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Address by
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on the occasion of the award of the
UNESCO Cities for Peace Prize
and the confirmation of the proclamation of
Jemaâ el-Fna Square as an oral and intangible masterpiece of humanity

Marrakesh, 18 March 2002

Honourable Minister of Culture and Communication,
Wali of the region,
Chairman of the Town Council,
Mayors,
Governors,
Parliamentarians,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first of all to welcome you warmly to this ceremony and to thank our hosts for the hospitality that they have shown us here in Marrakesh.

Nearly eight months ago, I took the floor in Rabat at the closing meeting of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's international symposium on dialogue among civilizations. It provided me with the opportunity to welcome the many national and international initiatives undertaken by our Member States, which are convinced that we can make dialogue and innovative practices a key factor in easing tension and building world peace. The UNESCO Cities for Peace Prize is also part of this approach.

I am pleased that this ceremony coincides with the 107th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which is being held in Marrakesh. Parliamentarians play a key role in the democratic process and policy development and constitute a vital link between the local and national levels, which must complement each other.

A century ago, only 4% of the world's population was urban. Today, cities are home to half of its inhabitants. The city is a hub of wealth, prosperity and social harmony, a place where people come together; but it can often spell poverty, isolation, pollution and violence. When well-administered it becomes a force for change and a catalyst of modernization, enabling each individual to be an active citizen and a full partner in the community. A crossroads for contacts and exchanges, it can foster the development of cultural diversity.

Taming the city is not a pipe dream. It has already been achieved here and there, at project- or neighbourhood-level, all over the world. By awarding these prizes, we wish to encourage and support the initiative of those who are making the city a haven of peace.

Here in Marrakesh I have the honour and great satisfaction of awarding the Prize, on behalf of UNESCO, for the third time. I am particularly happy to do so in such a highly symbolic place, the Jemaâ el-Fna Square, which was proclaimed a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity in 2001: this legendary square, where for centuries Berber and *gnawi* traditions were expressed through storytellers, musicians, dancers and performers and where the dialogue of cultures continues today.

Our aim, in creating the UNESCO Cities for Peace Prizes, was to pay tribute to cities working all over the world to guarantee peace and dialogue in daily life. The Prizes have provided us with an opportunity to see how we can work in partnership, the advantage of which is that it brings several social actors together around a common platform in order to invent new ties and new roots that help people to live together better and to shape new forms of social relations. That means guaranteeing each individual's right to imagine, appreciate and, above all, transform the city.

The cities to which we pay tribute today have not only endeavoured to carry out this experiment, they have succeeded. They deserve our gratitude, our admiration and our encouragement.

Honourable Minister,
Wali of the region,
Chairman of the Town Council,
Mayors,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We received some 80 nominations reflecting a wide variety of situations. They came from large cities that have long experience and an extensive administrative and technical infrastructure and also from more modest towns in which resolute action by a municipal team has occasionally taken less traditional but potentially more innovative forms.

The selection of the prizewinners was no easy task. The final choice does not in any way detract from the worth of all the candidate cities, whose action will be known and acknowledged all over the world. It will be publicized on the Internet site of the Prize through our *data bank on innovative urban practices*, which currently covers 714 projects.

I shall now announce the prizewinning cities:

For the **Arab States**, the Prize is awarded to **Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt)** [Mayor: Saleh Abd el-Aleim].

I am pleased to award the Municipality of Sharm El-Sheikh, in the person of its Mayor, Saleh Abd el-Aleim, the Prize for the Arab States. This city has made a remarkable achievement through a comprehensive and integrated initiative which combines a clear vision and sense of purpose with innovative and practical measures of implementation. The Sharm El-Sheikh endeavour addresses issues of quality of life from two vantage points: from a human perspective, targeting all population sectors as well as economic conditions, and from an urban development perspective that is environmentally conscious and conducive to participatory empowerment and harmony.

In 1982, Sharm El-Sheikh was an isolated village on a severely polluted stretch of the Aqaba Gulf coastline, devastated by war, bereft of any basic infrastructure and inhabited by a community of less than 1,000 Bedouins. Some years later, a plan for sustainable urban development and land use was established, job opportunities were offered to unemployed trained workers from densely populated cities around the country, and little by little Sharm El-Sheikh evolved to become a modern city, equipped with high quality infrastructure which does not harm the environment. The change has been dramatic. This remarkable development scheme has involved consultation with universities, public authorities, and urban planning experts as well as the technical and financial support of public, private and international actors. As a result of its success, Sharm El-Sheikh has become a magnet for scientists and conservationists: the centre for fighting marine pollution, for example, attracts many visitors each year. The Municipality of Sharm El-Sheikh has addressed many complex issues and has contributed significantly to strengthening respect for and preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

[Diploma, cheque and medal presented to the Mayor]

The **Honourable Mention** for the same region is awarded to the **City of Sousse (Tunisia)** [Mayor: Hedi Ayache].

Mr Mayor, I should like to highlight the innovative character of an approach that has made it possible to enlist the participation and commitment of the local population in the development of

your projects. You place particular emphasis on training which is sensitive to culture and the environment leading to greater social cohesion and sustainable urban development. The heritage of the City of Sousse is a very rich one and it provided the basis for the City's inclusion in the World Heritage List in 1986. Sousse has succeeded in involving various actors (government authorities, district committees and NGOs) in the development of its activities so as to improve living together. A democratic spirit has guided the development of your projects, placing emphasis on consultation, participation and the sharing of responsibilities.

[Diploma and medal presented to the Mayor]

For **Africa**, the Prize is awarded to the **City of Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of the Congo)** [Mayor: Floribert Kaseba Makunko].

I now turn to another courageous mayor who has succeeded despite a particularly difficult context in mapping out roads to peace. Mr Kaseba Makunko, the members of the jury were, like myself, most impressed by your outstanding efforts to give new hope to your City's children, hope that they might not fall victim to a war waged by adults. By integrating them into the life of the community and by creating structures adapted to their needs, you have forged the tools to build a better future.

The economic crisis that has beset your country for decades has condemned half of the Congo's population to living below the poverty threshold. Your municipality understood the urgent need to teach children new values, the values of sharing, respect and tolerance. The awareness-raising campaigns that you organized against sexually transmitted diseases (STD), HIV/AIDS and drugs also fit into the rationale for building a better future.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I award you this Prize today. I hope that it will help to make your remarkable initiative known throughout the world and encourage you to continue your efforts in that direction.

[Diploma, cheque and medal presented to the Mayor]

The **Honourable Mention** for the same region is awarded to **Bahir Dar (Ethiopia)** [Mayor: Teferra Tediyo].

Bahir Dar is another city that has managed to address the challenges of rapid urbanization. The Municipality of this city, now one of Ethiopia's most densely populated urban settlements, has developed an extensive range of measures to make it a healthier and more convivial place for its citizens.

The city has shown great determination in its efforts to tackle difficult issues – such as housing shortages, economic stagnation, and lack of electricity – by using local labour to find solutions, developing sanitation and transportation infrastructure, and generally providing adequate public services.

These actions have improved living conditions for the most vulnerable groups of society and have encouraged the community to work together to build a common future. In addition, the Municipality has succeeded in involving many sectors of civil society in its urban development project.

[Diploma and medal presented to the Mayor]

For **Asia and Pacific**, the Prize is awarded to **Bukhara (Uzbekistan)** [Mayor: Karim Kamalov].

Known as the “Living Museum” of Central Asia, Bukhara has been a city famous for its rich cultural heritage since the Middle Ages.

Today, not only has the city made outstanding efforts to preserve its heritage but also, since 1991, the Municipality has initiated projects to stimulate the museum industry, revive handicrafts, develop cultural tourism and rehabilitate the historic city centre. Throughout this process, care has been taken to involve the entire population by promoting cultural exchange and dialogue among different communities, developing educational programmes and creating job opportunities. Among the many outcomes of Bukhara’s initiatives have been the following: the creation of an Information and Culture Centre; the establishment of the Centre of Handicraft Development; the restoration of a medieval hotel, which has been turned into a centre for local artisans; and the setting up of specialist training institutions to run workshops in restoration and handicrafts.

In restoring and rehabilitating the cultural treasures of Bukhara, the Municipality is preserving traditions and artefacts that are of symbolic and historical importance to many countries and cultures.

[Diploma, cheque and medal presented to the Mayor]

For the same region, the **Honourable Mention** is awarded to **Jaipur (India)** [Mayor: Nirmala Verma].

The City of Jaipur submitted a candidacy suffused with a remarkable sense of energy and hope. This Municipality has adopted a community-based approach in order to build a city for peace and a sustainable peace for the city. Jaipur has sought answers to challenges facing many cities: population growth at a staggering rate due to the inflow of economic immigrants from rural areas and the subsequent development of slum and squatter settlements.

Within an urban planning framework, the Municipality of Jaipur has improved living conditions in slum areas, developed infrastructure and communal spaces, and rehabilitated the architectural style of this city, which is known as “the Pink City”. The local authorities have abandoned a paternalistic approach and now act as facilitators, encouraging communities to develop their own programmes and set their own priorities.

In order to address the needs of job seekers, the City’s authorities have implemented the Chief Minister’s Employment Generation Scheme, thereby fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among young persons while at the same time securing a livelihood for many families.

[Diploma and medal presented to the Mayor]

We now move to **Europe** where, as on the previous occasion of awarding the Prize, the range of eligibility was extremely broad, making the selection particularly difficult.

For this region, the Prize is awarded to **Vilnius (Lithuania)** [Mayor: Mr Arturas Zuokas].

The outstanding achievements of the Municipality of Vilnius in the five areas identified by the Prize were noted by all the jury members and by myself. I am delighted to award the Prize for the Europe region to the Municipality of Vilnius in the person of its Mayor, Mr Arturas Zuokas.

During the recent period of transition, and despite having very limited means, the Municipality of Vilnius has made considerable efforts to integrate an ethnically mixed population. Whether carrying out actions dealing with urban planning, education or conservation, the whole of its diverse population was involved; in other words, a strong emphasis was placed on local action and participation.

The Municipality always sought to build bridges between different generational and cultural groups, and to involve the more vulnerable groups of society, integrating them into city life.

By involving the entire school system in efforts aimed at environmental and cultural preservation, the Municipality has prepared a better future.

And, finally, by promoting activities and performances that celebrate the cultural diversity of its citizens, Vilnius has been able to foster the constructive intercultural and intergenerational dialogue which is essential for sustainable peace and the protection of heritage.

[Diploma, cheque and medal presented to the Mayor]

For the same region, the **Honourable Mention** is awarded to **Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation)** [Mayor: Kamil Iskhakov].

I have decided to award the Municipality of Kazan an Honourable Mention for its exemplary efforts to find collective solutions to a wide range of problems and tensions. Faced with a high concentration of cultural and ethnic differences, Kazan has managed to create genuine bonds of citizenship.

Most in line with the nature of this Prize is Kazan's "Friendship of Nations" project which involves the implementation of a multicultural policy. This is essential in a city composed of more than 100 nationalities!

But the Municipality has also taken significant steps to give its young people a part to play in improving their own living conditions, and to provide them with constructive, future-oriented activities.

In addition, Kazan has encouraged its inhabitants to take responsibility for cleaning up and preserving their city and its environment.

I hope that this Honourable Mention will give encouragement to you, Mr Mayor, and to your team and partners in the long-term drive to develop an intercultural dialogue of peace.

[Diploma and medal presented to the Mayor]

For **Latin America and the Caribbean**, the Prize is awarded to **Cotacachi (Ecuador)** [Mayor: Auki Kanaima Tituaña Males].

I now welcome a mayor who has demonstrated both courage and imagination, Auki Kanaima Tituaña Males.

Cotacachi, a small city with an ethnically mixed population, has shown a great willingness to create intercultural dialogue, overcoming many difficulties and bringing together all sectors of society in a joint effort. The accomplishments of the Municipality in this domain have been so outstanding that I have decided to give it the Prize despite the fact that on the last occasion of the Cities for Peace Prize (1999), the laureate was awarded to Quito, also in Ecuador.

What makes the actions of Cotacachi so remarkable?

Cotacachi has recently managed to elect and then re-elect its first indigenous mayor. The Cantonal Assembly initiated by Auki Kanaima Tituaña Males has allowed the municipal administration to propose and undertake innovative local development activities, promoting a new policy of participation, integration and cultural pluralism.

The emphasis on the multi-ethnic nature of Cotacachi has boosted the self-esteem of the population and given previously excluded groups a chance not only to voice their grievances but also to propose projects and solutions.

In these and many other ways, Cotacachi has been fighting against exclusion and in favour of constructive dialogue. It deserves to be highly commended for its achievements.

[Diploma, cheque and medal presented to the Mayor]

For the same region, the **Honourable Mention** is awarded to **Havana (Cuba)** [Mayor: Conrado Martinez Corona].

I now move to a larger city and to a great rehabilitation project that has been exemplary for the entire region and for many countries around the world. The rehabilitation of Havana's historic centre has generated a true rebirth of the whole city.

After many years of neglect and deterioration, the *Oficina del Historiador* managed to successfully reverse this trend thanks to a comprehensive, integrated effort that has produced one of the most interesting multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary rehabilitation projects in Latin America.

Since its launch 20 years ago, this outstanding project has received numerous awards, including the nomination of Havana as a World Heritage site. Despite major difficulties, Havana has undertaken the magnificent rehabilitation of the *Centro Histórico* not only by restoring its architecture (now recognized as part of the common heritage of humankind) but also by restoring the soul of the city through the revival of arts and crafts and the development of many cultural activities. Both the participatory nature of this project and the far-reaching effects it has had on tourism and international cooperation have been significant and deserve recognition at an international level.

[Diploma and medal presented to the Mayor]

To conclude, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to inform you that the next time round, the Prize will focus on the theme of cultural diversity and will reward cities that have made a particular effort in implementing UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Diversity is in fact a key asset in daily city life and a vital building block of a sustainable peace.

I cannot close this ceremony without expressing my thanks to you, Mr El-Jazouli, President of the Urban Community and Mayor of Marrakesh-Medina, and to your colleagues, for your generous hospitality and unwavering support in organizing this great event, which we will always remember. Allow me therefore to award you, too, a medal, which I hope will seal the memory of this important day.

[Medal presented to the Mayor]

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now a great pleasure for me to confirm the proclamation of the Cultural Space of Jemaâ el-Fna Square as a “masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.

This seal of approval, I am very happy to note, crowns the efforts made by the Kingdom of Morocco to protect and enhance the intangible heritage. For Morocco played a pioneering role in the process of reflection that brought the Proclamation programme into being. It was largely on the basis of studies carried out by experts on the forms of popular cultural expression of Jemaâ el-Fna Square that the fundamental concept of the programme was devised. Thereafter the International Jury unanimously recommended the inclusion of the Square, along with another 18 nominations, in the List of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

As the author and President of the Jury for the proclamation of masterpieces, Mr Juan Goytisolo, has so rightly emphasized: “Marrakesh’s inhabitants and visitors, without realizing it, enjoy a unique privilege: that of witnessing an epic world that ceased to exist in Europe and the rest of the Islamic area several centuries ago”. The Cultural Space of Jemaâ el-Fna Square is a perfect example of oral and intangible heritage that is rooted in Morocco’s millennial culture. It probably dates right back to the establishment of the City of Marrakesh, which was founded in 1070 by the Almoravids. Situated in the heart of the Medina of Marrakesh, which was placed on the World Heritage List in 1985, the Square is characterized by practically uninterrupted commercial and leisure activities. It constitutes an extraordinarily rich cultural and artistic crossroads.

As an arena of creativity and freedom, the Square exhibits an extremely wide-ranging repertoire of oral and intangible heritage: from storytellers to the various music and trance shows, as well as snake charmers, monkey trainers, herbalists, preachers, mediums, acrobats, magicians and fortune-tellers. These practices are the expression of an art which makes use of words, gestures, costumes and sounds. They are imbued with diffuse religiosity. The wealth of this oral and intangible heritage has as its corollary the diversity of its actors’ geographical, social and cultural origins. Juan Goytisolo has said in this connection: “On that public square, by means of some unknown power, class differences and all traces of hierarchy disappear”. I should also like to pay tribute to those men, women and children, all those holders and transmitters of knowledge, repositories of oral and gestural traditions, who bring the Square to life each day and tell its story. Jemaâ el-Fna Square is a unique example of a space that fosters the continuity of a constantly renewed tradition.

These numerous reasons more than adequately explain the choice made by the International Jury in selecting Jemaâ el-Fna Square as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. They are also a tremendous tribute to the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, which is being celebrated this year around the twin themes of “heritage and dialogue” and “heritage and development”.

I should also like to stress that the inclusion of these forms of cultural expression does not in and of itself constitute protection. It is rather a commitment on our part to help you to implement the safeguarding plan. I hope that it will encourage many donors to join those who have already contributed generously to the funding of the plan, such as the United Arab Emirates. It is indeed necessary for adequate support to be provided to local associations and organizations that are committed, under the action plans contained in the nomination files, to revitalizing the oral and intangible heritage of this cultural space in its original context and in close collaboration with the communities concerned.

There is urgent need for action. The effects of globalization, and the growth and modernization of the Medina of Marrakesh are increasing the vulnerability of the forms of popular cultural expression of Jemaâ el-Fna Square. Vehicle traffic, pollution, urban development plans and tourism threaten this extraordinarily vibrant but, at the same time, very fragile cultural space. The location of the Square in the very centre of the Medina makes its vulnerability more acute. For oral performances must inexorably compete with economically more attractive activities. Their delocalization away from pedestrian flows would spell certain death. In addition, the repositories of the oral tradition, particularly storytellers, are decreasing alarmingly in number and their insecure economic situation further undermines the Square.

I must pay tribute to the work of the Jemaâ el-Fna Square Oral Heritage of Humanity Association, established in 1999, whose purpose is to defend and rehabilitate the various oral forms of expression found on the Square. Its bywords are to identify, preserve, disseminate and, in that context, to publish and distribute books, guides and illustrated literature on the Square, to assist in the re-publication of stories and to afford protection in conjunction with national and local institutions. We are all duty bound to make its work possible for a long time to come so as to keep alive the “magical area of sociability” that is Jemaâ el-Fna Square.

Thank you.