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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of Fulbright/UNESCO Symposium
on Global Higher Education**

UNESCO, 24 October 2006

Madam Assistant Secretary of State,
Madam Ambassador,
Mr Ambassador,
Distinguished Guests,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to UNESCO for what promises to be a very stimulating morning of debate. May I first of all thank you for choosing UNESCO as your venue, and for inviting our delegations and colleagues to attend. Today's symposium on "Global Higher Education" will address subjects that are of deep concern to the Organization. We are honoured to host such an important event.

Let me extend a special welcome to Assistant Secretary of State Mrs Powell, and to members of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Bureau is a valued partner of UNESCO in so many fields of activity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ambassador Louise Oliver. As the first United States Ambassador to UNESCO in 20 years, you have led the country's practical reengagement with the work of this Organization. Your tireless energy, expertise and good will have already achieved many successes, of which

the most recent was the White House Conference on Global Literacy. UNESCO is working closely with the United States in the follow-up to this landmark event.

May I also pay a very warm welcome to Ambassador Craig Stapleton. Your presence here today is a strong sign of the importance you and your country give to higher education in its international dimension. We are proud to have you here.

Let me also thank and congratulate our guests and partners – and the organizers of this symposium – the Fulbright Programme and the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars. I would like finally to extend my particular gratitude to the distinguished speakers and participants who have come from near and far to join us here today.

The Fulbright Programme is known worldwide as a model of scholarly exchange. It demonstrates by its success the rewards that can be gained from the cross-border exchange of both students and senior scholars.

Ambassador Oliver said that many foreign students have benefited from studying in the US. I am indeed one of them. Over 40 years ago, I was an international exchange student, and received a Bachelors Degree in economics from Haverford College in Pennsylvania. The years I spent studying abroad, as part of the US higher education system, were deeply enriching. I remember them fondly for their intellectual liveliness, cultural discovery and personal warmth. During one of my Haverford years I lived in the College's Spanish language house, enjoying life – and the long, late-night discussions typical of college students – in two languages.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking at your rich programme this morning, I am struck – yet not surprised – that the themes you will be addressing are of priority importance to UNESCO. In particular, your agenda resonates strongly with the issues raised by the two World Conferences on Higher Education that UNESCO convened in 1998 and 1999 in Paris and Budapest respectively.

Already, ten years ago, we were aware of the enormous complexity of global challenges and the central role of higher education in empowering individuals and societies to meet them. Over the past decade we have seen a recasting of higher

education and research. There has been a major repositioning of the roles of all actors involved: governments, universities, academics and scholars, as well the private sector whose contribution to economic progress depends on the quality of today's graduates.

The New Century Scholars Symposium will tackle issues including student mobility, access and equity, the integrity of the academic profession, and the role of the university as a pillar of society both locally and globally. These issues are of the utmost importance to today's societies. Your recommendations are keenly awaited not just by this audience, but by policy-makers and the academic community worldwide. Let me assure you that UNESCO will certainly be taking note of your proposals as we strive to attain a sharper focus and stronger impact for the Organization's work in higher education.

Thank you very much.