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to the Seventh Ibero-American Summit  
of Heads of State and Government

ETHICAL VALUES OF DEMOCRACY

Isla de Margarita (Venezuela)  
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Mr President of the Republic of Venezuela, Rafael Caldera,  
Your Majesty,  
Presidents, Heads of State and Government, Ministers,  
Mr Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Mr Secretary-General of the Organization of American States,  
Mr President of the Inter-American Development Bank,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Democracy for whom? Democracy for how many?

Democracy is strong only in so far as it represents the people, achieves broad participation, and ensures that all citizens are aware of and exercise their rights.

Among the most important ethical implications of democracy is the need for congruence between democratic principles and government policy, which means constantly focusing on content rather than form, beginning with the electoral process.

It is through education - education for all throughout life - that we learn to know, to do, to be and to live together. It is through education - as so many ministers have noted - that we acquire judgement, that we learn to make our own decisions free of outside influence, to be ourselves, to achieve 'individual sovereignty'. Andrés Bello had this in mind when he exhorted young people in *El Araucano* (in 1848) to learn to judge for themselves and aspire to independent thinking. 'I participate therefore I am' transforms the Cartesian formula into a true democratic statement. If I do not participate, I do not exist as a citizen. I may be counted in elections and in opinion polls, but I do not count. This is how democracy deteriorates into market research, oligarchy, plutocracy, bureaucracy and technocracy. Peace, development and democracy are built up by education, not force, through the daily efforts of all citizens, not received as a gift. As Simón Bolívar said, education is the key to liberty.

Full freedom of expression - liberty for all, not just for some - is a basic prerequisite for justice and a fundamental pillar of democracy. The rule of law is not enough. If the laws are to be just, there can be no obstacle whatsoever to freedom of expression. As stated in Article I of its Constitution, UNESCO must ensure 'the free flow of ideas by word and image'. In his 'Letter from Jamaica', written in 1815 on the subject of the Spanish empire in the Americas, Bolívar asserted that its entire strength was based on public opinion. The same could apply to democracy. Freedom of expression for all. The truth will make us free and freedom will make us truthful. Truth is another benefit of freedom: freedom to contradict a piece of information; freedom to demonstrate its veracity. The only solution to the problems to which freedom may give rise is more freedom. Freedom brooks no obstacle. No one can set up limitations or restrictions on full freedom of expression, the tide cannot be stemmed. Who can judge whether a news item gives a true picture of a particular event? Only the individual conscience, in a context of freedom of expression for all, as President Rafael Caldera has so brilliantly affirmed today.

Democracy, peace and development form an interactive triangle with mutually reinforcing vertices. There can be no lasting peace without sustainable development. To be sustainable, development must be founded on justice, and justice depends in turn on the

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framework of ethical references called democracy. UNESCO's Constitution is the only one in the United Nations system to refer to democratic principles and democratic ideals: justice, freedom, equality and solidarity. The preamble to this inspiring document affirms that peace cannot be achieved through economic and political development alone. Both are essential but not sufficient. Peace and well-being depend on the 'intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind'.

Security and stability are vital if justice is to be dispensed fairly. Peace and security can be considered as both premises and outcomes. We have invested enormous amounts in arms to defend our borders and our territories. Now we must invest in the defence of our dignity. The collective shame heaped upon us by the abandonment and sexual abuse of children and their exploitation as cheap labour, and by young people who seek escape from our world in drugs or sects makes us realize that we have been so intent on saving the Earth that we have forgotten its inhabitants. We must now invest in a secure basis enabling all to reap the benefit of the ethical principles of democracy - the voice and government of the people by the people.

As was so rightly observed by President Frei this morning, it is only through greater sharing that we can reduce and finally eliminate social disparities and disequilibria in the distribution of wealth of all kinds, and most importantly knowledge. The verb 'to share' is the key to a new era in which, from the individual level up to the legislative and executive authority, new priorities must be established and the fruits of progress more evenly distributed. At both the international and the national levels, the fact that 18 per cent of humanity owns 80 per cent of all types of resources is not simply a grave injustice but also a source of radicalization and conflict. It is a time bomb. We must go deeper into the roots of violence: exclusion, poverty, loneliness, consumerism and despair. We must proclaim - as I said earlier with regard to education - that opportunities are never missed for good. They will come back again and again, throughout our lives.

Another principle of effective democratic governance is the ethics of time. Taking action in time. We already know the diagnosis and, in many cases, what treatment is needed. Postponing remedial measures, however difficult and at times unpopular they may be, may bring us to the point of no return. This possibility of irreversibility creates, in my view, a moral imperative. If we fail to act today, tomorrow may be too late. Why ask for more information in order to 'save time'? We are losing it. We must be more daring: we must dare to know and know how to dare. I like to say that taking risks without knowledge is dangerous but that having knowledge without being prepared to take risks is useless. Forecasting is basic. We have to know in order to predict, and predict in order to prevent. Strengthening the capacity to anticipate and predict is therefore a priority for governments, international organizations, scientific institutions, social actors and the private sector. The design and application of the 'management of intangibles' offered by prediction, anticipation and prevention based on the premise that it is not winning the battle that counts but avoiding it, calls for, among other things, government policy of broad scope. How long can we allow ourselves the luxury of not taking action? Have we calculated the price of inertia, inactivity, the absence of an ethical approach to the future? Five years after Rio we realize that Rio +5 is in reality Rio -5. If they are to lay the foundations for an ethical approach to the future, social actors and decision-makers cannot go on 'adjusting' and 'adapting'. They must anticipate and take the initiative.

A problem that has been avoided does not attract attention, but it can be the greatest victory. The general who wins a minor battle gets decorated. The one who averts a major war

passes unnoticed. Health, peace and happiness do not make the headlines. As Lawn said, only those who are capable of seeing the invisible will be capable of doing the impossible.

Another ethical dimension of democratic governance is respect for complexity. Simplification is a form of deception because by taking action we manage, at best, to modify our perceptions, but not the complex reality underlying them. The scientific and intellectual community must provide decision-makers and legislators with information that will enable them to make balanced decisions. This reciprocity between science and ethics can provide a starting point for many of the difficult solutions we will have to seek in vast and hitherto unexplored interfaces in, for example, genetics and cyberspace. At this very moment the General Conference is putting the finishing touches to the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights which, after more than five years' preparatory work on the scientific, legal and sociological aspects, will provide a major ethical framework for experimentation in chromosome modification, fertilization processes and gene therapy, including cloning.

The interdependency between ethics and democracy has another essential element - continuity. Major guidelines for action in the long term, based on fundamental ethical principles, must not be subject to the vagaries of political change. National covenants, to which political parties can make changes of emphasis but not of content or meaning, are useful here. Continuity must extend to future generations. Concern for the future, especially relevant at the tremulous, confused and hopeful dawn of the third millennium, cannot be left to the unborn. We must create a truly ethical approach to the future and, accordingly, to action. In order to revitalize the ethical values of democracy we must conclude a new social contract, based not simply on commitments to present generations but designed as an ethical bridge to future generations. The fate of these generations will increasingly depend on our ability to link our vision of the future with the decisions of the present. Facing the future implies equipping ourselves with the means to take decisive action for the benefit of our descendants. Because if we do not act in time our children will not even have the time to act. The faster a car goes the stronger its headlights should be.

Of course, the memory of the past is also important - not to reopen wounds but to heal them. We should use our historical memory as a rear-view mirror, enabling us to judge when to put on speed. The memory of the past reminds us that the major transformations were never effected by force of arms but rather by the strength of ideas and ideals. We need to remember that integration is never secured by self-interest and money but by the guiding hand of culture, binding different threads together with shared values. We need memory, finally, to teach us to listen instead of continuing to give advice and instructions, and to impose our conditions.

An ethical approach involves remembering and comparing: remembering those who gave their life for the peace that we enjoy today, remembering those who suffered imprisonment and torture for the freedom we have today, and comparing in order to appreciate the material goods that we enjoy. There is so much indifference among those who have almost everything and know the value of practical y nothing ! We really appreciate only those things for which we have toiled and struggled, of which we have dreamed day and night. We should compare ourselves with those who have almost nothing and appreciate so much the little they have.

Comparing also means globality, a permanent awareness of the world as a whole. I say 'globality' and not 'globalization' because the latter implies active and passive participants in the process, with far more passive than active. Globality also brings a particularly important

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element to the process of democratic governance: a sense of proportion between problems and solutions. We very often think that we have solved major problems such as water or climate change with makeshift solutions which are in fact often financed by charity and not as a result of the appropriate political decisions. Ethics has budgetary implications: an ethical approach involves investing in education, health and social justice, defining new priorities for public spending. The rest is rhetoric. Democracy must be international as well as national because many of today's problems are not national but translational. The solutions proposed must always be founded on ethical principles.

We welcome the technological advances in communications which have enabled us to reach those who up until now were unreachable and has given us the chance to include those who up until now were excluded. But technology is a tool, not an end in itself. Families, especially mothers, continue to be, along with teachers and educators, the key figures in the learning process which leads to individual sovereignty. *Homo sapiens* must always prevail over *Homo virtualis*. We must promote multilingual education which guarantees limitless diversity, the uniqueness of each human being in communities consolidated by common values. These ethical values are the source of social cohesion and, at the same time, the most dynamic agents for change. They are both the support and the cement of the social edifice.

The century which is now coming to an end has demonstrated - and at what cost! - the resounding failure of force, violence and imposition. It has shown the futility of bringing the market and commerce into areas in which we should be guided only by good sense and human rights.

We cannot afford to pay both the price of peace and the price of violence and war, We must choose. If we wish to reduce social disparities, which are a source of conflict; if we wish to improve the quality of living in rural areas; if we wish to confront the new pandemics - and also the old ones such as yellow fever and malaria, those to which not enough attention is given because they do not touch the industrialized countries; if we wish to prevent the outrage of failing to provide the treatment now available for AIDS to all AIDS victims because they are all poor and because the question of nationality or skin colour should not arise when treating a patient; if we wish to combat trafficking in drugs, ideas, capital, arms and above all people; if we wish to mitigate the impact of natural or human-made disasters; if we wish to guarantee food and education for all citizens, then we must stop paying the price of war and instead pay the price of peace. We must accelerate the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace and solidarity. We must - through the communication media, our legislators, our mayors - work together on a major campaign of shared moral responsibility to achieve a global renunciation of violence and a commitment, entered into by the civil, military and religious communities, to consolidate a framework of peaceful coexistence and progress.

These are just some of the ideas - and suggestions for putting them into practice - inspired by this summit of heads of state and government, which, on the initiative of President Rafael Caldera, has had the discernment to regard ethics as a form of culture, which means an influence on the everyday life of all citizens.