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Address by
Mr Federico Mayor

Director-General
of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

at the International Forum

*For a Culture of Peace and Dialogue among
Civilisations in the Third Millennium*

Moscow, 14 May 1999

Mr Luzhkov, Mayor of Moscow,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to express my deep gratitude to the municipality of Moscow headed by Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, who eagerly supported the initiative of Russian personalities of culture and science in organising this Forum. It is a special pleasure for me to welcome here today so many mayors and well-known intellectuals from all over Russia and the world - to welcome such persons as Rigoberta Menchu who struggles for human dignity; to welcome Chinguiz Aimatov and many other personalities who, in the different facets of our world today, are trying to improve the human condition.

Moscow is a most appropriate venue for this Forum. It participates actively in the UNESCO project "Towards the Culture of Peace". In Moscow, one of the first International Institutes for the Culture of Peace and Democracy was created in the Russian Academy of Science's Institute of World History and Institute of Youth. There are also departments of the culture of peace, democracy and human rights in many Russian Federation universities and educational institutions. The Moscow Forum has already met with a resounding response and this is not surprising. Firstly because Moscow itself is such a key actor in peace initiatives. Also because the subject of the Forum "*For a Culture of Peace and Dialogue among Civilisations in the Third Millennium*" addresses vital issues for both present and future generations. Last but not least, because the meeting takes place at a crucial time for the international community's approach to peace and conflict.

Today once again in Europe, we are witnessing conflict and the tide of human suffering, death and damage which comes in its wake. The exodus of the Kosovo Albanians has reached staggering proportions - the consequence of gross and systematic human rights violations and now, civilians throughout the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are suffering too. Guided missiles cannot uphold human rights. Yet, human rights must be upheld and the battle against intolerance must be waged. It should be very clear that the international community will not recognise rulers and regimes established as a result of crime and brutality. It should be very clear that impunity will not be tolerated any longer, that the flagrant violations of human rights, as in Cambodia or Rwanda, or the non-existence of governance, as in Somalia, will result in the immediate interposition of United Nations forces.

This implies the respect of the United Nations, the only democratic framework at the international level. To act outside this unique framework is a very dangerous precedent. As a matter of principle, it is incoherent to reinforce democracy at the national level and to weaken it at the international one. It is incoherent to have democracy at home and accept oligarchies at the international level. After the atrocities of the Second World War, with all the

abominable practices utilised, the United Nations system was set up to prevent a return to the horrors of conflict. The opening words of the UN Charter, proclaimed in 1945, were not "*We the governments*" but "*We the peoples*". The UN system was established as, and remains, the framework for solid international democracy. Its members may be nation-states, large or small, but its duty is to put people first.

The United Nations is committed to the maintenance of national sovereignty, but also to the protection of human rights regardless of frontiers. This is of course a sensitive and difficult task and that is why it is the United Nations which should be charged with the rapid interposition of international forces whenever this is justified by the scale of human rights violations. In the world today, with its constantly shifting tensions, we cannot afford to ignore the peace-keeping and, particularly, the conflict-prevention functions of the United Nations system. If these functions are diminished, it is all the harder for the UN to pursue its fundamental mission.

If the United Nations needs reform of the function and composition of the Security Council, let us do it as soon as possible. Today we need to act more expeditiously. Let us reinforce the United Nations in such a way that it can act more efficiently. We must not forget that we have a preventive mission: to save the succeeding generations from conflict. UNESCO must build the defences of peace in the minds of men. When you succeed in prevention, it is invisible, because all the events you have avoided are not visible. They do not appear in the screen. So we must help governments, we must help nations to recognise the crucial importance of preventive action, otherwise they will only react when they see accidents, suffering, war.

As we do not see health or peace in the screen, we must try to make these intangibles as visible as possible. This is our mission, the mission of parliaments and the mission of the media. All together we must try to change the present situation where peace-building is not visible, while, on the contrary, peace-keeping actions, after conflict, with images of death, prisoners and refugees, produce a rapid mobilisation of solidarity. Let us remember, lasting political solutions are not found on the battlefield and a peace treaty signed by governments is only peace on paper. It must be followed up by the long and patient work of peace-building, citizenship building. It is "*We the peoples*" who must construct the defences of peace at every level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

However hard it is to be hopeful about peace at the present time, we are gathered here for the Moscow Forum with a positive and constructive task to accomplish. We are neither hopeless nor helpless. The values of a culture of peace offer us a vision, a mobilising concept, on which we can act and can make a difference. Peace is much more than the absence of conflict. It involves

- above all - a better sharing, freedom, sustainable development and democracy. The absolute urgency is to eradicate the poverty and marginalisation, the exclusion which are the scourge of the modern world. Radicalisation, violence and aggression grow out of inhuman living conditions.

One of the keys, perhaps the most important one is education: multilingual, multicultural education that fosters tolerance and understanding in independent-minded citizens. I like to repeat that education is much more than information, or instruction. Education provides all human beings with the capacity to be themselves, to plan their own future, to say "yes" or "no" freely, not because they are subject to any external dictate: what I like to refer as "personal sovereignty". In UNESCO we have developed a kit for citizenship education. If I participate, I exist as a citizen; if I do not participate I do not count as a citizen: I am counted in the opinion polls, I am counted in the elections. To count as a citizen, this is the basis for a strong democracy.

UNESCO's mission – in the inspiring words of its Constitution – is to "*construct the defences of peace in the minds*" of men. We should add here "and women"! In the poem of Archibald MacLeish, which was the main element for this initial paragraph of the UNESCO Constitution, it is written "in the minds of men". For the time being, this is unfortunately correct. 96% of the decisions at the world level are taken by men. We are losing the decision-making capacity of women. Today only 9% of parliamentarians are women: we therefore lack 41% of voices. Perhaps this asymmetry, together with the asymmetry in the sharing of knowledge and wealth, is one the main reasons for the conflicts today in our androcentric world.

The founders of our Organization were convinced that there is no lasting peace without respect for the dignity of individuals and peoples; no lasting peace without freedom of expression and democracy; no lasting peace without justice. And it is this conviction that shows us the path to **action**: to effect the transition from the culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and dialogue, we must change the values, attitudes and behaviours of the past. Instead of the cynical proverb – *If you want peace, prepare for a war* – we should say: *If you want peace, prepare for peace, try to build peace in your every day life*. First and foremost, it is a question of personal responsibility. Then, individually and together, we have the power to change the world for the better.

From this perspective, the presence of mayors at a forum such as this is of particular importance. A city – Athens – was the birthplace of democracy. The city remains today the place, the level of society at which people often experience democracy - or the lack of it - most directly. The home, school, workplace and leisure centres, the street, neighbourhood and community form the fabric of our daily lives. It is here that the roots of intolerance and conflict can be eradicated, replaced with a culture of peace and dialogue. Often, we hear about the crisis of the city – reflecting a larger crisis which has been referred to as the "new world disorder". What is meant is a new unpredictability in life, a

lack of control, worse: organised crime, drug trafficking and even the trade in children and young women. When we try to solve these problems through charitable measures, we are wrong. All these problems must be addressed through political measures, reflected in budget priorities. All these issues must be dealt with by parliaments. Alongside these social evils are increasing inter-communal, inter-ethnic and religious tensions as well as critical environmental and health problems. It all presents an alarming mixture: one which leads some to feel nostalgia for past times when there were far fewer freedoms, but also fewer uncertainties.

I will cite just a few lines from the book *The Land of Green Plums* by Romanian author Herta Müller, who recalls the Ceausescu years. She writes: "*No cities can grow in a dictatorship, because everything stays small when it is watched*". Today, the world's cities are growing fast, posing enormous challenges. We cannot ask for them to stay small. We can only try to ensure that democracy and dialogue keep growing at the same rapid rate. Above all, we can try to install the culture of peace which enables us to live together and to cope with change. The report on Education for the 21st Century of Jacques Delors argues that we must provide our children and their children with education, based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. I would add: we must also learn to share better.

In many cases, we are witnessing a renaissance of cities. They play an active role in international life, often demonstrating great initiative in the resolution of problems vital for the life of the community. Taking all this into account, UNESCO set up a special "Cities for Peace Prize" to support towns where the principles of a culture of peace have become a daily reality. The Moscow International Forum has brought together mayors and personalities from the creative and intellectual fields. It combines the potential of all these actors for the promotion of the culture of peace at the municipal level, through municipal structures of education, culture, science and information. The outcome of this meeting will therefore be of the greatest importance. The Moscow Forum is looking to the future.

We are responsible to our children and grandchildren, and to future generations, for preserving – despite all the challenges and contradictions of our times - the essence of humanity. In other words, we are responsible for ensuring that humanistic concepts become stronger throughout the world. History allows us to state with certainty that our future must be based on the culture of peace and dialogue between civilisations. Let us be persevering. Let us try and try again. Let us prepare our children to express dissent without violence, to be different but united by the values and universal principles enshrined in UNESCO's Constitution: justice, freedom, equality, solidarity ("intellectual and moral solidarity"). Let us learn as many languages as we can. From the very beginning children must learn languages and respect, from the cradle, all cultures and colours of skin. We must know that there is only one pedagogy: teaching by

example. In Spanish we have a proverb: *"Más vale un ejemplo que cien sermones"* – it is much better to have one example than one hundred sermons.

In the age of globality, in the age of macro-economic data, of an inter-dependent world, life at the local level, everyday life remains the essence, the vital aspect of the world community. A very important poet in my country wrote: *"if you wish to be universal, fully live in your village"*. Today, at this Forum, let us recall the words of Fyodor Dostoyevsky: *"The Golden Age is the most improbable dream which has ever existed; but people gave their lives and all their force for it; prophets died or were killed for it; and the peoples do not want to live and or even die without it."* This dream is pursued in the whole concept of the culture of peace.

In the century that is now coming to an end, at the dawn of a new millennium we must realise that we have paid the price of war and violence. This country, the Federation of Russia, knows this better than other countries, as millions of their sons, particularly the young, gave their lives. And we must not take peace or freedom for granted; we must not take electricity and clean water for granted. We have this duty to remember all those who gave their lives - often the only thing they had - for the peace and freedom that we have today. How soon the culture of peace will take the place of the culture of war and violence depends on us: on our convictions about the need for these changes, on our determination to achieve this goal, on our determination to make the transition from the logic of force to the force of reason, from a culture of force and war to a culture of peace, dialogue and non-violence.