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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
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(UNESCO)

on the occasion of his visit to the
Kyiv Taras Shevchenko Institute for International Relations

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Director of the Institute,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I thank the organizers, particularly the National Commission of Ukraine, for having given me the opportunity to address you. Your Institute is known as a leading institution for the training of specialists in the field of international relations. It is therefore a great honour for me to be with you this afternoon. You may know that I have devoted much of my career to Japanese diplomacy. I am particularly pleased to meet here the future diplomats of Ukraine and to greet you almost as colleagues.

Ukraine's dedication to democracy and reform over recent years has been appreciated by the international community. Democracy is indeed a dynamic process, constantly endangered by the slightest social disequilibrium, constantly nurtured by effort, imagination and innovation. In fact, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the new international context, UNESCO has intensified its action in favour of democracy, seeking to create or strengthen networks of researchers, civil society organizations, promoters and educators of democracy and human rights. In particular, I would like to emphasize Ukraine's contribution to the organization of the International Conference "Democratic Governance and a Culture of Peace for the countries of Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe", held in Kyiv in March 1999.

You have invited me to share with you my "vision" of UNESCO's role at this time of globalization and constant changes. It can be summed up in one sentence: it is my ambition to restore UNESCO's full place as the United Nations Specialized Agency for education, science, culture and communication.

The specific mission of UNESCO within the United Nations family is building peace in people's minds through cooperation in education, science, culture and communication. Therefore priorities in these fields have to be determined according to the extent to which they contribute to these noble but - let us be honest - all too elusive goals.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, UNESCO - like many other institutions - finds itself at a turning point. While the Organization

has constantly sought to adapt, the present moment is particularly significant and auspicious.

Though other institutions may feel their future in question, UNESCO's mandate, enshrined in its Constitution, has not only stood the test of the time, but is more relevant than ever.

In order to respond to the growing expectations placed in it, UNESCO has a duty - and I quote from our Constitution - "to renew its efforts to promote peace founded on the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind and human development in its fields of competence" in particular through pioneering and catalytic activities. This demands clear-cut priorities and concentrated efforts in order to gain maximum effectiveness. The major organizational and practical challenge facing UNESCO at the dawn of the twenty-first century is to fulfil its mission while ensuring a balance between the scope of its action and its limited financial resources.

At the heart of UNESCO's current concerns is the question of globalization. Its inherent possibilities and the giant strides in science and technology that are being made in parallel with it - but also the legitimate questions that it raises as regards its risks - highlight a concept that is at the very heart of the founding of the United Nations system, and thus of UNESCO : that of universality.

Universality, if it is to have a meaning nowadays, must be perceived as the expression of the commitment by the members of the international community to work together to build a system which, over and above politics and the economy, would have ethics as its cornerstone. For ethics, or values, are what constitute the real challenge of this "globalization with a human face" which so many of us demand.

Globalization, though first and foremost an economic and financial process, is also a scientific and technological one, in which the new information and communication technologies are networking the world through links that are as dense as they are flexible.

But above all, globalization is a cultural process. It is spreading and imposing a new economy, and hence a new form of social organization, based on knowledge. How can we see to it that this knowledge, which is circulating everywhere and creating wealth, benefits everyone, instead of generating new and extreme forms of exclusion and marginalization not only between but also within countries ? How can we ensure that in this

universe of information exchange, knowledge, signs and symbols, everyone is simultaneously a receiver, a sender **and** a producer ?

The most profound issue raised by globalization is clearly that of universal participation. For Ukraine, as it advances through a period of transition that is at once economic, social and political, this question is central.

UNESCO sees a number of priorities in this regard, some of which I shall mention today, and all of which are designed to create conditions conducive to the emergence of a universal civilization :

1. Lifelong education for all and, in particular, basic education;
2. the ethics of the information society;
3. the ethics of science and technology;
4. the ethics of the environment, and finally
5. the ethics of intercultural dialogue, which is contingent upon recognition and fuller appreciation of diversity.

1. Basic and lifelong education

The importance of education in responding to globalization is too often neglected. Yet it is the pre-condition for the equitable and responsible participation of each one of us in this process.

Basic education denotes the minimum knowledge and skills needed in order to be able to make a full contribution to one's local environment and to be in control of one's own life. In an increasingly interdependent world, the contents, and therefore the very notion of the "quality" of basic education, are evolving. It can no longer be reduced to "reading, writing and arithmetic". It must also teach individuals to be, to do, to learn and to live together.

UNESCO has therefore placed basic education at the top of its agenda. The World Forum on Education for All, which was held last April

in Dakar, reaffirmed the great expectations cherished by the international community. The Framework for Action that emerged from the meeting entrusted the Organization with a major task, and confirmed its role as leader in the battle for education for all. UNESCO is therefore planning to devote a great deal of its expertise to developing basic education services accessible to all, including the poorest members of society, illiterate adults, marginalized young people and children not enrolled in school, by a strategy which mobilizes both the formal school system and all the alternatives that belong to the non-formal sector. For the right to education is, I must emphasize, one of the basic human rights, and as such it must be available to all without any exception on economic, social, cultural or geographic grounds.

The right to education has throughout the twentieth century been one of the most essential priorities for people in this part of the world. It is therefore especially important that a modern and democratic Ukraine is able to maintain this priority at the very top of its current reform agenda. Your country has an educated population and it is essential to preserve this human resource as a guarantee of the country's peaceful future and socio-economic stability.

Lifelong and "life-wide" education means higher education as well. In that connection, the representatives of parliaments and other national decision-making bodies who participated in the World Conference on Higher Education, organized by UNESCO two years ago, pledged to reform their systems of higher education in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Higher education must be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. There can be no discrimination and no one may be excluded from higher education for reasons of race, sex, language, religion, age, economic or social situation or because of a physical handicap.

Ukraine, which played an active part in that Conference, will undoubtedly be inspired by these noble principles in its structural reform of higher education now under way. I consider that each of the nine UNESCO Chairs established in universities and institutes in all regions of Ukraine should contribute to the reform effort.

UNESCO will also continue to support educational efforts in Ukraine, both by supporting the programme for tolerance and against extremism and through its international Associated Schools Project in which some 27 Ukrainian schools participate actively.

2. The ethics of the information society

The second field that we cannot fail to mention when we speak of globalization concerns the expansion of information and communication technologies and their dialectical link with globalization. Scientific and technological advances are in fact both the driving force and the effect of that development. They have radically reshaped the ways in which information and knowledge are produced, exchanged, shared and accessed.

But the new international civil society that is emerging through the new communication media has neither a shared history nor a shared vision of the future. Politicians, elected at national level, are torn between the requirements for local action and an international reality over which they have scarcely any control. This situation calls for an international debate for which international organizations, and UNESCO in particular, should provide the forum.

Undoubtedly, the Internet is an especially valuable tool for development and an extremely powerful means of disseminating information relatively cheaply. We are all aware, however, that the Internet benefits primarily those who are already educated and informed, and who can afford access to it. Unfortunately, it contributes at the same time to a widening of the gap that is already too large between the “infopoor” and the “inforich”. We have also to be vigilant regarding potential abuse.

The international community cannot remain passive when faced with such a phenomenon. It must mobilize so that information in the public domain may be both promoted and protected as the “global commons”. What we must do at this juncture is lay the groundwork for policy-making and for appropriate management of the global commons in relation to issues of general concern, in order to move towards a form of global governance that will take account of the collective challenges determining the fate of the planet.

The new programme that will be launched shortly by UNESCO, “Information for all”, is precisely aimed at reshaping a fairer information society, one that will guarantee universal access, the freedom of expression and the equitable participation of all in this global information society. Each of us must be able to benefit from the tremendous potential inherent in the new information technologies.

3. The ethics of science and technology

A third field which I think particularly relevant when we seek to perceive what universal values might emerge from the globalization process is that of the ethics of science and technology.

The rapid strides that have been made in science and technology over recent years and the convergence of informatics and the life sciences have resulted in considerable progress in the sphere of genetics and biotechnology. Human life - indeed, the very concept of living matter - are now being cast in a new light by advances in the biosciences and by the development of biomedical and gene technologies.

Here again, UNESCO, by taking the initiative of a Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, has played its role to the full. That Declaration strikes a balance between guaranteeing respect for human rights and allowing the necessary freedom for research. Among the ethical principles that it sets forth, the free exchange of knowledge and scientific information is gaining in importance as the mapping of the human genome progresses. UNESCO's objective is the construction of a shared bioethics, that is, of universal principles in bioethics.

Other fields, such as energy, outer space and water also merit our attention so that we can lay the foundations of a common ethics.

4. The ethics of the environment

The environment is one area that is greatly endangered by globalization. Scientific and technological advances have too often been exploited with no heed to their effects on the environment. UNESCO has played a pioneering role in attempting to change this state of affairs, which is now a universal concern.

One of my major concerns is freshwater resources. Water is scarce and very unevenly distributed around the world: nearly a quarter of humanity does not have direct access to drinking water. The uses made of scientific and technological progress have not dealt with this situation. This failure makes the prospect of a global water crisis a very real one, threatening not only sustainable development but also peace and security. UNESCO is

endeavouring to promote a proactive, integrated and multidisciplinary approach to the problem of water resources management, combining political, social, scientific and environmental factors.

I have therefore launched a new Programme which is to formulate a global method for the assessment of water resources and set up ongoing monitoring of trends. It will enlist the participation of 24 organizations in the United Nations system and must also develop instruments to facilitate the resolution of water-related conflicts.

5. The ethics of intercultural dialogue

But the field which is perhaps the most sensitive to the effects of globalization is that of culture. Globalization undoubtedly helps bring people closer together. However, it must not lead to cultural uniformity or to the hegemony of one or more cultures over all the others. Nor should it encourage fragmentation or a ghetto mentality. On the contrary, it must encourage pluralism with a view to dialogue and mutual enrichment.

Ukraine is a striking example of this phenomenon. The mosaic of its multiethnic population and the cultural diversity that has enriched it over the centuries, are among Ukraine's most precious treasures. Globalization must not in any way lead to the homogenization of what must by definition remain multifaceted.

This is the direction of UNESCO's action for the conservation of the world's tangible and intangible heritage, and for the promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingual education. Here I would like to praise Ukraine for hosting the UNESCO LINGUAPAX VIII Conference entitled "On the Threshold of the Millennium: through Language and Culture Studies to Culture of Peace, Harmony and Cooperation", which I had the honour to open this morning at the Kyiv State Linguistic University. Its main objective, since it was launched in this very same country in 1986, is to highlight the role of multilingual education as a key factor in the development of understanding among peoples and dialogue for peace. It does so by supporting Member States in formulating and implementing language policies designed to ensure linguistic diversity and multilingual education at all levels of education, protect and revive local and vernacular languages.

The impact of globalization on trade is not without consequences for intercultural dialogue. If there is to be genuine dialogue, there must first be a harmonious and equitable multi-directional flow of cultural goods and services of many different origins. Most of humanity cannot be restricted to the mere consumption of imported cultural products. The rules of international trade must allow spaces to be created in which all the planet's inhabitants can create and express themselves through cultural goods and services, make real choices about what they wish to acquire, and do so in conditions of justice and fairness.

The specific identity, the symbolic references and the cultural goods available to the citizens of those cultures that are the most vulnerable are heavily impacted by trade and technology. This is undoubtedly also relevant in a country like Ukraine, owing to the great variety of its traditional cultures.

Cultural diversity also means being able to produce and disseminate a wide range of cultural goods. It heightens the sense of identity as both a source and a product of creativity and living culture.

Indeed, UNESCO has just launched a large-scale international consultation on that subject. A group of experts will meet, on 21 and 22 September, to prepare the ground for a full-scale promotion of cultural diversity, particularly now that a new round of international trade negotiations is beginning.

On the same lines, UNESCO is considering promoting an international instrument - possibly a convention for the safeguarding of the intangible heritage, comparable to the one which exists already for the tangible heritage and which has proved its importance and usefulness over the last quarter century. The recognition of worldwide cultural diversity, spanning traditions, values and symbolic relations, will not only lead to acknowledgement and better appreciation of the culture of the Other, but will also bring out the history of intercultural contacts, with their mutual borrowings and contributions. This common sense of belonging, albeit pluralist, will also facilitate action to combat mutual ignorance and misunderstanding, thereby strengthening the fundamental values of democracy, justice and human rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In response to the globalization of the economy, the international community must be resolute in promoting universality in the most profound sense of the word: a type of universality which both challenges all models and acknowledges and respects the contribution of all peoples to universal civilization.

UNESCO, for its part, will spare no effort in its response to this challenge. As an intergovernmental body that is at the same time a partner of civil societies, as a crossroads between disciplines, too, which is seeking to promote advances in specialized knowledge, the Organization constitutes a forum for intellectual exchange and ethical debate that is most suitable for a consolidation of the bases of such universality.

As you doubtless know, since I was elected last November, I have embarked upon a far-reaching programme of reforms which aim to ensure that UNESCO regains its status as an unchallenged reference point, I would venture to say, an authority in matters intellectual, strategic and ethical, in all areas within its competence.

In order to do this, UNESCO needs to reorganize itself as a world centre for capturing, collecting, assessing and disseminating all forms of knowledge and know-how available around the world, on the basis of the highest standards of professionalism and quality. This means that it must improve and radically change its management methods so as to respond efficiently to its core mission, in the broadest sense of the term, which is to be a true “knowledge organization”. Indeed, while the fundamental end-goal of all its action – peace-building – has remained unchanged, the world has, and greatly so, since 1945 when UNESCO was created.

That is the underlying purpose of my commitment towards the Organization, and my determination to steer it towards those goals as we move into the 21st century.

Thank you for your attention.