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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
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Address by
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United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

on the occasion of the presentation of the
1996 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize

UNESCO, 22 July 1997

DG/97/22

(The Director-General began his address in French)

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to begin, if I may, by saying how great a pleasure it is for me to welcome you to UNESCO which was created in the aftermath of the Second World War to construct the defences of peace in the minds of men and to contribute to the building of a more fraternal and more human world.

My pleasure is all the greater in that we are meeting on the occasion of the presentation of the 1996 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to Mr Alvaro Arzú, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and Commander Rolando Morán, Head of the National Revolutionary Union.

I should like to express my warmest greetings to Mr Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to Mr Henri Konan Bédié, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, who have come once again to demonstrate their attachment to the Prize which bears the name of the Sage of Africa. I should like to emphasize how deeply UNESCO is indebted to them for enhancing and extending the impact of this Prize. Their constant support to UNESCO for the international consolidation and promotion of the Prize is of inestimable value.

I should also like to pay tribute to Mr Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, who, by his presence among us, has kindly demonstrated his support for the Prize. May I also extend my greetings to the representative of the President of the French Republic and to the representative of the Government of the United States of America, Mr John Hamilton, Assistant Secretary of State, who has joined us here to uphold the ideals of peace, justice, equality and freedom which are enshrined within UNESCO in the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize.

And lastly may I pay tribute to the President and members of the international jury who have succeeded in placing the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize among the highest international distinctions, for which I should like to thank them.

The number and quality of the candidates nominated this year reflect once again the prestige and importance of this Prize for the international community as a whole.

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The award of the 1996 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize crowns the historic - and bittersweet - moment of the signing on 29 December 1996 of the Peace Accord in Guatemala.

DG/97/22 - page 2

On that day, in the presence of 11 Heads of State and Government and some 100 international delegations, President Alvaro Arzú and Commander Rolando Morán, the representative of the Guatemala National Revolutionary Union, signed a peace agreement which brought 36 years of fratricidal conflict to an end.

The peace process, which made its first timid appearance in 1991, was to go through a long period of gestation, involving many trials and tribulations, before suddenly gathering momentum in January 1996, when Mr Alvaro Arzú was elected President of the Republic of Guatemala. The task of overcoming the reluctance of the sceptics, dissipating the resentment left in the wake of the civil war, and surmounting the inertia of those who supported the status quo, could not have been accomplished without the combined force of two converging wills.

It is to celebrate this twofold commitment to peace that the International Jury decided to award the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize jointly to President Arzú and to Commander Moran, who embody both the spirit of reconciliation and the determination to build a peaceful future for the entire Guatemala people.

(The Director-General concluded his address in Spanish)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should now like to address my remarks in Spanish to President Arzú and Commander Morán, as representatives of the people of Guatemala, of all Guatemalans, especially the indigenous and the poorest population groups, who were the direct victims of exploitation, spoliation and war. I should also like to express to them today my firm belief that by their united efforts they will succeed in guiding Guatemala through one of the most fascinating and difficult phases of its history: that of reconciliation and national reconstruction. It will be a period in which the people of Guatemala must learn to accept one another as they really are, taking pride in their multicultural and multilingual identity. They must also acknowledge that this marvelous country, so full of light and colour, belongs to **all of them and not just to a few**, through solidarity, mass participation, education and nationwide distribution of the benefits of development.

This is not a task which can be completed in a day or two, by a single individual or group. It is a task in which all Guatemalans must participate, day after day, in order to build a future for the coming generations and for the new Guatemala of the third millennium.

Peace, as an ethical concept in politics, demands the daily application of the democratic principles of justice, freedom, solidarity and participation by all. It is essential that a culture of peace should replace a culture of violence, that dialogue should triumph over coercion, that the rule of reason should prevail over the rule of force. We must not delude ourselves: with exclusion, poverty and ignorance, there can be no peace. It is impossible to forget. It is possible to forgive, but forgiveness must not be confused with impunity. There can be no peace without justice. Nor is peace possible with revenge. It is essential, then, to throw open the doors, to break down structures that have been immovable for so many centuries, so that different ideas can flow freely and intermingle, enriching this Guatemala cultural diversity which is the basis of the country's identity in the world. This world which the quetzals in their soaring flight, far higher than the condor or the eagle, can perceive both in its unity and in its infinite diversity.

Peace has been signed. **Political peace** has been obtained. So now the politicians can discuss, debate, express their views, agree and dissent. The next step is to obtain **social peace**

through the application of the Peace Accords, under which all citizens are granted access to education, health, employment, welfare and the equitable distribution of resources, together with the indefensible right to live in accordance with their own culture and beliefs. Whoever works for culture works for peace. The Peace Accords have given UNESCO a special responsibility in the field of education which we are fulfilling and shall continue to fulfil with even greater enthusiasm, were that possible.

For years, the culture of violence created solidarities and allegiances. We now have to seek these solidarities and allegiances in and around peace. The benefits and advantages of peace are much greater. 'They shall beat their swords into plowshares'. Indeed, war is an irreversible absurdity. Peace is an everyday task: it is an objective, an aspiration, a culture.

Peace is possible and lasting only in a political context of democratic principles guaranteeing an acceptable level of economic, political and social development. Its cornerstone, as UNESCO's Constitution proclaims, is 'intellectual and moral solidarity'. Not every form of development or every democratic model leads to peace. What breathes life into peace and transforms it into culture and a right is articulate participatory democracy; it is the voice of those who have hitherto been silent; it is free speech in parliament; it is political will. This human right to peace, which is the condition, means and purpose of life, is the only fundamental right - among the three principles of peace, justice and freedom - that was not developed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Without it, citizens of all other human rights vanishes. All that is left is worry, anxiety, fear and death.

I am very familiar with the peace process in Guatemala. It was some six years ago that, thanks to Dr Prera Flores, who was already a leading figure in those early meetings, I joined the process in a quiet mountainous area of Central America, where I got to know the commanders and some of the political negotiators. From then onwards, we met many times in Latin America, Central America and Europe, here at UNESCO Headquarters. We held meetings with the different peace commissions and the URNG (Guatemala National Revolutionary Union), constantly seeking the road to peace. It is because I am deeply aware of their worries, desires and concerns, and of their determination to set aside the culture of violence and accept the culture of peace, that I know that the reconciliation of Guatemalans is possible. I know that it will not be easy, but they are not alone: the international community and the United Nations are with them. UNESCO will continue supporting them in education and human rights and in the development and safeguarding of cultural diversity. Special assistance will be given to young people and to the indigenous Mayan peoples - the prodigious Guatemala minority whose roots plunge to the very heart of the earth.

Mr President,
Commander,

As the moment of conferring the Houphouët-Boigny Prize approaches, the greatest tribute we can pay to the tens of thousands of people who gave their lives - for some of whom it was the only thing they had to give - in the whirlwind of confrontation and enmity is to commemorate them in this act with our particular esteem, as the honorary recipients of this award, no matter on which side they fell or on which side they fought, and promise them that never again will their brothers of Guatemala or of any other place raise up their hands in hatred, but that they will stretch out their hands in solidarity, so that nobody has ever again to die for causes that are worth living for.

DG/97/22 - page 4

Our special thoughts go to Rigoberta Menchú Turn, the Nobel Peace Prizewinner and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, who, in this very hall, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization, so deeply impressed us with the shining example of her humility and clearsightedness.

Mr President,
Commander,

Congratulations on receiving this Peace Prize on behalf of an entire people. It is an honour for me to honour you. For this reason, all those people and personalities who dreamt of this moment, who embarked on a long and difficult process and pursued it with courage and determination should feel that they share in this distinction. Above all, however, I want to associate in this happiness and this Prize all those who will, in future, work to build peace in the minds of all and every Guatemala without exception, so that, as the Popol Vuh puts it, 'all rise and nobody is left behind, neither a single person nor two or three'.