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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 the Eighth Session of the Intergovernmental Council
(IGC)
of the “Management of Social Transformations” (MOST) Programme**

UNESCO, 16 July 2007

Honourable Minister and President of the Intergovernmental Council,
Honourable Ministers,
Mr President of the International Social Science Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to address you at the opening of this 8th Session of the Intergovernmental Council of the Management of Social Transformations Programme.

I would first like to welcome the distinguished Chairperson of the MOST Intergovernmental Council, Minister Zola Skweyiya from South Africa, as well as the distinguished ministers from 20 countries, 18 of which are responsible for social development, who have travelled to Paris to share with us their views on social policy and experience in connecting research to policy development.

I would also like to welcome Mr Gudmund Hernes, former Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, and seize this opportunity to congratulate him for his election as President of the International Social Science Council (ISSC) during the last session of ISSC's General Assembly in 2006.

Excellencies,

This week's Intergovernmental Council of the MOST Programme is a unique opportunity for inter-regional exchange and peer learning in the field of social sciences.

UNESCO has six decades of action and experience in international social sciences, a field with a direct impact on all societies. No other field of knowledge can so decisively contribute to building a bridge between reflection and thought about human affairs, on the one hand, and policy and action to improve the lives of human beings, on the other. The MOST programme can well assume a catalytic role in this regard. It is, in my opinion, well placed to weave together the different threads. But it also needs clear commitments from the Member States to enable it to carry out its mission.

Four years ago, after the thorough evaluation of MOST's Phase-One, the Intergovernmental Council underscored the need for MOST to fully play its role in efficiently bridging research, policy and practice. Since then, and particularly in the last biennium, MOST has made a specific effort to support multi-partite networks at sub-regional and regional level with a view to producing policy-relevant knowledge under its priority themes.

MOST has also strengthened its strategic alliances with, on the one hand, the users of social science knowledge: with governments, regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society organizations; and on the other hand, with international and regional social science organizations and national research councils.

All of MOST's cooperation efforts culminated in what has been named the "Buenos Aires Process". The process gave birth to the International Forum on the Social Science-Policy Nexus which took place simultaneously in three cities of Argentina: Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Rosario; and in the capital of Uruguay, Montevideo, in February 2006 and to which you are dedicating tomorrow's morning session.

I am confident the contributions you will make to the roundtables convened today and tomorrow will significantly help sharpen MOST's focus and capacity to serve the needs of Member States, in particular through the launching and institutionalizing of the Regional and Sub-Regional Fora of Ministers of Social Development, which will be the leitmotif running throughout this IGC session.

This initiative, I believe, will be instrumental in facilitating the coordination of common strategies for social policy in regions and sub-regions and consolidating the sharing of information and best practices and designing horizontal cooperation.

Excellencies,

Allow me now to set your active commitment to the MOST programme within the context of major developments in UNESCO's planning and programming processes.

Let me first turn to the overall review of UNESCO's major programmes in Natural and Social and Human Sciences, which is of direct concern to the MOST programme. This Review, as you know, was mandated by UNESCO's last General Conference in 2005, with a view to examining UNESCO's science programmes and to proposing a vision and strategy for the future of the sciences at UNESCO, in light of the Organization's mandate, country and regional priorities and today's global needs.

I am very pleased that IGC representatives were able to provide useful input during the hearings held during 2006. The MOST-Vice-President of the Asia-Pacific Region at the time, Professor Huang Ping from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences proved to be a very dedicated Committee member.

I am also pleased to see that MOST is already giving the utmost attention to some of the Committee's key recommendations. This entails, in particular, reinforcing its links with other UNESCO programmes in crucial areas such as the strengthening of national and regional research systems, the sustainable development in small islands development states and education for sustainable development.

UNESCO needs today to better integrate its work in the sciences, and to strengthen interdisciplinary and intersectoral activities. To achieve sustainable development, social, economic and environmental goals must be considered on the same level, with social equity and social justice as an overriding goal.

UNESCO must adopt a holistic approach to these challenges, mobilizing the full range of expertise that exists within its two science sectors, and also drawing on relevant competencies in other sectors.

I have now established a Task Force, chaired by the Deputy-Director General, to prepare an Implementation Plan building on the recommendations of the Report of

the Review Committee and my comments thereon, which have been presented to the Executive Board at its 176th session.

Furthermore, within the context of UNESCO's developing its Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 – the 34 C/4 – and its Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 – the 34 C/5, I am counting on MOST to greatly contribute to one of the proposed sectoral priorities of Major Programme III, namely “Strengthening national and regional research system in order to provide policy-oriented research on social policy.”

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next three days, you will discuss new modalities of social science co-operation and co-ordination with other societal stakeholders. As policymakers, you will exchange valuable experiences.

You will debate on issues such as the national monitoring of social problems, the transfer of research results to the decision-making level, the timeliness of this undertaking, the new tools and technologies needed, and how to craft new research policies attuned to these objectives. MOST's work in bringing together Social Ministers for regular peer-exchange and horizontal coordination is of critical importance. In order to be effective for social welfare, scientific results must be communicated to the highest levels of political power.

What is at stake is a long-term objective.

That objective is the strengthening of democracy through instilling a new culture of evidence-based policymaking. This daunting task is clearly not that of the Secretariat alone. Here in this Council session, you, the Social Ministers and distinguished representatives of Member States, will develop strategies to ensure the political commitment to implementation such an agenda.

To conclude, I wish you a very fruitful meeting, and look forward to hearing about your deliberations and to receiving the Council's recommendations.

Thank you.