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Organización  
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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 Closing session  
of the 6<sup>th</sup> UNESCO Youth Forum**

**UNESCO, 3 October 2009**

Dear youth delegates,  
Esteemed participants,  
Director-general designate  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you on this final day of the UNESCO Youth Forum, the sixth since its inception in 1999. I would like to greet Mme Bokova, Director General designate who is with us today.

Let me begin by congratulating you on three very fruitful days of debate, which is captured in the Forum's final report. I have carefully listened to the final report. It is extremely impressive. I am convinced that the presentation of the Report to the Plenary of the General Conference and the different Programme Commissions will generate an interesting debate and raise awareness among the decision-makers about your needs, views and aspirations. Indeed, it is vital for the highest decision-making body of UNESCO to have your valuable input. I shall return to this point later.

This year's Forum is very timely. The two principal themes, "Investing out of the crisis: towards a partnership between UNESCO and youth organizations"; and "Youth participation: UNESCO Youth Forum, a long-term approach" lie at the heart of global concerns and discussions.

The unprecedented financial and economic crisis that has wreaked devastation across the world over the past year has damaged growth, unemployment, trade and

investment, affecting the lives of everyone and hitting hardest those who are least responsible, particularly young people in developing countries. For them, the financial crisis has compounded the food crisis, the energy crisis, the development crisis.

Taken together, these crises have provided compelling warnings that our patterns of development are simply not sustainable.

Yet, as I have repeatedly emphasized to UNESCO Member States, with the crisis comes the opportunity for change. Times of uncertainty open up possibilities for profound transformation. We must seize this chance, and use it to bring about more inclusive societies as well as more stable and equitable growth.

My experience at the head of UNESCO over the past 10 years has convinced me that there is a direct link between investing in knowledge and accelerating development. That is why, earlier this year, I wrote to G20 leaders ahead of their meeting in London on 2 April to argue for increased investment in the knowledge-based social domains as the key to sustainable recovery, social cohesion, prosperity and peace. It was gratifying that in addition to announcing a \$1.1 trillion stimulus package to boost the world economy, the G20 leaders also recognized their collective responsibility to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the poorest countries, to help them achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and ensure a fair and sustainable recovery for all.

This is the backdrop to this sixth UNESCO Youth Forum.

Dear friends,

In reflecting on the impact of the current crises on youth and appropriate responses to them over the past three days, you have learned more about UNESCO's action in this regard and exchanged views with the Organization's staff.

UNESCO's unique mandate, covering education, the sciences, culture and communication enables us to address many of issues affecting young people across the world. We do this by supporting the integration of youth through efficient public policies, developed with young people themselves through fora such as this one. We work directly with young people to help them gain the skills needed to fully

participate in society. Above all, we promote dialogue at all levels, in an effort to foster mutual understanding, tolerance and trust between and among generations, as well as between and among cultures.

For example, the new Global Strategy on Youth and the first ever Strategy on African Youth that are currently being finalized by the Sector of Social and Human Sciences seek to foster the appropriate policy environment for young people to flourish.

The integration of youth concerns through the different UNESCO programmes, particularly in the context of “Education for All” and our efforts to promote sustainable development, a green economy, intercultural dialogue and media literacy are intended to support you in addressing specific issues with your peers and communities.

Indeed, the quality of your deliberations during this Forum reflect your sense of responsibility and your commitment to identifying sustainable solutions to the crises and the challenges they pose for youth development. Your final report provides a succinct framework for action as well as a sound overview of the specific opportunities and challenges for youth development in the current context.

You were also given the opportunity to ponder on the role of the Youth Forum as a mechanism for ensuring young people’s involvement in the development of UNESCO’s Programme. In this process, you have emphasized the key role of the National Commissions for UNESCO and the necessity of ensuring a systematic follow-up process. This is a crucially important point.

Your suggestions, along with your views and insights on UNESCO’s work, will be key to rendering more effective our efforts to address youth concerns and will definitely enable us to respond to the challenge of promoting meaningful and effective youth participation across the Organization.

Dear friends,

This is a very special occasion for me, since the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum is the last that I will address as Director-General of UNESCO.

Over the past ten years, I have had the privilege of speaking at five of your gatherings. In that time, I have witnessed an increasing awareness and recognition of the potential of youth and of the value of their contribution to the elaboration and the development of UNESCO's programme. I have also seen the Youth Forum evolve from a side activity to an integral part of the General Conference. This is demonstrated by the formal presentation of the Youth Forum Report during the General Conference, as well as the integration of the Forum's youth delegates in their country's official delegation to the General Conference.

But we can do much more. We need to build on this momentum in order to further foster a meaningful and effective participation of youth in the development of the Organization's programme.

This is not the work of three days. It requires a determined and sustained commitment not only by UNESCO and its Member-States, but also by you and your organizations, particularly in following up the Forum's recommendations.

In this context and through increased cooperation between your organizations and UNESCO's Field Offices and Institutes, as well as the National Commissions, Clubs, Centres and the UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs, I am convinced that we can work hand-in-hand to ensure an appropriate follow-up to this Youth Forum. Only then we will rightly be able to say that youth are at the heart of UNESCO's action.

In closing, I wish to thank you, youth delegates and partner organizations for your ideas, your motivation and your sense of responsibility.

It is therefore with great optimism that I declare the 6<sup>th</sup> UNESCO Youth Forum closed.