Award Ceremony of the
Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize
Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, 5 December 1995

Address by His Majesty Juan Carlos I
King of Spain
1994 Prizewinner

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and its President, Henri Konan Bédié, have brought us together today in Yamoussoukro to honour Félix Houphouët-Boigny in his birthplace. UNESCO gave his name to the Peace Prize which it created in 1989, thus paying him a well-deserved homage during his lifetime.

When I think of the Sage of Africa, whom I had the honour of knowing personally, I remember above all his untiring search for peace and his perseverance in banishing violence from human relationships. His fine instinct led him to couple this objective with the development of his country and the continent, which he actively pursued both at the helm of Côte d'Ivoire's affairs and through his participation in international fora.

I also am convinced that, despite the great problems which it has to solve, Africa will satisfactorily overcome the obstacles in its path to progress and lasting peace.

First of all, it will achieve this because of the potential of its people. Human beings, as the United Nations has been declaring again and again, constitute the centre and ultimate objective of any development policy. I am sure that the young generation, on whom the future depends, will be able to use their education and the benefit of experience to conduct development projects in a context of freedom, paying due attention to the most underprivileged sectors.

Hope-giving economic recovery will also be of particular significance in this respect, helped by the efforts being made in the field of regional integration and co-operation which cannot but improve the continent's capabilities in this sphere.

Added to these positive factors are, lastly, the processes of constitutional reform, the holding of free, multiparty elections and the measures adopted to ensure the protection and defence of human rights.
These are all positive elements for the consolidation of democratic processes and the establishment of the rule of law which constitute the necessary basis of progress and peace in sub-Saharan Africa.

The ideal of peace is a moral duty and the supreme objective of public life. A generous disposition to settle conflicts which might occur at any time is one which we are certain will continue to gain strength in the coming century and express itself in a preventive attitude which has begun in each individual's conscience and world-view.

As UNESCO has aptly formulated it, peace cannot be expected if it is not to be found in people's minds, hearts and habits. Peace is thus a way of being and living, and of desiring and aspiring, within the limits required by coexistence and with a clear understanding of the reality of one's fellow beings and the equal legitimacy of their rights and aspirations as compared to ours.

Living peacefully together also fundamentally and principally requires shared convictions which are adopted by all, solid public institutions and harmonious relationships between the former and the latter.

Lastly, peace cannot be achieved or become a stable reality when extreme disparities exist which are counter to reason and justice.

The latter is, indeed, an inexcusable factor in the international order. UNESCO is a forum and instrument of inestimable importance, in its spheres of competence, for lessening the tensions created by the disparities between nations, always striving to promote a more just and equitable balance.

In this untiring effort - as the President of the Jury warned us some years ago, to achieve peace is not as simple as to desire it - education, science and culture are indispensable tools, because by definition they promote, in its widest and most profound sense, a sense of the dignity and equality of all men and women and help, in an outstanding way, to create an authentic international community based on spiritual values.

We see this as the ultimate significance of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Prize. But, as time passes, a prize is defined not only in terms of its objectives, but is also characterized by the pedigree of its recipients.

Since the first award in 1991, this Peace Prize has been conferred on eminent figures who relegated apartheid to history in South Africa as well as on others who are making great sacrifices to achieve the same result with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These persistent efforts, at both the personal and institutional levels, produced undoubted benefits for humanity as a whole, and the world in which we live has a significantly more human face.

I should like, above all, to single out the unique figure of Yitzhak Rabin, a martyr to the cause which brings us together today. His is a shining example: that of the outstanding man of war who sacrificed his life in the field of peace. He was the previous recipient of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Prize, and has now fallen victim to intolerance and fanaticism because of his total commitment as a statesman to his mission and duty. May his soul rest in peace and his sacrifice inspire similar vocations, resembling flashes of hope.
In view of all that I have said, I feel highly honoured to be awarded this prize, and it gives me particular pleasure that it coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of UNESCO and the Year for Tolerance.

Let us advocate for a tolerance which does not signify inequality between individuals who concede it and others who merely wait to receive it. In its practical expression, we should like tolerance always to be the clear result of mutual respect, based on a sense of equality and fraternity which respects the freedom of every human being.

While expressing my thanks for this award, I should also like to express my warmest congratulations to former President Jimmy Carter as well as my personal satisfaction at sharing the 1994 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize with him. I agree with the Jury concerning the value which it thus attributes to the perseverance, strength of will and energy that former President Carter has devoted to promoting peace since he left the White House.

The fact that we can continue to count on his untiring efforts in the service of the ideal which unites us is of great significance.

To conclude, I should like to recall the words of a poet, as I am convinced of the great importance of poetry as a means of creating harmony. According to the poet, peace is, perhaps, a state of things in which hostility between people expresses itself through creation instead of the destruction caused by war. We have, indeed, opted for "creation" as Valéry suggested and for "constructing peace" as Félix Houphouët-Boigny desired, in accordance with what continues to be UNESCO's fundamental mission.

Thank you.