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联合国教育、
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**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the ceremony for the award of
the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize**

UNESCO, 2 October 2008

President of the General Conference,
Chair of the Executive Board,
Vice President of Indonesia,
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Finland,
President Abdou Diouf, Sponsor of the Prize,
President Henri Konan Bédié, Patron of the Prize,
Members of the Jury,
President Martti Ahtisaari, winner of the Prize,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters, on the occasion of the presentation of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to Mr Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland and Chairman of the non-governmental organization Crisis Management Initiative.

Allow me first of all to extend my warmest greetings to the President of the Jury, Mr Henry Kissinger, who regrets not being able to be with us today. I should also like to welcome the Vice-President of the Jury, Mr Mario Soares, former President of Portugal, and the members of the Jury of the Prize, who have joined us on this occasion.

I am delighted to welcome President Abdou Diouf, Secretary-General of the International Organization of the Francophonie, Sponsor of the Prize, and President Henri Konan Bédié, Patron of the Prize, who have always been by our side at this annual ceremony for peace.

Lastly, I should like to greet the President of the General Conference and the Chair of the Executive Board, who have honoured us with their presence.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

President Martti Ahtisaari, today's laureate, has for many years made it his mission to devote every effort to seeking concord and dialogue. His successes in this area have certainly earned him the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize.

With your outstanding abilities as a mediator, Mr President, you belong to a tradition of great peace builders. You have thus been called upon on many occasions to exercise your talents as a negotiator and facilitator on behalf of governments or the United Nations.

Whether it be in Namibia, Indonesia or the former Yugoslavia, you have overseen complex processes of dialogue and reconciliation. The presence among us of the Vice President of Indonesia, Mr Jusuf Kalla, is indeed a tribute to the mediation efforts you successfully led in Indonesia in 2005, between the government and the Free Aceh Movement.

Today, as head of the non-governmental organization Crisis Management Initiative, you are in a position to promote a necessary and innovative debate on the questions of collective security, good governance, justice and reconciliation.

Over and above that, it is your unique ability to listen and to analyse, and your conviction that the issues of peace and development are closely linked, that are being rewarded today.

Mr President, your political and intellectual career, which has led you to hold the highest offices in your country and within the United Nations system, is an example to many of us.

That is why I am delighted by the Jury's choice and should like to wish you, on behalf of UNESCO, every success in your unflagging efforts in favour of peace, dialogue and tolerance in the world.

I thank you for your attention.