UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
His Excellency Mr Musa Bin Jaafar Bin Hassan
President of the 33rd session of the General Conference

in the presence of

His Excellency Mr Jorge Sampaio
President of the Republic of Portugal

and

His Excellency Mr Thaksin Shinawatra
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

on official visit to the 33rd session of the General Conference

Tuesday, 11 October 2005
In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Your Excellency Mr Jorge Sampaio, President of the Republic of Portugal,
Your Excellency Mr Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand,
Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished Heads of Delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Member States of UNESCO, I am honoured to welcome that great defender of human rights, His Excellency President Jorge Sampaio, President of the Republic of Portugal.

Mr President, for decades you have fought for and defended the name of democracy. Whether it was at Law School at the University of Lisbon, or before the courts, or chairing the European Commission for Human Rights, or finally as President, you have staunchly defended the downtrodden.

Mr President, since its return to UNESCO in 1974, Portugal has continually striven to help those countries that urgently need support and assistance.

Moreover, your country plays a vital part in UNESCO and participates actively in implementing its goals. You have agreed to organize a workshop in Lisbon at the end of this month on “Promoting public services in the media: human rights, tolerance, multilingualism and the fight against discrimination”. All of these projects have humanitarian and social dimensions. They are a means to develop the will to live together and to serve the cause of peace, tolerance and mutual understanding between humanity.

Your Excellency Mr President,

Cooperation between UNESCO and Portugal takes several forms. There are a number of bilateral projects. Among these is the World Conference on Arts Education, which will be held in Portugal in March 2006.

There are also joint initiatives involving many other countries in Africa and Latin America. Among these are your active cooperation with the Portuguese-speaking countries through the PALOPS project, and your support for projects that UNESCO has adopted to reconstruct the State of Timor-Leste.

Your Excellency Mr President,

Allow me to welcome your country’s determination to intensify cooperation with UNESCO through the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. This Commission aims to strengthen research on pollution at sea, with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the ocean as a source of nutrition, ensuring a better life for all. My compliments to you for this outstanding cooperation between your country and UNESCO.
Distinguished audience,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am also honoured to welcome His Excellency Mr Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand.

On behalf of the Member States, I should like to thank you for your kind attendance. Since joining UNESCO in 1949, your country has shown over the years its deep commitment to developing education.

In 1990, the city of Jomtien saw the first World Conference on Education for All. Your country witnessed the definition of the basic learning needs, such as the knowledge, values and attitudes required by human beings to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development and to improve the quality of their lives.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate you on your country’s implementation of the Dakar goals relative to primary education and girls’ education before the agreed deadline of 2015.

Mr Prime Minister,

Last year, the world and in particular South East Asia witnessed a terrifying disaster. Words cannot express this tragedy that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of victims and destroyed buildings and cities, leaving thousands destitute in its wake.

The tsunami left virtually nothing but mass destruction in its wake. However, it was not able to destroy hope, the hope for life and defiance of natural disasters. As the Chinese proverb says, “You cannot stop the birds of trouble from circling over you, but you can stop them from making a nest on your head”.

It was not long before the first initiatives were set in place, centring on ways to implement a tsunami early warning system. Mr Prime Minister, you were among the first to be able to set up a tsunami early warning system on a national level.

Mr Prime Minister,

I should like to salute your enthusiasm and determination with regard to fighting poverty and improving the standard of life of your people. To this end you have adopted policies that protect homes, but also give an incentive for initiatives to provide small loans with acceptable terms. The aim is to encourage a new economic cycle and national prosperity drawing on the society’s own vitality. We all understand that this is one of the pillars of sustainable development. Mr Prime Minister, you have achieved much to this effect in your country.

Finally, I should like to express to both of you, Your Excellencies, President of the Republic of Portugal and Prime Minister of Thailand, the warmest thanks and respect for attending the proceedings of the General Conference. I wish both of your countries ease, prosperity and safety.

May the peace and the mercy and blessings of God be with you.