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

at the closing session
of the World Conference on Science

Budapest, 1 July 1999

Mr Chairman of the Conference,
Mr President of ICSU,
Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we come to the close of the World Conference on Science, I would like once again to express my deep gratitude to our hosts for making our stay here in Budapest such a memorable one and I also want to say how very grateful I am to all the participants. You have deployed so much energy over the last six days and contributed to so many important debates, that our final documents can truly be said to result from an active and - I may add - a highly interactive process, especially in the case of the excellent role played by the rapporteurs, the drafting group and the chairs of the Thematic Meetings.

So I warmly thank the government officials, the scientists, the engineers and the educators, the employers, the representatives of private enterprise, NGOs and the media for this remarkable input which is the first great achievement of the Conference. I have been greatly encouraged by what I have seen this week. The outstanding feature of this Conference has been the constructive way everyone has worked together, all actors on the same stage. Basic science researchers have been getting to grips with issues which they may not always have considered as aspects of their work. I must say how much I have admired their willingness to respond to this role of scientist as global citizen. There have also been government ministers and other officials, listening to the natural scientists, to the social scientists, to the NGOs and I thank them too for entering this very open dialogue.

Each and every person here has fully played his or her part. I am especially grateful because the relationship between science and society that we are seeking for the start of a fresh century makes learners of us all. In order to establish a new way of doing science, we have to learn to take the dialogue about science, policy, social needs and ethics to a new level and that is why I am so glad we have launched UNESCO's first World Social Science Report here in Budapest. We have to learn to practice democracy at a new level: a level where each party to the science-society relationship is a respected partner, where there is constant interaction between the natural and social sciences, where science communication becomes a process of two-way exchange - between science and society, between science and politics.

Science popularisation has to enrich debate and feed a growing exchange on the issues. Because if the twenty-first century is to be marked by a closer relationship and a new role for science, believe me, there **will** be debate! There **must** be debate - so intense, so creative, so ethically rigorous, so intellectually challenging that it comes to be seen as a social, political and, yes, a scientific Renaissance - one in which universities, academies, research councils and

institutes, parliaments, the media and associations for the advancement of science mobilise to link everyone, within and between countries, to the knowledge base of humanity.

Much has been said about public disenchantment with science. What saddens me most is the disenchantment of many young people. This new departure must get young people lining up to enroll in science classes, viewing science as an outlet for their idealism, as the vehicle for making ours a better world: one where scientific knowledge is applied in a timely way, to redress but also to anticipate and prevent the problems which keep so many people in poverty, with no choice but to migrate to the shanty towns or to emigrate. A better world, where the best talents - the treasure within - do not fly away and where we apply knowledge to narrow and bridge the gap between the extremes of prosperity and exclusion, this unresolved paradox of our times. A world where science ensures the sustainability of development within a democratic context. That is the best way to build justice and security, to facilitate the transition from a culture of force and confrontation to a culture of tolerance and dialogue - a culture of peace.

And for this to happen on a massive scale, we need a new commitment at all levels. First and foremost, the outcome of this Conference must impact directly on national policies. Here I turn to all the government officials present in this room to emphasise once again, how much depends on you. When you go back to your governments and parliaments, please ensure that the documents adopted here are debated in your National Assemblies, in cabinet meetings, in the parliamentary select committees, in science policy groups. I know there is no point in dreaming that I will hear next week that all your governments have agreed to increase the percentage of research spending overnight to the levels we are calling for. But I do dream that you will put science on the political agenda and keep it there, that it will become the norm to devote a day a year to parliamentary debate on research policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a crucial time for science. What does it mean when we say we live in a knowledge society ? When we say information and knowledge are the main resource and the real currency of our age ? It means that for the first time ever, the key resource of humanity is not finite. We will never have to wage wars over diminishing supplies of knowledge! Of course, knowledge is power and the temptation to control such a powerful resource will be greater than ever. But equally, there are powerful tools to resist knowledge monopolies, knowledge deprivation, knowledge discrimination. Knowledge lends itself to sharing, to dissemination, to incremental growth and information and communication technology now offers the means to share, disseminate and expand knowledge on a totally unprecedented scale.

It is this process of sharing and developing the knowledge base to which we must now turn our efforts. Our professional activities are more than just jobs – underlying them is a mission: to improve the lives of human beings. Capacity-building in the developing world must put emphasis on basic science more than technology-transfer. Only this can put each country in charge of its applications of science and technology. How can we achieve this? As Michael Southwick said here, speaking for the United States, the answer is : all together, through dialogue and cooperation. He is so right! Even the biggest country cannot go it alone and even the smallest country cannot expect outside assistance without first making its own efforts - both in budget and in policy terms.

ICSU and UNESCO will play their role in implementing the resolutions made here and ensuring the relevance of follow-up initiatives. Thanks to Internet and e-mail, the outreach of our follow-up will extend as far as the widest network. We have a Declaration that unites us in our general aims and a Framework for Action that allows each country, each region, each network of institutions, to select their own most urgent priorities. UNESCO and ICSU will of course not be alone in the task of international follow-up and I already welcome all those from NGOs, from business and from the Youth Forum who will join our working group. And of course, all the participants here will have a role to play in their own workplace and community. We must all implement follow-up initiatives if we are to reach the scale of capacity-building needed, if we are to forge the kind of links between science and decision-making that allow for timely scientific advice to be heard and to be used. Some may think these expectations are too high. Some may wonder whether the demands of the role of scientist as global citizen will not be too great. But I believe that if we do not commit ourselves to a fundamentally new way of doing science, the costs will be far higher, in terms of lost opportunities, in terms of the uncontrolled transformation and fragmentation of scientific activity under the weight of market pressures, and above all, in terms of the dangerous acceleration and accumulation of critical problems for society and our planet that are crying out for scientific solutions. If any one thing should urge us on, it is the risk of irreversibility that now hangs over some of the most crucial processes of change that we are witnessing today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I opened this Conference, I said that the Danube does not separate Buda and Pest. It joins them. It seemed a fitting symbol for our undertaking. And we have indeed been joined, not separated, this week, by our different backgrounds and approaches, by the diversity of our areas of knowledge and of concern. As His Excellency, the President of Hungary said in his opening speech: *"There is only one science, only one planet Earth, and only one humankind"*. This is a truth that has come home to us here in Budapest. We have it in our power to contribute to the well-being and the human dignity of people who will never hear of our Conference, but whose lives we can improve.

And now, as we split up and go our separate ways, we take with us a shared determination. Although we each leave on our own journey, we have done our mapping together and even after we separate, we remain joined by a shared - by a new - commitment.