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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
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(UNESCO)

at the opening ceremony of the
Hague Appeal for Peace Conference

The Hague, 12 May 1999

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Dear Friends,

One hundred years on, we say today again with reinvigorated voice, "No!" to violence and force. We say "No" again and again to war. We think of all those who have given their lives, all those who have suffered, all those who are suffering today, who have paid the price of war. Millions and millions of human beings have given their lives during this century, most of them young people.

We have a duty of memory towards all those who have been tortured, imprisoned, humiliated, forgotten. The hungry, the poorest, the excluded, the abandoned are in our own hearts and minds because poverty is violence, exclusion is violence. We have been living in a culture of war and violence and now we say : "enough!" We wish to try and try again new ways of achieving peace. We wish to move from violence to dialogue, from force to tolerance, from a culture of war to a culture of peace. We want to build peace every day in our families, in our schools, our streets, our workplace, our environment.

As Cora Weiss has written, "*When the United Nations was founded, peace was a dream. Now we know that peace will not be achieved without the everyday behaviour of the citizens of the world, without the peoples.*" Peace is a prerequisite. There is no freedom, no education, no exercise of human rights without peace. Sustainable peace needs sustainable development, which needs justice and freedom. There is an interactive triangle of peace, democracy and development that we must try to build every day.

Development must be based on better sharing. We must dare to share better: share wealth, share knowledge, but also share decision-making. Today only 9 per cent of parliamentarians are women. We are lacking 41 per cent of the voice of the world. Today only 4 to 5 per cent of top decision-makers are women and we therefore lack 45 per cent of decision-makers. We need better sharing in endogenous development to avoid the trap of loans that increase debt.

However, we must recognise - and I say this with a lot of sadness - that in recent years, instead of an increase in aid, instead of an increase in funds for international cooperation, there has been a sharp decrease. We have, with the exception of the Nordic countries, not reached the 0.7 per cent that we promised to the developing countries in 1974. Three years ago, we were around 0.4 per cent at the international level. Today we are at 0.2 per cent. There has been a decrease in these funds and simultaneously there has been an increase in funds for research and development for military purposes. The Hague Appeal must say very clearly that there is a relationship between peace, sharing, development and democracy. We must build on this relationship by investing in peace. We must pay the price of peace as we have paid the price of war.

Democracy is crucial not only at national level, but also at the international level. The only international, global, democratic framework has a name: the United Nations. To intervene outside the context of the United Nations sets a very dangerous precedent. It is incoherent to build democracy at the national level and to accept oligarchy at the international one. If the United Nations needs to be reinforced, then this must be done, but all countries - the small and the biggest ones - have a say, have a role - not only the most advanced, those that are the strongest ones. When there is a flagrant violation of human rights, the international community must act. When there is a flagrant lack of governance, countries that have only warlords, the international community must act. But **all** that community and **all** that community has a name: the United Nations.

The first victim of war and violence is truth. The real human victory is to prevent harm. When we avoid harm, the success is invisible. You do not see peace on the screen ; you do not see normal life on the screen ; you do not see health on the screen. What you see are catastrophes, war, disease. Through the media, through the parliaments, through you the peoples, we must try to give to preventive measures, to foresight all the visibility their immense value deserve. In 1945, we promised : We the peoples, we will save our children from the horror of war. Education for all throughout life is the keyword for a new departure. Education for peace and human rights, democracy and tolerance. As UNESCO's Constitution says : "*Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be built.*» Education at all levels, not only in schools.

You are the peoples. Education means first of all the mother, the father, the teacher. Education means first example and love. In many countries today there are many computers but a lack of love. Learn to know, to do, to be, to live together. Today to learn to live together is perhaps one of the most important dimensions of education. Education, as I said already, means rural women and girls' empowerment; it means to give a hand to those in need more than the others : this hand that we promised to give, when we committed ourselves to education for all throughout life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We the peoples, we said in the Charter of the United Nations, we the peoples, we will save the future generations from the scourge of war. You are the people, you have in your hands through your devotion, through your commitment, the ability to favour the transition from war and violence to peace and dialogue. No peace is possible without the full involvement of civil society, joining forces with local and national authorities, with regional and international bodies. You, you are the peoples. You can write the future. We cannot write the past. The past is already gone; the past is as it was. We can describe the past but we can, and we are going to write the future, all together. All together. Because this is our most important possibility today. If we do not stop living the

past, how can we address the problems of our future ? We need to offer a vision that inspires people with hope and with the conviction that they can make a difference.

The culture of peace builds on learning, on human rights and democracy, as the strongest defences against conflict. A culture of peace combines this emphasis on education, justice and development with conflict-resolution and conflict-prevention. « *Peace* » wrote Einstein « *cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.* » We must understand today that if peace is the right of all people, then a culture of peace is the responsibility of all people. We want peace and justice and for this reason, on behalf of UNESCO, I fully support the Hague Appeal. I fully support your efforts. I am sure that your message will come through. I am sure that signing this manifesto for a culture of peace means the next year can represent this new departure with the beginning of the century. The Hague Conference 100 years ago was right, it did well, it convened the first meeting in the history of mankind for peace. Now, one century later, we are today absolutely committed to what you, at that moment, with lucidity, requested us to do.