

DG/2001/88  
Original: English

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by  
Mr Koïchiro Matsuura

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

on the occasion of his official visit to Albania

Tirana, 18 September 2001

Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with you here today. This is my first visit to Albania, which I have been looking forward to very much. It is also my first visit to South-East Europe; it will certainly not be my last, for I shall undertake further visits to the sub-region in the period ahead.

My visit occurs at a time when people of goodwill everywhere are seeking to come to terms with the horrific events last week in New York, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania. Last Wednesday, I issued a statement expressing my total condemnation of the terrorist attacks upon the United States of America and declared my deep-felt conviction that “no cause, whatever it may be, can be advanced through terror”. I fully share the United Nations Security Council’s view, as expressed in its Resolution 1368 (2001) that was adopted on 12 September 2001, that such appalling acts, like any act of international terrorism, are a threat to international peace and security. UNESCO, along with the rest of the United Nations system, supports the call of Security Council Resolution 1368 for collaborative action “to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these terrorist attacks”.

It is both tragic and ironical that these unprecedented terrorist attacks have occurred during the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, which UNESCO has done much to promote and develop. For UNESCO, it is imperative that, at the same time as we unequivocally support the need to decisively combat all forms of terrorism, we must continue to advocate and cultivate dialogue among different civilizations and cultures. We must not allow international terrorism to kill this spirit of dialogue.

The world, it seems, is turning on a hinge and we are entering a new period of history. We must try to assimilate and understand the enormity of what has happened and what is going to happen. We must deal with the practical consequences but we must also get to grips with the intellectual and ethical implications of such major turning points in world affairs. UNESCO has a particular interest and responsibility in regard to these tasks. To help it fulfil its intellectual and ethical role, UNESCO calls upon intellectuals

everywhere to apply their minds to the new conditions of insecurity, terror and inhumanity. Above all, we must analyse how we can steer a course towards peace, security and development in human affairs. I preface my remarks today, therefore, with an appeal to the intellectual leaders and creative talents of Albania and the sub-region to embrace the challenge represented by 11 September 2001.

Since becoming UNESCO's Director-General, I have stressed the importance of particular sub-regions within the framework of the Organization's overall vision and programme. Thus, UNESCO's work is not focused only upon individual countries and the global level. One such sub-region is, indeed, South-East Europe, towards which UNESCO has sought to develop a more coherent and systematic strategy. Given the sub-region's considerable need for international cooperation, I have tried to ensure that South-East Europe receives more attention within UNESCO's activities. I am determined that, within the framework of the Stability Pact, in close collaboration with the Member States concerned and in partnership with other organizations, UNESCO will increase its cooperation, building upon the sub-region's unique and diverse cultural identities and on its historically close cultural links.

The theme of today's meeting, the challenges of culture and communication in an age of globalization, is particularly close to UNESCO's heart for we have adopted the need to humanize the globalization process as the pervasive theme of our Medium-Term Strategy (2002-2007). As you will see, UNESCO believes that the sub-regional dimension is vital for addressing issues of globalization.

Long known for its remarkable isolation during the Cold War period, Albania is now increasingly engaged with the sub-region within which it is embedded and with wider Euro-Atlantic connections and visions. Through its geographical location and history at the crossroads of Ottoman, Roman, Greek, Illyrian and other civilizations and cultures, Albania can draw upon a rich heritage as a prism through which it can see today's events in a distinctive way.

During the Cold War, when Albania was virtually cut off from external contacts, UNESCO provided many Albanian scholars, scientists and other intellectuals with a unique avenue of access to the wider world, largely

through the Fellowship Programme. More recently, following the Albanian crisis of March 1997, UNESCO provided some immediate emergency assistance for the rehabilitation of educational and cultural establishments. Subsequently, in conformity with decisions taken by its governing bodies, UNESCO helped the Albanian authorities to prepare a comprehensive plan of action for the rehabilitation of educational, scientific and cultural institutions and for the restoration of the cultural and architectural heritage of Albania, particularly Butrint.

Now that the situation in the country has stabilized and improved, we can explore new avenues of cooperation together. Of course, UNESCO will assist Albania directly but, as I am sure you realize, a framework of sub-regional cooperation promises better results in the long run. In this connection, I would like to share with you some thoughts on the subject of sub-regional cooperation and the role of intellectuals. To encourage and stimulate this process of reflection, I shall raise a number of questions. These questions, which address important issues facing Albania and the sub-region, are as follows:

- Is peace in the sub-region of South-East Europe being threatened by outside aggression?
- Why doesn't the United Nations concentrate on peace-keeping in South-East Europe?
- Would it not be good for the countries of South-East Europe to receive more external aid?
- Why doesn't UNESCO focus its efforts on providing emergency assistance to South-East Europe?
- Should education be a priority for cooperation among countries in South-East Europe?
- Should science be a priority for cooperation among the countries of the sub-region?
- Should culture be such a priority?

- Should communication and media be a priority of cooperation among countries in South-East Europe?
- Are regional cooperation and integration relevant any longer in the era of globalization?
- What is the role of intellectuals in international cooperation?

I will now briefly examine each question in turn, adding some remarks relating to UNESCO's role and its position on the issues raised.

My first question - **Is peace in the sub-region being threatened by outside aggression?** – must be answered in the negative. At the present time, the sub-region is free from any significant external threat. The chief threats to peace are coming from internal conflicts and inter-ethnic tensions. All things considered, the situation within South-East Europe is improving, though progress towards lasting peace remains difficult due to the persistence of deep-rooted hatreds, fears and suspicions. Leaders in the sub-region bear an enormous responsibility to exercise power in ways that reduce rather than exacerbate internal tensions. Should they fail, they have no one but themselves to blame.

While Albania has avoided many of the sub-region's worst forms of violence, the decade of transition following the collapse of communism has proven to be very difficult. Rapid social, economic and political changes have not generated a stable environment for investment, nor has the infrastructure of legislation and law enforcement created a culture of security and reciprocity. Violence, criminality and brutality have taken hold and will be difficult to root out. But the effort must be made, otherwise Albania risks becoming marginalized once again within the society of nations.

With regard to the second question - **Why doesn't the United Nations concentrate on peace-keeping in South-East Europe?** – my answer is to give emphasis to the high importance of peace-building. Peace-keeping efforts undoubtedly have helped to restore security, which is a precondition for sheer survival and for developing some basic forms of normalcy. The killing, destruction and chaos in the Balkans had to stop, and military intervention was essential for this to happen. However, the external

imposition or importation of peace offers no long-term solution. It is for this reason that peace-building must be undertaken too. For peace to be sustainable in today's world, it must be based on the acceptance and practice of democratic principles, the rule of law, and respect for other people's rights, not just one's own. Peace must be re-created every day through processes internal to each society, indeed each community. This takes time and patience. Peace-building requires vision and sustained commitment not over weeks, months, even years but for one, perhaps two generations. Lasting peace is home-grown.

In this perspective, we can see the necessity for a division of labour among international organizations and within the UN system: between those focused mainly upon political and military security (NATO, OSCE and the UN Department of Peace-Keeping Operations) and those seeking to establish the foundations for long-term peace and development. UNESCO believes that those foundations are, in vital respects, ethical and intellectual in character. We seek to encourage an ethical and intellectual vision of human security based on shared values. The arms collection process must go on but we must also develop an ideas collection process and a values collection process; we must then find ways to share these ideas and values. People like yourselves are vital for this task. UNESCO, whose Constitution famously declares that the defences of peace are built in the minds of men, will join with you in this endeavour.

My answer to the third question - **Would it not be good for the countries of South-East Europe to receive more external aid?** – is mixed. On the one hand, it is clearly vital that Albania never again becomes as isolated or neglected as it had been during the Cold War years. It must reach out to the West and to the whole world, and must engage with the dynamic processes of globalization. On the other hand, I believe that there are risks that the conditions under which economic assistance is offered and received can seriously compromise the opportunities for long-term development. These risks include the generation of dependencies and an over-reliance upon externally designed assistance programmes that may be ill-suited to local realities. I recognize that it may be very hard to refuse the offers of assistance, especially when present resources are so thin and eventual risks seem very distant. In any case, the prospects for economic assistance are no longer as rosy as they once were. Economic surveys reveal a downward trend in economic aid but they also point to a positive general trend of economic development in the sub-region. I share the view of many observers

that the key factor is the legendary Balkan flair for entrepreneurship and how this can be encouraged so that industry and trade can modernize and flourish.

The fourth question I have raised is: **Why doesn't UNESCO focus its efforts on providing emergency assistance to South-East Europe?** UNESCO recognizes that international emergency operations and relief and rehabilitation programmes are of crucial importance in order to relieve human suffering. We have provided various forms of emergency assistance in the sub-region. We have made interventions focused on such concerns as the plight of refugee children, the Mostar bridge, the recovery of Kosovo's education system, the attack on Dubrovnik, and the protection of Butrint. However, reference must be made to a division of labour among international actors. UNESCO is not well-endowed with the resources needed for massive, sustained humanitarian assistance programmes. We are pulled, of course, by the moral impulse underlying humanitarian action and by the duty to contribute to the international community's response. But we seek to intervene in ways that are linked to our strengths and orientations. This requires that when we provide emergency assistance or engage in humanitarian crises, we have a view to the medium-term and long-term dimensions.

UNESCO's key role, I believe, is to provide bridges between relief and development. This requires that we do engage with emergencies and crises from the beginning but not primarily through providing short-term 'consumables'. Instead, UNESCO must contribute to the international community's understanding of the causes of a particular crisis and the trajectory of future needs. Its practical work must focus mainly on harnessing local expertise and developing national capacity in order to undertake the design, planning and implementation of programmes traversing the relief/development divide.

Fifthly, **should education be a priority for cooperation among countries in South-East Europe?** I am convinced that it must be. Educational reform is vital for addressing the problems of social conflict, weak democratic norms and practices, and the denial of full citizenship rights. Education cannot be expected to solve all these problems by itself, of course, but its long-term effects are undoubtedly part of the long-term solution. The sub-region's 'democratic deficit' has attracted many

educational initiatives that have prioritized the strengthening of democratic citizenship and the promotion of human rights through formal schooling, adult education, teacher training, curriculum renewal, and textbook development. For its part, UNESCO has elaborated a broad programme for the development of civic education and human rights education in the sub-region, in partnership with Member States and a range of international and regional organizations.

Other priority projects and activities conducted by UNESCO are focused upon the modernization of higher education policies and institutions, the exchange of university staff and students, the development of research capacities and the alleviation of brain drain.

A particular priority concern has been the spread of better mutual knowledge and understanding among countries in South-East Europe. If mutual incomprehension and outdated stereotypes persist, a more solid and long-lasting peace will prove elusive. UNESCO is seeking to contribute to the long-term peace process by addressing the problem of distorted and biased representations, but we acknowledge that it may take a long time before positive results emerge. Especially in the area of the teaching of history, forms of stereotyping and prejudice directed towards other countries and ethnic/cultural minorities have defaced many textbooks. UNESCO, in collaboration with its partners, is seeking actively to eliminate these negative images, distortions and misrepresentations; in effect, we are trying to 'disarm history', as expressed through history curricula and textbooks.

My sixth question - **Should science be a priority for cooperation among the countries of the sub-region?** – must be answered in the affirmative. The past decade has witnessed a dramatic disintegration of research networks and infrastructures of scientific cooperation. Scientific activity and the community of research and scholarship among scientists in the sub-region have been badly affected. For UNESCO, it is vital that scientific networks and infrastructures are rebuilt. This should be focused not only upon intra-regional cooperation but also on establishing sustainable links with institutions and individual researchers further afield, especially in Western Europe and North America. An umbrella project is being prepared for submission to a special meeting of Ministers of science and technology in South-East Europe, scheduled for October 2001 in Paris. This project will have five components: life sciences, environmental sciences, computer

sciences and information technology developments, materials sciences, and selected aspects of the social and human sciences. UNESCO expects that the Ministers will make a series of important decisions and adopt an action plan to carry forward this region-wide initiative.

In answer to my seventh question - **Should culture be a priority for cooperation among the countries in the sub-region?** – I have no hesitation in proclaiming culture to be a top priority. The protection of cultural diversity and the promotion of pluralism are long-standing features of UNESCO's work. Respect for cultural diversity and pluralism is essential for the development of truly democratic societies in which human rights are guaranteed. UNESCO seeks to provide practical help to all countries and regions so that they may preserve and develop their cultural distinctiveness and variety. To facilitate this, I shall place before UNESCO's forthcoming General Conference a new proposed declaration on cultural diversity. If adopted, this will be the first such declaration on this subject.

Vital for protecting and promoting cultural diversity in the sub-region is the remarkable cultural creativity of artists in South-East Europe, an asset that should be put to use for this purpose and for strengthening multicultural citizenship. One way to encourage this is by providing opportunities for artists and cultural professionals from different cultural backgrounds to make joint presentations of their work to young people. Such an initiative has already been successfully piloted by UNESCO in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and there are plans to extend it to neighbouring countries.

The protection of cultural and natural heritage is of great importance for the countries of South-East Europe, which have no less than 54 sites on UNESCO's World Heritage list. As I am sure you know, the chief responsibility for heritage site protection lies with the countries themselves. For its part, UNESCO assists in the area of upgrading national legislation to meet modern standards and the training of national specialists in the protection of cultural heritage.

One of the most critical areas for the cultivation and consolidation of peace in the sub-region is the development of intercultural dialogue. This has particular importance within our activities associated with the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001). It should not be forgotten that dialogue among civilizations and cultures is needed within

regions and sub-regions as well as at the global level. In the light of recent horrific events, inter-cultural dialogue has never been more crucial for international and intra-regional peace.

My eighth question - **Should communication and media be a priority of cooperation with countries in South-East Europe?** – is again answered in the affirmative. With the transition from systems of state-controlled media to a more Western-style of information flow, the mass media and ICT developments have inundated citizens with an unprecedented flood of words, messages and images of little or no real information value. This “information overload”, which has been unleashed upon citizens with little experience of press freedom, has often been accompanied by crude forms of commercialism and risks of cultural dominance and political manipulation. As a result, the media have been discredited in the eyes of many citizens and are seen as a particular threat to the young. In this regard, UNESCO recommends the development of critical media reading/watching skills at the secondary school level, with the ultimate objective of enabling young citizens to play their full role in a free and democratic society.

Among UNESCO’s priorities in recent years has been the desirability of neighbouring countries in South-East Europe acquiring accurate knowledge of and information about one another. Misinformation and ignorance have played a role within the many conflicts in the recent past; peaceful relations in the region require that this be addressed. With the generous help of various external partners, UNESCO has developed a daily TV news exchange programme among 12 channels in 12 countries. One of the main objectives is to provide TV audiences with balanced news about neighbouring countries. This project has already started its operations earlier this year on an experimental basis, and it is planned to develop it to become the sub-regional equivalent of “EuroNews” serving the countries of the European Union.

With regard to my ninth question – **Are regional cooperation and integration relevant any longer in the era of globalization?** – UNESCO’s view is that they are indispensable. On the way towards European integration, a priority target set by each of the sub-region’s countries, it will be necessary to dismantle many barriers established in the past that act as obstacles to future progress. Consequently, each of UNESCO’s priority projects for South-East Europe has an in-built component for developing

regional cooperation between government authorities, institutions and individuals.

The diversity of each region of the world does not preclude the universality of principles and norms based on shared values. Especially in the field of culture, the protection of regional diversity is becoming increasingly vital; indeed, it is a necessary instrument in the fight against the excesses of globalization. In addition, no region of the world can afford to do without intra-regional cooperation; only by joining forces with neighbouring states can a single country hope to meet the political, economic, social and cultural challenges deriving from ever-growing global competition. South-East Europe, however, has established hardly any sub-regional cooperative or integrative mechanisms. This will rapidly handicap countries individually and collectively. UNESCO stands ready to assist in whatever way it can to facilitate the development and implementation of such mechanisms of cooperation.

My tenth and final question - **What is the role of intellectuals in international cooperation?** – summons forth a major challenge. I think that the sub-region's intellectuals must make their voices heard not only within their own societies and the sub-region but also in the wider world. Especially in a democratic system, intellectuals must play an ethical role, which in turn requires a capacity for critical questioning. And their questioning cannot be confined to the domestic sphere but must extend to the design and practice of international cooperation in our globalized world. The time has passed for what might be called 'regime intellectuals'. The political and ideological conditions for such intellectuals have disappeared. It is now imperative that national intellectuals acquire another identity, one that places them at the creative and critical interface between the local and the global.

The world's writers, scientists, artists, journalists, educators, researchers and cultural workers have a natural friend and strong ally in UNESCO, especially through the various networks and programmes of international cooperation set up under its auspices. The International Association of South-East European Studies (AIESEE) provides one such circuit of exchange. Together, we must develop others so that the rich intellectual and creative talent of the sub-region can flourish and grow.

In conclusion, let me return to the concerns with which I began my presentation. I would like to encourage the intellectuals of Albania and the sub-region to contribute to the world's intellectual and ethical response to the new international situation. More generally, it is time for Albania to become more active in international affairs, in the United Nations and in UNESCO in particular. I can assure you of a warm welcome.

Thank you.