Globalization with a Human Face - Benefiting All

Tokyo, July 30, 2003 – Address by Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on occasion of UNESCO/ UNU International Conference on "Globalization with a Human Face – Benefiting All."

Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to be here for what promises to be a most interesting and stimulating conference. Without further ado, I would like to express my thanks to those who have made this event possible – to our sister agency, the United Nations University and its Rector, Professor Hans van Ginkel, for jointly organizing and hosting this conference with UNESCO; and to the Government of Japan, specifically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and to Nihon Keizai Shimbun for their generous support, which is much appreciated.

Last but not least, I wish to welcome the many distinguished personalities, among them several former Heads of State and Government, who have accepted to come to Tokyo. By drawing upon their insights, knowledge and experience, we shall make progress towards fulfilling the key aims of this conference, namely, to assess the impact of globalization on our societies, to clearly identify where action and partnership are most needed, and to map out a more balanced approach towards globalization.

For UNESCO, this conference is a significant event. This should be clear from the fact that the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy (2002-2007), which was approved by UNESCO's General Conference in November 2001, is strongly focused on globalization and its implications. Indeed, that strategy is organized around a single unifying theme: "UNESCO contributing to peace and human development in an era of globalization through education, the sciences, culture and communication". The idea of "globalization with a human face", in fact, is woven into the very fabric of UNESCO's strategic response to globalization, whose challenges, drawbacks and opportunities constitute the global agenda of our time.

Globalization, broadly conceived, has brought many benefits to humankind - through its economic impact, especially in terms of increased trade and investment; through its technological impact, especially the way it has

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allowed the chasms of time and distance to be bridged; and through its social and political impact, especially because it reveals our global interdependence and opens up new opportunities for participation, empowerment and communication.

However, globalization's benefits are not distributed in an equitable way either within or between societies. On a daily basis, the majority of humankind experience full or substantial exclusion from these benefits. Furthermore, the adverse side-effects arising from globalization are often borne disproportionately by those who least enjoy its benefits.

In quantitative terms, the scale of global inequities is shocking. Around the world, 1.2 billion people are living on 1 dollar a day or less. In other words, the persistence of extreme poverty is the clearest sign that globalization is not working for humanity as a whole. According to UNESCO's latest estimates, there are 862 million illiterate adults and 115 million children who are out-of-school. In other words, close to one billion men, women and children have not received a basic education, which is the very minimum for effective participation in today's globalizing societies. Furthermore, 1.2 billion people - one-fifth of the world's population – have no access to safe drinking water, and nearly two and a half billion people – 40 per cent of the inhabitants of our planet – have no access to basic sanitary facilities. In other words, the very basics of a healthy and dignified human life are far from universally unavailable. And, in the very areas where globalization is supposed to be changing our lives most dramatically – communication and information – enormous gaps still remain. For example, the levels for fixed line and mobile telephones are 121.1 per 100 inhabitants in developed countries, 18.7 in developing countries and just 1.1 in the least developed countries. Meanwhile, the 400,000 citizens of Luxembourg share more international Internet bandwidth than Africa's 760 million citizens. One might conclude from all these figures that perhaps a third of humanity has yet to enter the twentieth, let alone the twenty-first, century.

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In addition, globalization is generating new problems and challenges. In many areas of life, the ethical ground is shifting beneath our feet due to the very rapidity of scientific and technological change, which is outstripping our capacity to devise appropriate ethical, political and social responses. For example, today's debates in the field of bioethics, such as those concerning human cloning, deal with unprecedented issues in the history of ethical discourse. New information and communication technologies (ICTs) are also creating new kinds of problems, such as those regarding content. Meanwhile, long-established assumptions about the meaning of "quality" in educational terms are coming under renewed scrutiny. The very nature of globalization requires the development of knowledge, values, skills and behaviours that enable young people to cope with complexity and change. As we enter the twenty-first century, educational processes must generate appropriate forms of learning – how to live together, how to be tolerant and respectful of diversity, how to respect one another's rights and how to build a sustainable future.

It is against this background of new challenges and problems, especially the large-scale inequities evident in the distribution of globalization's benefits, that the phrase "globalization with a human face" acquires its meaning and significance. It is a phrase with certain connotations. There is the implication that, especially in terms of its economic, financial and technological dimensions, globalization is not sufficiently "human" in its effects. There are three main concerns here. First, there is an anxiety that, left to its own devices, globalization cannot be relied upon to benefit the whole of humanity. Concern about global poverty, social exclusion and the digital divide is based on a fear that globalization is exacerbating rather than reducing the divisions and inequalities in our world. How can a process be 'human' if large parts of humanity are left out of account?

Second, the notion of a "human face" draws attention to the way in which development occurs. However impersonal the forces shaping our world may seem, in practice they occur through the actions of people – as they live, work, think, choose and decide. At the heart of globalization, there is a complex pattern of mutable relationships – between the global and the local, between the 'included' and the 'excluded', between those who benefit more and those who benefit less. These relationships are neither fixed nor uncontested. It is vitally important, therefore, to affirm that creative and purposive human agency, individual and collective, remains a potent force in the world. Human action, which is centrally important in the dynamic processes of development, is fundamental to our engagement with globalization and the basis of our hopes for a better future for all.

Third, the "human face" also refers to the ends that globalization processes should serve. Those processes could serve a number of different ends, some of which may restrict rather than enlarge our potential as individuals and as a species. The felt need to humanize globalization rests on the conviction that greater human welfare and well-being should be the desired outcomes of globalizing processes.

These distinctions help us to see that how we conceptualize globalization influences how we respond to it. I am choosing my words carefully. I believe that our programmes, policies and actions should be framed in terms of "responding to" globalization rather than "reacting against" it. We should, of course, try to understand why some people and some communities may reject globalization and seek to disengage from it. But, given the spreading impact of globalization on all aspects of our lives, such disengagement is illusory. In practice, the real task is to engage with globalization in order to make it better serve human interests and the common welfare of humankind.

UNESCO is seeking to address the concrete challenges presented by globalization in all of its fields of competence. To concentrate its efforts, however, the Organization is currently focusing on selected principal priorities in each of its five Programme Sectors, all of which are inextricably linked to development in an era of globalization:

> i) basic education for all (EFA)
> ii) water and related ecosystems
> iii) cultural diversity and dialogue among civilisations
> iv) the ethics of science and technology, with particular emphasis on bioethics
> v) equitable access to information and knowledge

In the perspective of humanizing globalization, UNESCO's activities relating to these five principal priorities are structured along three strategic axes. Each of these strategic thrusts – namely, protecting the common good, enhancing diversity and promoting knowledge-sharing – will now be examined in turn.

Protecting the common good involves developing and promoting universal principles, norms and standards based on shared values. This has always been central to UNESCO's ethical mission. In this age of accelerating globalization, however, powerful trends of homogenization and commercialization threaten the very idea of the common good and question the adequacy of existing normative standards and the mechanisms to enforce them. Globalization threatens to bring about an excessive uniformity of content and perspective at the expense of the world's creative diversity. The growing commercialization of many spheres previously considered as public goods - such as education, culture and information – may impair the ability of some countries and communities to preserve their way of life and improve their quality of life.

As a result, the desirability of establishing new normative instruments has attracted serious attention, especially where the universality of rights and freedoms is under threat. Such universal instruments are especially important in order to provide governments and the general public with principles, values and norms to guide their actions and decisions. UNESCO's work in the area of bioethics may be cited in this regard, as may its preparation of new normative instruments in the areas of cultural diversity, intangible cultural heritage, multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace, and the preservation of digital heritage.

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There are, of course, ways to protect and strengthen the common good other than through the creation of new normative instruments. UNESCO's efforts in regard to freshwater, for example, are built upon the strength of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and on the multi-agency World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), whose first World Water Development Report was launched at the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto last March. UNESCO's contributions to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water are based firmly on principles of universality.

Similarly, UNESCO's efforts regarding Education for All (EFA) are grounded upon ensuring the realization of everyone's right to basic education. Without the widespread, indeed universal, fulfilment of this right, we cannot talk sensibly about education as part of the common good. The role of governments and public authorities is indispensable in this regard for it is their responsibility to guarantee that all have access to quality basic education. This is a public responsibility that cannot be off-loaded upon the private sector or civil society.

While commercialization, marketization and privatization are powerful currents running through present-day globalization processes, affecting education as well as other areas of human activity, the Member States constituting UNESCO have placed themselves squarely behind the drive to secure quality basic education for all. Maintaining and enhancing this commitment is a continuous task, one which requires efforts of leadership, coordination, partnership, persuasion and information. The High-Level Group on EFA, which meets next in New Delhi in November 2003, and the Working Group on EFA, which met in Paris last week, are crucial instruments in this work, as is the EFA Global Monitoring Report, whose preparation is undertaken by an independent international team based in UNESCO.

Let me now turn to the second main thrust within UNESCO's strategic approach to globalization, namely, enhancing diversity. Globalization, of course, cannot be held responsible for all threats to global diversity but the scale and rapidity of globalization processes today are providing an added dimension of danger, one which needs timely and effective responses before it is too late. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) is a landmark document which has stimulated calls for an international convention in this area, but it should not be thought that our concerns and actions regarding diversity are limited to the cultural realm alone.

The need to promote pluralism through recognizing and safeguarding diversity is evident in other fields too: for example, in regard to biodiversity, linguistic diversity, and the multiple forms of creative human expression embodied in tangible and intangible heritage. Furthermore, diversity is also a vital dimension of scientific enquiry, the search for new knowledge in all academic disciplines and the transmission of knowledge through the media and materials used in teaching/learning processes such as textbooks. Diversity is the lifeblood of ethical debate and intellectual exchange, and its recognition is indispensable for a genuinely free press to flourish. And, in our increasingly multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, tolerance and respect for diversity are the public virtues on which new forms of social cohesion can be built.

UNESCO's commitment to enhancing diversity, therefore, is expressed in all its fields of competence. It is also an essential aspect of the Organization's promotion of intercultural dialogue within and among societies. Since organizing the Round Table on "Dialogue among Civilizations" in New York on the eve of the Millennium Assembly, UNESCO has encouraged reflection and exchange between different cultures as a way to deepen understanding of how civilizations grow and develop. Intercultural contacts, in fact, have long been vital for human development but today there is an added urgency since dialogue among civilizations is increasingly seen as a way to cultivate peaceful relations in our globalizing world. Recently, at the beginning of July, UNESCO and the Government of India organized an international conference on "Dialogue among Civilizations – Quest for New Perspectives" in New Delhi. At the conclusion of this meeting, the participants adopted the New Delhi Declaration which stated the time has now come to put the principles of dialogue into practice and to take concrete steps that will help to create equitable, inclusive societies at peace with their neighbours. This is clearly an agenda relevant to an age of globalization.

Turning now to the third strand of UNESCO's strategic approach to globalization – promoting knowledge-sharing – emphasis needs to be placed on both the challenges and opportunities presented by the rapid development of new ICTs. UNESCO's task is to promote empowerment and participation in the emerging knowledge societies through equitable access, capacity-building and the exchange and diffusion of knowledge. To this end, much of UNESCO's recent work has focused on the preparation process leading up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which will meet in Geneva next December and then in Tunis in 2005.

Our engagement with this preparation process has involved a consistent effort to encourage the inclusion of non-technological and non-infrastructural dimensions of the ICT revolution in the conceptualization of the Summit's agenda. We have stressed the social, cultural, linguistic and institutional aspects of the debate, with a special emphasis on equitable access and the pluralist idea of building "knowledge societies" rather than a single uniform "information society". In our contributions to the WSIS preparatory process, we have emphasized the following four principles: the basic human right of freedom of expression, which must apply to the Internet as it does to traditional media; cultural diversity, including the promotion of multilingualism on the Internet; universal access to education, including education for both the utilization of ICTs and the use of ICTs themselves in accessing education; and universal access to information, which is important for good governance and development. These principles, in fact, not only inform UNESCO's engagement with the World

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Summit but also suffuse its overall response to the challenges of globalization.

UNESCO is acutely aware that, more than ever, at the beginning of the 21st century, decision-making and policy-making need to be fully informed as to their scientific underpinnings, social consequences and ethical implications, drawing on input from all disciplines and all relevant fields of knowledge. We are particularly conscious of the fact that the speed and character of scientific-technological advances require new approaches and tools.

I can assure you all that UNESCO's commitment to addressing the challenges of globalization is stronger than ever. We recognize, of course, that to successfully shape globalization to the benefit of all will take time and perseverance. But, as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "Unless globalization works for all, it will work for nobody". In other words, a "globalization with a human face" is a globalization with six billion faces!

Thank you.

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PAEP and YAASIT recognize and take appropriate partnership measures to promote principles towards the emergence of a Universal Code of Ethics for the Future, as set out in UNESCO's Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (1995); the Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations towards Future Generations (1997); the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (1997); the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (1999); and the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000).