education and their social or economic status, have a part to play in building the nation.

Although Africa is the continent which is currently suffering the most from civic conflict, I remain convinced that Africans have the resources to deal with them if they will look to their own cultures and traditions. African culture is intrinsically a culture of peace. The values of tolerance, respect for human life and non-violence are at the heart of their culture. They do not therefore need to be imported or imposed from outside. Mr President, one of your illustrious compatriots, Amadou Hampâté Ba, addressing UNESCO's Executive Board, said one day 'Africans have suffered enough from racism to combat anything which reminds them of it. They have suffered enough from violence to oppose anything which might resemble an attempt at domination through force. But they have too much respect for human

life not to understand that it would be pointless to sacrifice it even for a just cause'. That is why, Mr President, I have confidence in the future of this continent, in the capacity of Africans to find for themselves the remedy to their ills.

In 1995 Audience Africa took place in Paris, under the auspices of UNESCO. For the first time, Africans representing every trend in society were invited to an international forum to carry out 'an incisive examination of the whole question of development and development priorities in their continent in the light of the new challenges facing the world . . . in order to set down the terms of a self-reliant development policy to secure the economic, social, political and cultural progress of the present populations and the survival, in dignity, peace, democracy and justice, of generations to come'. The audience was a success as it enabled an authentically African approach to the continent's problems to be identified and a number of convictions to be shared, some of which I will now mention:

- (1) **Contrary to the general view, Africa is not poor.** Africa has the greatest natural wealth. It could catch up with other regions of the world very quickly;
- (2) Only Africa can decide its destiny. Africans - and they above all - must take the initiative in solving their own problems. **Africa is neither a lost continent nor a continent in distress;**
- (3) **Africa needs democracy,** not as a model to be copied but as an objective to be attained because it is the missing link between development and peace.

These convictions are shared by UNESCO. That is why Africa is given such high priority in all the Organization's programmes.

Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The programme for this Forum is particularly interesting and its main themes very well chosen. I should like to pick out those involving the culture of peace, which is in no way to detract from the importance of the others.

There is no lasting peace without endogenous development which takes full advantage of local human resources in a democratic framework and which places each individual at its centre, as a beneficiary and as a protagonist, which is not based on the key to our common future: sharing. This is where **education** comes into its own, by giving each individual the opportunity and the ability to decide his or her own future independently and to participate in a responsible way in development. Education is a fundamental right of all citizens. More than instruction, it is the tool which enables the entire human potential of a nation to develop and sharpens awareness of the decisions and choices on which the nation's future depends.

Very often, the distinctions between education, instruction and information are blurred. Education goes much further than instruction and information. Education is what enables individuals to control their actions and allows them to use their own judgement. Individuals who have taken responsibility for themselves can then take their part in public life, as is possible in a democracy. Education is the cornerstone of this citizenship.

We therefore have a particular moral and intellectual duty in that respect to our Member States. We must help develop education, taking into account the specific characteristics of each country. Education is not only a vehicle for transmitting theoretical knowledge. It is

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more than anything about values - values which concern, for instance, peace, human rights and democracy. As the report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century said, education must encourage 'learning to live together'. It must teach the values of tolerance, respect for others and sharing. It must foster a spirit of dialogue, non-violence, and openness towards others. It must help combat the stereotypes and prejudices which are a breeding ground for conflict between nations, and between citizens of the same nation. It must make a continuous contribution to the all-round development of each individual, from pre-school to higher education and at all the levels of non-formal education.

Education for tolerance is more important now than ever before, as we see alarming signs of a resurgence of racism, extremism and hatred. All of us, every day, must do what we can to spread peace, for the sake of our children and of their children, by learning to live together and to realize that 'We are the "other"'.

Education for peace is not the responsibility of one part of society alone. It requires the involvement of **social actors**. That is why it is so pleasant for me to observe that the workshop on education for peace will have as its principal topic 'the role of different actors in society'. Who are these people?

First of all, **teachers**. Teachers are, together with parents, the most important social actors. What would education be without them? The forty-fifth session of the International Conference on Education, held in Geneva in 1996, focused its attention on the role of teachers in a changing world. Teachers have a central role to play in the process of adapting to change. However, the deterioration in their working conditions, training and status has considerably reduced their ability to participate in change. In fact the transmission of the values of peace and tolerance through education is one of the great challenges facing all educational systems. If the teacher, the linchpin of any educational reform, is not taken into account, we cannot expect education to form tolerant individuals, aware of their civic responsibilities and respectful of democratic principles.

Then come young people, treasure of any nation. Today, **young people** account for over a third of the world's population. In the least-developed countries, they are a social force taking an active part in the development process. In Africa, over recent years, young people have contributed substantially to the establishment of democracy. Unfortunately, the lack of opportunities for education makes young people increasingly vulnerable to urban violence, social exclusion, rural exodus, economic marginalization and unemployment. We cannot help but notice that at the moment young people, some of them very young, are being enlisted in wars and armed conflicts of all kinds. Others, even in rich countries, are exploited in various ways, which goes to show, yet again, that material, economic development is not enough. Street children and child prostitutes are a disgrace to us all. This exploitation of young people and children is something we witness every day and it means that many young people today know of nothing but violence, war, intolerance and contempt for human life. How in such conditions can we establish a system of justice and liberty? How can we build a democratic nation? We adults have a duty to integrate these young people into a fairer society which will take notice of them and in which they will feel that they count.

As a great Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, has said, 'it is absurd to confuse value with price'. And yet we often do! Instead of identifying the real reason for our actions and our efforts, we think first of all about their cost. We must stop doing that, Not everything can be brought or sold. We must say no, and we must ask the media to say no. When we see that five years after that great commitment made at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro not one

country in the world has made a substantial effort to halt the deterioration of the environment, we must speak out. When we see that values are denied, that the dignity of the individual is flouted, when we see sand encroaching on land which could be irrigated if we invested in peace instead of war, we must make our voices heard. When we see all these young people being exploited and whose who know, those in power are saying nothing, we cannot remain silent - silence makes us accomplices. Life's meaning does not only lie in know-how or in material welfare. It lies in the wisdom to which we must re-connect ourselves in order to give back to the world its reason for living. And I see that wisdom today more often in the most deprived than in the most comfortably off. I find it more often in Africa than in the countries of the northern hemisphere.

Mr President,

We have just celebrated International Women's Day. It was an opportunity for the strength which **women** represent in the world today to be confirmed in all national and international fora. Long relegated to subordinate tasks, women have demonstrated their total ability to assume duties enabling them to participate in development and peace-building. For reasons other than the strength of their numbers - since they account for more than half the world's population - they have the right to speak and to act.

As mothers they are the first to see to their children's education. In many cases, they are responsible for the economic survival of their families. Today more than ever they have the right to take an active part in their country's political life and to assume the concomitant responsibilities. Building peace and consolidating democracy are only possible if more attention is paid to women's views in the places where decisions are debated and made. They have a decisive role to play in the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace.

The role of the **media** in this connection is just as important. Journalists and media professionals must be the promoters of peace. We can all remember recent examples of the 'instrumentalization' of the media in the escalation of violence and conflicts. UNESCO, one of whose tasks is to promote press freedom, strongly condemns the use of the media for incitement to hatred - racial, ethnic or religious - and violence. That is why it has always attached great importance to training journalists with a view to awareness-raising and educating communities in peace.

Today, the media - press, television and radio - are omnipresent and therefore omnipotent. That is why whilst we must, in accordance with Article I of the Constitution of UNESCO, guarantee 'the free flow of ideas by word and image', we must also demand that the media be constantly on watch, like sentinels. They must denounce when they have to. They must also report the positive, the invisible, the intangible.

Having worked for years on the pathology of newly-born children, I know how important prevention is, and at the same time how disregarded. When we prevent instead of healing, we must expect no thanks. No one notices health; no one notices normality; no one notices peace.

I am delighted that this forum has included **parliamentarians** and local elected representatives among those active in education for peace, since they are the voice of the people, the first bastion and the first guarantee of democracy. In the societies in 'democratic transition', parliaments play a key role in the daily invention of good governance and the application of the law. They are in the front-line of efforts to establish genuine democracy. They also represent continuity, for the mainstays of national politics, education for instance,

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must not be dependent on transient political changes. They must have a vision of the state and a memory of the state.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Forum is yours, it belongs to all the citizens of Mali represented here who are working every day with energy and enthusiasm to build the Malian nation on the basis of democratic principles. We are here to debate together and to exchange ideas. The constant support you have received from the United Nations system in recent years testifies to its interest in what you are doing, and I hope that the recommendations and proposals resulting from your work will make a most auspicious contribution to the international community's efforts to introduce a culture of peace.

The promotion of **democratic principles** in political management, governance and respect for human rights are the bases on which UNESCO's Culture of Peace programme rests. As a contribution to the Forum, the Organization hopes to stimulate an in-depth examination of the principles governing political management in this society and the different cultures of which it is composed. The idea is to establish a productive dialogue between the political actors so as to consolidate plans for a peaceful society which meets the aspirations of the people of Mali.

It is only by relying on the values of society that democracy can be reflected in acts of government. That is the meaning of **governance**, being the organized management of political rules and institutions intended to offer solutions to the problems of the community. Governance needs democracy to be participatory and democracy needs forms of governance which enable it to become a solid, stable and effective regime.

Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The construction of democracy presupposes peace, which influences the exercise of human rights and civil and political rights. That is why I always say that peace, itself the basis of security, is together with security the key prerequisite for democracy and development. If democracy and development fail to take account of that prerequisite in their substance and in shaping national and international policies, not only will peace not be consolidated, but conflicts will continue to spread.

There can be no education, no freedom of expression, no justice, democracy or development in a climate of violence and war. We cannot simultaneously pay the price of war and the price of peace. We must choose between a culture of war and a culture of peace. We must start to pay for the environment, to pay for schools, to pay for our capacity for sharing in daily life. We cannot simultaneously build peace and invest in war. We must conclude a new social contract based on the recognition and application of the **human right to peace**. As the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approaches, UNESCO is working tirelessly for recognition of the human right to peace, which is the basis for democracy, justice and human development.

Mr President of the Republic,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I see the flame of peace in Timbuktu, the monuments to peace in Avaradju, the Garden of Peace, whose trees will be rooted deep in the hearts of all Malians. We who are accustomed to the logic of force must now make this Garden of Peace, these monuments and this flame, our own. No more violence, but brotherhood, to build together the future our children deserve.

I would like to conclude with another example of the wisdom of Hampâté Ba: 'Reason tells me that the most effective way of bringing peace to our troubled world and expanding human awareness (...) is to see developing among the different religions - and among all people - a spirit of tolerance, mutual understanding and emphasis on what we have in common'. Who could put it better than that?