



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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Organización
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para la Educación,
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Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

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 World Science Day for Peace and Development**

10 November 2008

Every year, on World Science Day for Peace and Development, we celebrate the role of the sciences in forging a better world.

Science has long been recognized as a driver of change. However, the magnitude and complexity of the problems we confront today – from extreme poverty and deepening inequality to environmental degradation and increasing vulnerability to resource scarcity and natural disasters – make the effective mobilization of scientific knowledge more fundamental than ever.

We live in a time when it has become impossible to achieve both social and economic progress and environmental sustainability without a massive reliance on scientific research, knowledge and technical expertise.

This year, on World Science Day for Peace and Development 2008, let us give special focus to the critical role of the science community in helping humanity understand and come to grips with global climate change. Global warming is likely to have significant consequences for all nations. However, it is developing nations and the poorest communities within countries, which, while least responsible for climate change, will be the most seriously affected. Science has already contributed to the overall understanding of the causes, nature, timing and consequences of global warming, and will become more and more crucial in finding solutions and mitigating and adapting to its impacts.

Climate change is a multi-dimensional issue. No previous environmental issue has been at once so global and yet so disparate in its causes and possible effects, nor so closely related to the social and economic development of humankind. An effective response to climate change therefore demands a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, supported by the best, most up-to-date scientific knowledge and expertise.

Over the past 40 years, UNESCO has actively contributed to building the global knowledge base on climate change, notably through the work of its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. In recognition of this longstanding experience in climate change research and observation, UNESCO has been designated to coordinate, together with the World Meteorological Organization, action across the United Nations system in the cross-cutting areas of science, assessment, monitoring and early warning.

In addition, UNESCO's extensive network of biosphere reserves is being used to monitor the effects of climate change and will provide demonstration sites for adaptation options. These reserves also serve as centres for education and research, for developing sustainable management practices, and for promoting a better understanding of the links between cultural and biological diversity. They highlight UNESCO's resolutely interdisciplinary approach to climate change, and the Organization's commitment to mobilize the expertise of all its sectors – education, the natural and social sciences, cultural and communication – to deliver a comprehensive and coordinated response to the multi-faceted challenge of global climate change

The task before us is vast and complex. Providing accurate scientific evidence of present global changes and future predictions is critical, as is the need to address regional and local impacts within different time frames. The effectiveness of our action will depend on the ability of scientists, decision-makers, industry and citizens to work together. It will also require more concerted efforts to respond to the human dimensions of climate change. The ethical and social implications of climate change and its impact on human migration; education and the skills, values and knowledge needed to live sustainably; effective public information and awareness-raising – all these aspects must be taken into account.

Faced with the challenge of global climate change, and other threats to human and environmental security, achieving a better understanding and use of science is

imperative. Today, therefore, on this World Science Day for Peace and Development, let us celebrate science and commit to strengthening the links between science and other disciplines. Above all, let us reaffirm our commitment to building a safer, healthier and more sustainable world for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Matsuura', with a horizontal line above the name.

Koïchiro Matsuura