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pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
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Организация
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**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,
in introduction to the general policy debate
on the occasion of the 35th session
of the General Conference**

UNESCO, 6 October 2009

President of the General Conference,
Chair of the Executive Board,
Distinguished Heads of Delegation,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with deep emotion that I speak to you today. As I take stock and pass on the baton, I feel the solemnity of the moment, which brings to a close a period of 10 years spent serving UNESCO ideals with enthusiasm and devotion.

My vision of the world was forged through seeing a bloody world war leave an old world in ruins. During these last 10 years, I have never forgotten whence I came nor what the words tolerance, freedom and peace meant to my generation. Nor have I forgotten what the birth of the United Nations represented during the reconstruction period when my country turned its back definitively on war.

On 16 November 1945, the Constitution of UNESCO voiced the international community's hope for a world of solidarity and dignity. Like my predecessors, I have often gone back to that founding text both to find inspiration in its idealism and to appreciate its profound acuity despite the passage of time and moments of doubt or difficulty.

I know the extent to which the world has changed over the last 10 years, dramatically changing our points of reference and interpretive lens. Deep and serious new worries have arisen from the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the social and environmental crisis aggravated by climate change, the increasing scarcity of water, the impact of the current economic and financial crisis, inequality and poverty.

Conversely, we have also seen the globalization process give rise to new, more interdependent and pluralistic knowledge societies. Despite its still uncertain shape, our world is more open and multipolar than ever before. The most telling examples of this include the readjustment of North-South relations, the growing importance of the new emerging powers and the new political framework in Africa.

Several important milestones from this past decade come to mind. They are closely linked to UNESCO's five principal priorities, which have led to the Organization taking on new functions and responsibilities. I am thinking in particular of the World Education Forum held in Dakar in April 2000, the adoption of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001, the World Water Forum held in Kyoto in March 2003, the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in November 2005, the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in November 2003, the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in November 2005, and the Summit of the African Union, which focused on the link between education and culture, held in Khartoum in January 2006.

We must also look to the future. I am delighted that, in Budapest in a few days' time, the World Science Forum, known as Budapest +10, will cap a decade of commitment to science policies and sustainable development, while opening up new avenues of action.

As the world has changed, so too has UNESCO. To help us prepare for the major global challenges, I have steadfastly led a wide-ranging reform agenda, the outlines of which I elaborated in this very forum, first in my installation address on 15 November 1999 and then in my reinvestiture address on 21 October 2005.

In the process, I have refocused UNESCO's programmes on five major strategic issues: education for all, water, the ethics of science, cultural diversity and freedom of expression. Then, taking into account the ongoing reform within the United Nations system and Member States' needs, we have rethought UNESCO's profile, modalities of action at Headquarters and in the field, and our administrative, management and governance systems. I will come back to these different points.

Of course, we have too often had to ask ourselves what UNESCO should be like in the future. That said, we have never doubted the relevance of our mandate, nor the rightfulness of our Constitution's principles. While it is true that institutions must adapt to their times by changing their positions and practices, I have always believed that UNESCO should first remain true to itself.

In addressing today this assembly that will soon reach the mark of 200 Member States and Associate Members, I better appreciate how our Organization has become stronger and more universal.

I consider this universality to be a yardstick of trust renewed. This is invaluable for the Secretariat. More than ever, as we face the long-term social impact of the world economic and financial crisis, the Secretariat must continue to meet your expectations in order to keep that trust alive.

I know that all UNESCO staff members share this sentiment. Their dedication, professionalism and competence are unique, remarkable assets. Please allow me to pay them a solemn yet personal tribute here from the bottom of my heart.

Mr President,

Every two years for the past decade I have stood before this esteemed assembly to present a shared vision of UNESCO's roles and responsibilities in an era of global change.

I have focused with constancy on those areas where UNESCO has a distinct comparative advantage and lead global responsibilities.

Yet I have also been conscious of the need to adapt UNESCO's work to address emerging new challenges; to make sure that we are in a position not just to react, but to anticipate global trends so that we can actively shape them for the common good.

Today, it is my duty to report on what has been achieved, and to show how we intend to build on this through the next biennial programme and budget, the 35 C/5.

There is no doubt in my mind that the decision to focus UNESCO's action on those areas where we can make a unique contribution is the right approach, and that this quest for concentration should continue.

By mobilizing a critical mass of expertise and resources behind a limited number of priority programmes, UNESCO has reinforced both its impact and its credibility.

Today, the world knows what UNESCO stands for. Our voice is heard, and it is listened to.

What UNESCO stands for, first and foremost, is the right of every child, young person and adult to a quality education.

The 2000 World Education Forum was the first major event in which I participated as Director-General. I saw the trust and expectations Member States placed in this Organization, and in me as its representative, when they called upon UNESCO to coordinate the follow-up to this historic conference. I knew the great responsibilities this brought. And I knew that UNESCO's legitimacy and reputation would depend on the success with which they were met.

That is why, since April 2000, keeping the promises made in Dakar has been this Organization's – and my own – top priority.

There are many ways in which progress can be measured.

One is the extent to which UNESCO has forged stronger international collaboration in EFA. The role of global coordinator has not, I must admit, always been easy. UNESCO had to work hard to build confidence and cooperation among our main multilateral partners. Through persistent efforts we can today claim to have established a genuine spirit of collaboration at the international level. We are now focused on translating this renewed unity of purpose into more coherent support to countries on the ground.

More broadly, UNESCO has put in place a series of mechanisms to maintain the global political momentum on EFA. At the centre of these is the annual High-Level Group meeting, which brings together the four main EFA constituencies – national governments, donors, multilateral organizations and civil society, including the private sector.

It is easy to forget, now that these meetings have become established practice, what a significant achievement it is to gather every year around one table top-level representatives of all major stakeholders to agree on policies to drive forward EFA.

The launch in 2002 of the EFA Global Monitoring Report represents another landmark. This flagship UNESCO publication has been instrumental in raising the level of education policy debate

by providing hard evidence of where we are making advances and what more needs to be done to reach the six goals by 2015.

Another measure of positive change is the importance given to EFA on the global development agenda.

The extent to which national governments are giving higher priority to EFA is strongly evident in their response to the current economic crisis. In the face of reduced growth and shrinking budgets, developing countries have ringfenced education spending as a fundamental investment that cannot be cut without putting long-term development at risk.

Basic education has also been given new prominence in major international fora, from the G8 and G20 to the United Nations General Assembly and regional summits. It is nevertheless disappointing that while donors increasingly champion education in their communiqués as crucial to growth and development, this priority is still not reflected in their aid budgets. This is a particular concern in the present economic climate, where developing countries will need increased international assistance to protect their education systems and safeguard access for the most vulnerable groups.

It is this – the experience of learners on the ground – that is the true measure of EFA progress. Here we must admit that while major advances have been made, especially towards universal primary education, there is still a long way to go to achieving the six Dakar goals, in particular the goal on adult literacy.

Document 35 C/5 demonstrates how UNESCO will lead a renewed push to get all countries – especially those furthest from the goals – on track to achieve EFA by 2015.

It also shows how UNESCO is responding to the new pressures that progress in primary education is placing on other levels of education – notably by reinforcing the emphasis on sector-wide planning and boosting support to technical and higher education.

Mr President,

In other fields, too, UNESCO has helped to advance – and in many respects redefine – the understanding and approach to major world challenges.

UNESCO raised the alarm that unless we change our behaviour towards freshwater, the world will face a major crisis, with grave implications for human development and security.

We have argued consistently that in order to address this impending threat, the first priority must be to improve freshwater management and to do so in an integrated way that addresses the whole water sector.

Since 1999, I have bolstered UNESCO's freshwater programme so that we can help Member States achieve just that.

As well as reinforcing the flagship International Hydrological Programme (IHP), I established three new pillars to our action.

By initiating the World Water Assessment Programme, UNESCO has not only brought greater coherence to United Nations activities in freshwater. Through the publication of the triennial World Water Development Report, we are also providing decision-makers with a valuable tool for improving their water policies. Like the GMR, the Report is a benchmark in its field.

The integration of the IHE Institute for Water Education in Delft as a category 1 centre has boosted our action in water education, research and capacity-building. UNESCO now leads the largest water education programme in the world.

The rapid growth of category 2 freshwater centres has further expanded UNESCO's support to Member States in key areas, from groundwater to urban water management. After this General Conference, 20 such centres will be in operation.

Together, these four pillars have enabled UNESCO to establish itself as the recognized leader within the United Nations system for freshwater management.

UNESCO's freshwater work brings to the fore this Organization's real comparative advantage in the sciences, which is our role as capacity-builder and policy adviser to governments. More and more, countries are turning to UNESCO to help them bolster their national science and innovation systems as key drivers of sustainable growth and development. That is why you will see a renewed focus in document 35 C/5 on science policy and capacity-development, with particular emphasis on Africa.

Mr President,

There are many things that make this Organization unique. Our standard-setting role, but also our technical capacity to help Member States act upon the principles laid down in international normative agreements. Our ability to act as an interface between policy-makers and the scientific community. Our role in stimulating open debate on sensitive issues that is respectful of social and cultural differences. Our role, too, in anticipating new challenges and sensitizing the international community to their implications. One of the areas where these comparative advantages have been strongly demonstrated over the past decade is in the area of bioethics.

When I arrived in 1999, the international community faced a major challenge in terms of navigating the ethical dimensions of rapid scientific and technological progress.

Today, thanks to UNESCO's normative leadership, countries have a set of clear ethical standards and principles that provide guidance in a wide variety of domains, from genetics and biomedicine to the life sciences and associated technologies.

The consensual adoption of the 2003 International Declaration on Human Genetic Data and the 2005 Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights – together with the earlier 1997 Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights – are truly landmark achievements.

These three Declarations are being used around the world as reference texts for ethics committees and higher education programmes, and have provided guidance to governments in developing legislation on bioethics.

I should add that UNESCO has also taken the lead in fostering stronger international cooperation in bioethics, initiating the creation in 2003 of an Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics. This Committee brings together all major intergovernmental organizations concerned with bioethics.

This does not mean that UNESCO's normative role is over. Science continues to advance rapidly, giving human beings tremendous new powers to affect the development of living species. Stem-cell research, genetic modification, human cloning – the implications are immense.

I firmly believe that UNESCO should always stand ready to respond to these issues, and find ways to resolve ethical dilemmas – as it has done in the past – in a spirit of international cooperation and consensus.

Mr President,

Over the past ten years, UNESCO has pioneered a more dynamic and inclusive vision of culture encapsulated in the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

On taking office in 1999, I felt an urgent need for UNESCO to expand its legal protection to all forms of cultural expression. The 2001 Underwater Convention certainly enlarged the notion of cultural heritage.

But it was the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that really opened up a new phase in UNESCO's normative work, to encompass intangible as well as tangible heritage. This was quickly complemented by the 2005 Convention on contemporary cultural expressions.

Now, ten years on, we can be proud of a comprehensive standard-setting framework, covering all aspects of humanity's cultural diversity.

This is our real strength and advantage.

The challenge now for UNESCO is to assist Member States in implementing all six principal Conventions, which should be seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing, by integrating them into national development strategies. This applies especially to the Conventions of 1972, 2003 and 2005.

In the past, too many development initiatives failed because culture was not taken into account. This was clearly highlighted during the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997). But it is only now that culture is being mainstreamed in international development work.

A key moment came in 2006, with the creation of a window on culture and development under the UNDP-Spain MDG Achievement Fund. The 18 projects financed under the Fund – ranging from cultural tourism and industries to heritage preservation – demonstrate the multiple ways in which culture drives development.

This is what we have sought to showcase in this year's General Conference exhibition, as well as in the forthcoming World Report on Cultural Diversity, which I will launch on 20 October.

Document 35 C/5 reaffirm our belief that culture is not a luxury to be enjoyed after social and economic problems are resolved, but an integral part of the solution.

Mr President,

The escalation of intercultural tensions, in particular after the terrorist attacks of 2001, has given further urgency and impetus to our work in promoting cultural diversity.

UNESCO was created to show how cultural diversity, through dialogue, can be a force for social cohesion and peace. This vision was strongly reasserted by UNESCO's Member States in November 2001, when they adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. It was a tribute to UNESCO's advocacy throughout the 2001 UN Year for Dialogue among Civilizations.

At this crucial moment, Member States rejected outright the notion of the inevitable clash of cultures or civilizations and unanimously reaffirmed their conviction that intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee of peace.

UNESCO has demonstrated the validity of this conviction in many ways over the past years. There is one particular example I would like to highlight, that of South-East Europe. The annual regional summits co-chaired by UNESCO since 2003 are one of the most compelling illustrations of how countries can use their diverse, yet interconnected, cultural heritage to lay the foundations for reconstruction and sustainable peace.

The celebration in 2010 of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures opens up a new phase in UNESCO's promotion of dialogue. We have been given a lead role in promoting the Year and are counting on your support in making it a success.

Mr President,

Another example of where UNESCO has influenced international thinking is on how to bridge the digital divide.

We have helped shift the debate away from one of pure connectivity and infrastructure, towards more fundamental questions about the nature of human society today and the direction in which it is changing.

We have shown that the digital divide is not merely technological in character, but rather expresses and compounds more fundamental social and economic inequities.

And we have argued that if this divide is to be overcome, it is not enough to expand access to new information and communication technologies (ICTs) – we need to empower people to use them in ways that give meaning to their lives.

This inclusive and participatory vision is what UNESCO means when it speaks of “knowledge societies”. UNESCO has been working towards this vision since its foundation. However, our action has gained renewed focus and vigour over the past decade, notably through our engagement in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process. This has helped to crystallize our action around four main goals.

The first is education. Partnering with some of the world’s leading IT companies, UNESCO is focused on enhancing ICT competencies among teachers, who are the lynchpin of educational progress.

Our second goal is to expand access to information and knowledge, both by helping Member States put in place robust national information policies and by empowering local communities to harness ICTs for development.

Our third goal is to ensure that ICTs take into account and promote cultural and linguistic diversity. The World Digital Library project shows how new technologies offer tremendous opportunities for raising awareness and understanding of the world’s cultural treasures.

UNESCO’s fourth goal is to promote freedom of expression, together with its essential corollary, a free and independent media. Over the past decade, we have given special emphasis to building media capacity in developing countries.

Throughout my time in office, I have strongly upheld UNESCO’s constitutional commitment to promoting freedom of expression, and it is my sincere hope that this Organization will continue to champion this fundamental human right and basic guarantor of democracy and development.

Mr President,

While retaining a clear and constant focus is crucial, it has also been – and remains – important for UNESCO to adapt to the challenges and opportunities of the present. This is not only about keeping the Organization relevant in a period of accelerating global transformation. It is also about playing to our strengths: in particular our ability to think and act in an interdisciplinary way. This is indispensable in the face of increasingly complex global problems.

Over the past decade, UNESCO has pioneered new forms of programme delivery to draw on this capacity for interdisciplinarity, most recently through the creation of intersectoral platforms. This has positioned UNESCO to respond much more effectively to major global issues, foremost among which is without doubt climate change.

UNESCO, through its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), has long been at the cutting edge of global climate science and research. Today, IOC and the WMO are coordinating UN efforts in this area so that world leaders have a sound knowledge base upon which to act.

We all know the importance of reaching a robust agreement in Copenhagen to reduce carbon emissions and help developing countries adapt to the devastating impacts of global warming already taking place.

However, we also know that the only lasting solution to climate change is through a fundamental transformation in human attitudes and behaviour. This requires a interdisciplinary approach, which engages not just science and technology, but also education, the social sciences, culture and communication.

With expertise in all these domains, Member States are looking to UNESCO for leadership. We must not let them down. We must pursue and expand the work we are doing to sensitize educators and the media and examine the ethical implications of climate change, which is an item on your agenda.

With climate change, as with other global crises, it is the poor and marginalized who are most at risk.

Over the past decade, UNESCO has significantly scaled up its support to vulnerable populations and countries.

We have adopted Africa and gender equality as two overarching Organizational priorities – because we know that without greater progress in these areas the world will not meet its development goals. Both these commitments are reaffirmed in the new document C/5.

UNESCO has also dramatically increased its support to countries in post-conflict and post-disaster situations. In this, we have helped to enlarge the understanding of what humanitarian assistance should entail. We have won recognition of the importance of protecting social sectors in emergency situations. We have shown how maintaining educational services, ensuring the safety of journalists, and safeguarding cultural heritage are essential to peace, reconciliation and recovery.

The growing demands on UNESCO for assistance – in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Palestinian Territories, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, the Great Lakes region, Haiti – demonstrate the value that is given to our work.

UNESCO has already bolstered its capacity to act in post-conflict and post-disaster situations, as demonstrated in the 35 C/5. However, continued efforts will be needed to build a critical mass of expertise so that UNESCO can respond quickly and effectively to the needs of those who are most vulnerable and most at risk.

Mr President,

In this time of crisis, renewed calls have been made for intensified international cooperation and multilateralism.

In hindsight, I can say that our constant efforts since 1999 to fully include UNESCO in the United Nations family have borne fruit, and that today we are far better equipped than 10 years ago to participate effectively in United Nations coordinated responses.

To position ourselves more effectively as a trusted partner to Member States, we have made the most of the new momentum inspired by the United Nations' "Delivering as One" principle.

We have shown unflinching commitment to the principles of coherence, harmony, efficiency, accountability and results orientation at the country level, with a proactive follow-up to the United

Nations General Assembly's 1997 resolution concerning the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (TCPR).

We have also improved recognition for the role of specialized agencies, playing an integral part in the reform of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies.

In this new context, we have done our best to cooperate more closely with all the bodies and agencies of the United Nations system. Such cooperation, both international and at the country level, was reflected especially in the UNAIDS Global Initiative on HIV/AIDS and Education (EDUCAIDS), created in March 2004, and in our active participation in joint initiatives such as UN-Water and UN-OCEANS. The increasing strength of these ties also allowed us, in October 2008 and again in April 2009, to enter into strategic cooperation partnerships with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Lastly, UNESCO has over the years been resolutely involved in joint programming exercises at the country level. I refer in particular to the preparation of Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), as well as broader joint assistance strategies involving external donors. I also have in mind our constructive engagement in the eight pilot countries that are beneficiaries of the Delivering as One initiative.

In the light of the sheer scale of current needs, I have expressed the wish in document 35 C/5 that throughout the coming biennium, UNESCO step up its participation in joint programming processes, even though it is a given that we cannot all contribute in the same way. In this respect, the upcoming issue of UNDAF documents for some 90 countries until 2012 will be a true test for UNESCO.

In order to regain our status as a recognized and credible stakeholder in the United Nations system, adapting our global mandate to our action in the field, we have also modified our organizational structure and laid the groundwork for a more streamlined and efficient system of decentralization.

Given the duality of our mandate, which is both global and local, I have gradually reduced the ratio between staff at Headquarters and staff in the field. Standing at three to one when I took office in 1999, the ratio is now two to one, a balance that I consider satisfactory.

Yet, I am convinced that how we execute our action at the country level will be one of the major challenges for our Organization in the years to come.

It was in anticipation of this change that I launched the in-depth review of the Organization's decentralization policy and structure. I believed that it gave UNESCO the opportunity to revise the criteria for decentralization adopted by the General Conference in 1999.

Consequently, I submitted to the Executive Board in September 2009 a new set of criteria and guidelines, which were approved by the Board and which should enhance our responsiveness to the needs of Member States in the field while fulfilling our functions within United Nations Country Teams.

It is my hope that the General Conference will, in turn, adopt these criteria, thereby providing my successor with the means, with the approval of the Executive Board, to take the requisite measures to adapt our decentralization system to benefit the Member States that are most in need.

Let there be no mistake: the future of UNESCO, its position and influence in the global multilateral system, are fundamentally contingent on United Nations reform. We must continue to make every effort for the reform to succeed, for it will be vital in consolidating confidence in the system as a whole.

However, our support of the reform must not close our eyes to the diversity of the United Nations system as an infinite source of richness and vitality. Let us therefore not forget, as I have argued over the last 10 years, that the United Nations draws its strength, prestige and influence from the many sectoral competences of its specialized agencies.

Mr President,

As we know, UNESCO cannot attain its objectives single-handedly. We have thus consolidated and strengthened the range of support and networks in the “UNESCO family”, in particular the National Commissions. Furthermore, in the light of the spectacular development over the last decade of novel forms of multiple partnerships, we have managed to build new coalitions.

By using our networks’ full potential, we have established innovative platforms for dialogue and cooperation, while building the capacities of countries most in need.

I am thinking, for example, of the category 2 water-related centres, as I have already mentioned, as well as those related to science, technology, education and culture. During this session of the General Conference alone, I have moreover noted that no fewer than 23 category 2 centres and one new category 1 centre will be proposed to you for adoption.

In addition, we have managed, by capitalizing on possibilities opened up by globalization, to extend our traditional networks to include new partners. The latter have emerged thanks to the new dynamics within civil society, in particular between the public and private sectors.

With regard to the public sector, UNESCO is proud that it now maintains official relations with no fewer than 320 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Initially having observer status, these have become major catalysts for social and political change. We must continue to build on this privileged relationship.

Moreover, in order to expand our audience, enhance our impact and create innovative synergies among these new support communities, we have developed strategic and targeted partnerships with major private groups such as L’Oréal, Daimler-Chrysler, Hewlett-Packard, Cisco, Microsoft and Intel.

In cooperation with UNESCO and civil society players, and through public-private partnerships, these groups have supported initiatives to tackle key societal challenges: for example the L’Oréal-UNESCO Prize for Women in Science and the Mondialogo Award to promote scientific cooperation among young people.

In this regard, we are delighted and proud to hear that the 2009 Nobel Prize in Medicine has just been awarded to Professor Elizabeth Blackburn, 2008 winner of the L’Oréal-UNESCO Prize for Women in Science. The wonderful success of Professor Blackburn is a great encouragement for women scientists the world over as well as a magnificent example for young people.

Lastly, I should add that we must not underestimate the ability of our coalitions, in particular at the subregional and regional levels, to build consensus, resolve conflict and consolidate democratic practices. In this connection, I can only take pleasure in the fact that we have managed, within the framework of Priority Africa, to sign fruitful cooperation agreements with the African Union and all of the African Regional Economic Communities.

Mr President,

When I stood before the General Conference on 15 November 1999, I committed to foster good governance, transparency and efficiency in this Organization. I called on all Member States for their support and active participation in these reforms.

Looking back, I am more than gratified that we have together achieved more harmonious cooperation among the three organs of UNESCO: the General Conference, the Executive Board, and the Secretariat.

The General Conference is progressively moving towards becoming a more interactive forum for policy discussion. The introduction of Ministerial Round Tables has created opportunities for constructive dialogue on topical issues. I am very much looking forward to participating in this Conference's innovation to hold a Plenary Ministerial Forum to discuss how to invest out of the financial crisis.

For its part, the Executive Board, under the able leadership of five successive Chairpersons, has played its constitutional role of supervising the results of programme execution.

Over the past decade, I have given much time and importance to maintaining an open dialogue with Members of the Board, be it through my prepared addresses or through the numerous plenary Question and Answer sessions.

I have also expanded this dialogue to all Permanent Delegations through the holding of frequent information meetings.

Through this, I believe we have established a much more harmonious and conducive atmosphere for pursuing our common goals.

Mr President,

On my arrival, one of my primary concerns was to revitalize the Secretariat, UNESCO's most precious asset.

This is why I immediately set out an ambitious programme to devolve management governance back to the programme sectors. Each sector was empowered through new tables of accountability and delegation, and supported by an executive office.

I also realigned the structure of the Secretariat and the profile and management of its staff to better match the Organization's programme priorities.

I say this acknowledging there are areas where we can always strive for more. I am also acutely aware that the revitalization of the Secretariat came at a high cost for the staff, as they were subjected to the necessary negative effects of the reform process – reduction of posts, abolition of numerous Director and above positions to correct the top heaviness of the past, and reductions in available resources through successive zero nominal budgets.

Sacrifices were made; and without the solidarity of the Secretariat, the Executive Board and Member States as a whole, this shared ambition to optimize our Organization's resources could not have been achieved.

While talking about the Secretariat, I wish to highlight the progress achieved in establishing and implementing an integrated human resources policy. I would like to acknowledge the important role played in this process by the staff associations.

Throughout the past decade, sustained efforts have been made to ensure that the workforce corresponds to UNESCO's programme needs. This is a constantly evolving process, so it will need to be kept under review.

I am particularly pleased to say that UNESCO has proven that it is possible to sustain a competitive recruitment process, while at the same time achieving record levels of geographical representation and gender balance. Indeed, UNESCO can claim to be the leader within the UN system in terms of representing the diversity of its Member States.

Recognizing the critical importance of ensuring a high standard of ethical conduct within the Organization, I have recently established an Ethics Office. Among other things, the Office will promote ethics training for staff.

Mr President,

Ten years sustained commitment in the area of results-based management has enabled UNESCO to focus its programme around an agreed set of priority objectives. Our expected results and outcomes are much more transparent and clear. We have put huge effort into trying to measure objectively the impact of our programmes. In this regard, the work of the Internal Oversight Service is crucial through its systematic evaluation of programme results, now supplemented by risk analysis.

Establishing this integrated oversight function in early 2000 was an important milestone, as it aligned UNESCO with best practices. I believe today, as much as I did ten years ago, that the work of IOS is essential for the transparency and accountability of the Organization. For this reason I was very pleased when the current Oversight Advisory Committee, comprising external specialists, informed me during their last visit in June that IOS is operating effectively and in line with recognized principles and international standards.

I am proposing to this General Conference the formalization of the Oversight Advisory Committee as a permanent standing committee within UNESCO. This will ensure the institutionalization of a key component of the internal oversight mechanism.

In this context, I wish to pay tribute to the two External Auditors, first the Canadian auditors and now the French. Their work is essential for transparency and accountability and is highly appreciated.

I have invested significantly in modern management tools to support, and improve the monitoring of, our programme implementation, accounting system and HR management. However, as I said to the Executive Board, we are at the point when significant investment is needed to further modernize our IT systems.

Looking forward, I hope that Member States will continue to support the introduction of IPSAS, and to improve our collective security, which also needs investment.

Finally, I am pleased to report to this Conference the completion of the Belmont Plan – the Renovation of the Organization's Fontenoy site – which I inaugurated on 25 September. We have managed to transform the hitherto dilapidated site into a high quality and energy efficient working environment.

Mr President,

Ten years ago, when I was given the honour of becoming Director-General of UNESCO, the Member States set me two major objectives: to improve the relevance and impact of UNESCO's programmes, and to carry out a thorough reform of its management and administration methods.

Throughout my 10 years in office, I have worked with steadfastness and determination to achieve this task, even if much remains to be done.

UNESCO deserved this effort. In my endeavour, I was able to draw upon the considerable reserves of energy, idealism and conviction of the staff of this Organization. I think of them in particular today.

Let me add that over the past 10 years, the staff of UNESCO has diversified tremendously. As a result of the demographic threshold, a large number of senior management staff will also be

retiring in the very near future, handing over the reins to a new generation. Let us consider this a wonderful and refreshing promise for the future.

I have come to believe that UNESCO now knows better how to structure its various missions. In continuing our global and standard-setting functions, we will still need to strengthen our ability, in the field, to translate suitable policies on national and regional levels.

With the effects of globalization, social transformation and new ways of sharing knowledge, our era is giving rise to new challenges which call for new responses. On the other hand, pressing current issues such as education for all, climate change and dialogue among cultures will undoubtedly remain central to the international agenda for some time ahead.

We must continue to show initiative concerning all these matters. In so doing we must fulfil our mission creatively.

What could be more thrilling than remembering the vision of our founders while imagining future possibilities? You will understand then that as I end this address, I wish to do as so many others before me have done, and pass on to my successor this portion of history and memory in which I share and from which the continuous thread of our ideals has stemmed since 1945.