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Organización
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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of International Youth Day**

12 August 2007

The theme of this year's International Youth Day is 'Be Seen, Be Heard: Youth Participation for Development'. It is a powerful reminder of the critical importance of the social, economic and political participation of youth¹ in the progress and sustainable development of our societies.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition that today's younger generations are not merely the leaders of the future, but key partners of the present. Young people bring unique perspectives, make invaluable intellectual contributions, and have an unrivalled ability to mobilize support for action at all levels. This is exemplified in countless initiatives all over the world, where young people themselves have developed and implemented active solutions to development challenges faced by their communities. And many successful efforts by governments to engage youth leave no doubt that youth participation in decision-making leads to more effective policies and programmes.

However, concerted efforts are needed to ensure that youth participation for development is effectively practiced and not confined to ad-hoc approaches. This implies that young people are provided with the kind of information, skills and training that enables them to make a difference. It also requires that governments and other partners scale-up investments in youth and promote changes in organizational structures to accommodate young people's voices.

For UNESCO, the imperative of youth participation has been a long-standing one. It is embodied in the institutionalization of the Youth Forum as an integral part of all

¹ The United Nations defines young people as those aged between 15 and 24 years.

sessions of the General Conference, UNESCO's highest decision-making body. It is also reflected in the Organization's firm commitment to involve youth in all initiatives aimed at promoting education for all, poverty eradication and intercultural and interfaith dialogue, a quest which lies at the core of our mandate. Many inspiring examples of youth-led action resulting from a series of UNESCO Regional Youth Forums related to the promotion of dialogue confirm the benefits of meaningful youth participation.

On the occasion of International Youth Day 2007, I therefore call on governments, civil society and development partners to intensify efforts to facilitate the participation of young people in core aspects of social structures, institutions and decision-making processes. And I encourage all young people to make their voices heard and to channel their commitment and creativity into our shared cause of building a world of inclusion.

Koïchiro Matsuura