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THE CULTURE OF PEACE FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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Excellencies, organizers, participants and colleagues:

It is a great pleasure for me to greet you on behalf of the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura and to welcome you to the Headquarters of UNESCO. I would also like to thank the organizers for inviting UNESCO to participate in this 24th International Montessori Conference, focussing on the very important theme: Education as an Aid to Life.

The deliberations over the coming three days are most timely in this first year of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), which is also the International Year for Dialogue among Civilizations.

We already look forward to receiving your report from this conference, which, I am convinced, would largely contribute to operationalising the goals of the Decade that are centred around two themes: (i) Education for a culture of peace and (ii) building partnerships in moving towards a society based on the values of a culture of peace.

I hope that you will also have the possibility to use this occasion to familiarize yourself with this house, its architecture, its cultural richness and, above all, its programs and projects, its bookshop and library. This house is the house and the home of all cultures - and you, the teachers, are UNESCO's privileged partners.

UNESCO is in the process of preparing its next Medium Term Strategy (2002-2007). The draft that will be presented to Member States for their decision at the General Conference later this year has one unifying theme: Contributing to Peace and Human Development in an Era of Globalisation through education, science, culture and communication. The strategy has three main strategic thrusts:

- (i) Developing and promoting universal principles and norms based on shared values, in order to meet emerging challenges in education, science, culture and communication and to protect and strengthen the "common public good".
- (ii) Promoting pluralism, through recognition and safeguarding of diversity together with the observance of human rights.
- (iii) Promoting empowerment and participation in the emerging knowledge society through equitable access, capacity-building and sharing of knowledge.

In pursuit of UNESCO's three strategic axes, UNESCO will promote education as a fundamental right, work to improve the quality of education, and stimulate innovation and the sharing of knowledge and best practices.

The realization of the six Goals of the Dakar Framework of Action for Education for All will be the overriding priority for UNESCO's education strategy. The Dakar World Education Forum (April

2000) reaffirmed the vision of the international community at the Jonitien Conference in 1990 that all children young-people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs. After Dakar, special attention will be given to:

- The learning needs of the poor and the excluded
- The reduction of adult illiteracy
- The expansion of early childhood care and education
- Improving the quality of learning
- Overcoming gender disparities, and
- Mobilizing the requisite resources

On the request of the organisers, I will in this intervention have a special focus on UNESCO's culture of peace initiative, with examples, if time permit, from the Women and a Culture of Peace Program that I am heading. In accordance with the culture of peace vision, I will not focus on the disturbing growth in violence, on domination and force, but on how to overcome violence; on how women can be effective agents of peace and also on fostering non-violence and gender sensitivity among boys and young men.

How to build a culture of peace?

The culture of peace initiative has developed from an ambitious, intellectual idea presented first at the UNESCO peace conference in Yamoussoukro, the Ivory Coast (1989) to an emerging popular movement. Parliamentarians, educational and research institutions, non-governmental organisations, educators, artists, religious groups, media professionals and women and youth organisations have invested creativity and commitment in developing non-violent conflict resolution methods that could replace or be a supplement to existing power structures, traditional forms of diplomacy and military interventions. Many organisations working with topics such as human rights, social justice, sustainable development, human security, a sound environment, gender equality, and cultural diversity find that linking to the culture of peace initiative provides inspiration, a more comprehensive perspective on their own work, as well as broader networks. Part of the catalyst role of UNESCO is to help make visible and strengthen these actors who are pillars and potential of real democracy.

Over the last years the focus of the international community has moved from the question "What is a culture of peace?" to "How can we build a culture of peace in our society?"

The interest in a culture of peace is particularly important in zones of crisis, conflict and war, where people have lived the horrors of war and deprivation and are experiencing the enormous efforts needed to rebuild a society and to learn to live together again in peace. Interest is also growing in countries with an alarming level of urban violence. The Culture of Peace initiative might, however, also be seen as a threat to arms manufacturers and trafficking in arms, as it sets-out to build societies where war is obsolete.

UN-decisions

In addition to the UN decisions on the International Year for the Culture of Peace, (2000) and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), the General Assembly adopted the Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace in 1999 (13 September), which makes the culture of peace a UN system-wide concern. This document provides us with an agreed definition of the concept of a culture of peace that emphasizes:

1. The fostering of a culture of peace through education
2. Promoting sustainable economic and social development
3. Promoting respect for all human rights
4. Actions to ensure equality between women and men
5. Actions to foster democratic participation
6. Actions to advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity
7. Actions to support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge
8. Actions to promote international peace and security

A short popularised presentation of the main features of a culture of peace, the Manifesto 2000, developed by Nobel Peace Prize winners, was used to mobilize broad support for a culture of peace during the International Year for a Culture of Peace. More than 72 Million signatures to the Manifesto have been gathered, which is a world record that gives evidence of people's longing for peace. The signatures imply, if taken seriously, a commitment to: respect all life, reject violence, share with others, 'listen to understand', preserve the planet and rediscover solidarity.

The mottoes of the IYCP, "peace is in your hands" and "cultivate peace", bring connotations to action also on an individual level, and to the time and care needed in order to build and sustain peace. Peace can be compared to a tree or a piece of art. It takes normally many years and a lot of care for a tree to grow after a seed has been planted, and it takes only a minute to cut it down. It also takes insight, skill; creativity and time to create and construct art-work and only small efforts and small minds are needed to undertake destruction.

What is a culture of peace?

The culture of peace initiative is based on UNESCO's basic moral and intellectual mission of "creating peace in the minds of men", and should be seen as an attempt to build a vision that could be shared broadly without being appropriated by certain political constellations. The culture of peace concept also encompasses the greater concern and need of the South for development. The vision of a culture of peace has already proven to be effective for mobilizing groups and individuals for change, as it inspires hope, active participation and engagement. This psychological factor should not be underestimated in a period where large groups of people feel marginalised and alienated, sometimes to the extent that it threatens democracy.

The concept of a culture of peace impels us to reflect on which scenarios for the future we want to support, and to ask such fundamental questions as: Why is the world seemingly more willing to pay the costs of war than the costs of peace? How do we overcome the enormous gaps between military and social expenditure? What are the main obstacles to a global culture of peace? Who benefits from the culture of war and violence? How to learn to value differences? How do we educate our children for cooperation, sharing and dialogue, and how to truly learn to live together? While these questions are not new to the human quest for peace, never before in history have they had the same urgency; as modern, sophisticated weapons are capable of unprecedented destruction, and as the number of people who suffer from violence, both direct and structural, are larger than ever.

A culture of peace encompasses not only peace as the absence of war, but focuses on the content, the substance and the conditions of peace. To combat war as the ultimate expression of what we can call the culture of violence, we must also address issues such as the denial of fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms, acts and reflexes of aggression in everyday life - in homes and in the street - the banalisation of violence in the media, the use of stereotyped images of "the other", the explicit glorification of war heroes and the implicit glorification of war in the teaching of history. It entails that we dare question the institutions, the monuments, priorities and practices of this culture, as well as the destructive production, trafficking and use of arms and illegal drugs.

Building the culture of peace entails unlearning the codes of the culture of war and violence that have pervaded our existence in a myriad of ways even down to the level of the names of streets and statues which too often represent war heroes rather than peace heroes. The culture of peace requires of us that we confront not only the physical violence, but also the violence of economic and social deprivation. Redressing the flagrant asymmetries of wealth and opportunity within and between countries is indispensable to economic and political stability and human security.

In the vision of a culture of peace, dialogue and respect for human rights replaces violence, intercultural understanding and solidarity replaces enemy images, sharing and free flow of knowledge and information replaces secrecy and egalitarian partnership and full empowerment of women replaces male domination. The goals, ideals, and strategies that comprise the movement from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence are drawn from, and seek to revitalize major international, normative instruments which are basic to the United Nations' mission "to save future generations from the scourge of war". These norms, values and aims constitute the basis of a global ethic and show that many of the most important values and norms that many consider only to belong to their own cultural background, are in fact, commonly shared by all great moral traditions with no sharp cleavage between various population groups or countries.

Long term prevention

It has been asserted that in the last century more than a hundred Million persons have died due to war and war like situations, and with modern warfare and the growing number of "internal" conflicts, civilian victims largely out-number any other group as the casualties of war. The last decade alone saw some hundred-armed conflicts, and the number of soldiers involved in UN peacekeeping missions during that period rose from around 10,000 to some 85,000. The costs of these operations also increased tenfold, shifting resources away from preventive peace-building initiatives, be it infrastructure, education, healthcare or cultural activities. The vast amounts of resources used for military purposes, peacekeeping and in-conflict and post-conflict humanitarian assistance depict our failure to meet basic human needs and concerns in an adequate and timely manner. Acting in a timely manner with long-term preventive measures to radically attack root causes of violence: poverty, exclusion, ignorance, inequality and injustice would be more humane, less costly and greatly contribute to the building of peaceful societies. Hence the importance to re-institute humanistic, long term values.

As an illustration, I would like to share with you the anecdote of the fisher woman who was standing on the shore of a river unable to fish because she constantly had to rescue drowning persons in the river rapids. After doing this for a long time with no abatement in the flow of victims, she was about to leave when another person arriving tried to stop her by insisting that she had to continue to help people coming downstream. However, the woman responded that she had to go up-stream to see who was throwing these people that had not even learnt to swim into the water. The anecdote depicts the strong determination of a growing number, notably of women and youth, who want to tackle conflicts at their roots instead of only dealing with symptoms and undertaking "stop gap" measures in times of crisis.

At the beginning of this new millennium, already given strong symbolic significance by many, the culture of peace concept provides us with a new opportunity to address the commonly held beliefs - or myths - that:

- (i) If you want peace, prepare for war and
- (ii) Nothing can change because (a) violence is inevitable and intrinsic to human nature and (b) Violence is an efficient method for solving problems and disputes.

In refuting such hypotheses I would like to refer to the UNESCO Seville Statement on Violence (1989) developed by a broad group of scientists, which states that " it is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behaviour is genetically programmed into our human nature".

And is it not so that if we want peace, we must prepare for peace - cultivate peace? Perhaps we do not only need to have ministries of defence or security, but ministries of peace, not only prestigious military academies but obligatory peace education on all levels of the school system; not only peace research that is preoccupied by following the development of new weapons and new armed conflicts, but peace research that truly helps us learn to resolve conflicts in non-violent ways.

Education - a leading modality

For UNESCO relevant, quality education for all is the preferred tool to facilitate the transformation towards a culture of peace. It is the key to democracy in everyday life and a guarantee of a sufficiently broad basis for democratic recruitment to decision-making positions. Education, both formal and informal, in schools, in the family, through mass media and social institutions is the most important process by which people can attain the values, attitudes and behavioural patterns consistent with a culture of peace. However, if education is to be successful in promoting a gender responsive culture of peace, it is essential that it includes the excluded, notably girls and women, is relevant to different socio-cultural contexts, is of high quality and encourages interpersonal, intercultural and international dialogue. Education for human rights, peace, democracy, non-violence and tolerance is of particular importance. In the report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty First Century (*Learning: The Treasure Within*, UNESCO 1996) four pillars of education are outlined: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together, with the greatest emphasis placed on the challenge of learning to live together.

At the beginning of a new millennium and as a follow-up to the Dakar Forum, it is important to ask - as you do in this conference - which competencies are particularly needed in society? What are the real survival skills? Is it to learn to live together, to take care of each other and the environment, to develop creativity and entrepreneurial skills, to develop tools for conflict transformation, for gender-sensitivity and non-violence? The world's ministers of education meeting on the occasion of the UNESCO International Conference on Education (ICE, Geneva 1994) underlined their intention "to take suitable steps to establish in educational institutions an atmosphere contributing to the success of education for international understanding, so that they become ideal places for the exercise of tolerance, respect for human rights, the practice of democracy and learning about the diversity and wealth of cultural identities". They also pledged "to pay special attention to improving curricula, the content of textbooks, and other educational materials including new technologies, with a view to educating caring and responsible citizens, open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of freedom, respectful of human dignity and differences, and able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non- violent means".

Education and training should reflect the needs and aspirations of both girls and boys and provide opportunities and choices to the young in accordance with their potential and not on the basis of whether they are born a girl or a boy. In one of UNESCO's some 6000 Associated Schools working on international understanding (Krokeldal Elementary School, Tromso, Norway) the teachers systematically use positive reinforcement techniques to promote non-violent conflict transformation and gender equality. The project called "It is fun to be nice" has transformed the school environment, resulting for example in girls becoming more visible and boys changing their often disruptive behaviour.

Gender Sensitive Male Roles

Disturbed by growing violence world-wide, UNESCO, in the context of the Women and a Culture of Peace Program is exploring the social, cultural and economic conditions producing violence, notably among young men; political and practical strategies for reducing men's violence and ways of raising boys that emphasize qualities such as emotional response, caring and communication skills that are vital to a culture of peace.

It is argued that men, in general, through their upbringing, feel entitled to dominant positions in the family, work and political life, and react negatively when this entitlement is not fulfilled. These reactions might lead to domestic violence, violence in schools or in the street, adherence to extremist gangs and sects, or wanting to join institutions that may use force, such as the police and the military. Some groups of men are becoming a risk factor, not only to themselves, but also to society at large, notably the poorly educated, the unemployed, the demobilized soldiers and groups linked to authoritarian power structures. Special emphasis must be given to awareness raising and training in addressing uncertainties, conflicts, frustrations and feelings of dis-empowerment in order to prevent recourse to violent behaviour.

Within this context UNESCO organized an Expert Group Meeting on, Male Roles and Masculinities in the Perspective of a Culture of Peace in September 1997. The Meeting reflected the understanding that rigid and stereotyped gender roles prevent individuals from realizing their full potential and run counter to the principle of participatory democracy. The participants acknowledged that whilst women's roles and status have been broadly debated over the last decades, men have been seen as the standard human being - the norm - and men's roles and positions have hardly been discussed and much less questioned.

A Gender Perspective

Since the Beijing Conference, the United Nations system has been committed to the main stream of a gender perspective in all its activities and policies. A true gender perspective would ensure that the needs and interests of both girls and boys, women and men would be catered to on equal basis.

Women make up more than half of the world's population and yet their intellectual and creative potential remains largely ignored. Women have been largely excluded from formal decision-making. Yet due to the experiences gained from gender specific roles assigned throughout different life stages, and from the demands related to their 'mothering and caring functions', and collective experiences from family and community work, women might have different perspectives, alternative visions and methodological approaches, as well as distinct contributions to the traditionally male- dominated and male-defined power structures.

A growing number of countries are now moving towards democracy. Nonetheless, the majority of existing democracies are still but 'unfinished democracies'. One third of the countries of the world have less than 5 percent or no women in parliament. The 5-year assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (New York, June 2000) showed that despite some achievements the obstacles remain in place, whether it is fundamentalism or lack of political will. Violations of women's human rights and lack of equal opportunities for women and men are the most systematic injustices in the world to the extent that in some cases the only adequate word for it is 'gender apartheid'. 60% of the 113 million out-of-school children are girls, 70% of the 875 million adult illiterates are women, 70% of the 1.3 billion persons living below the poverty line are women, as well as 70% of refugees. Only 1,5% of the world's elected heads of governments and states are women, 9% ministers - very few are heading powerful ministries such as finance, foreign affairs or

the interior and only 13% of parliamentarians are women. Almost all countries have given women the right to vote, yet women are not being voted for.

Studies describe foreign policy, and notably defence issues, as areas in which women and men are deeply divided in their attitudes and policy preferences. Due to their socialization more women are said to be pacifist and 'dovish', subscribing less readily than men to the myth of the efficacy of violence, while more men tend to be 'hawkish', advocating "real-politic", the use of force, and violence in international conflicts. It is, however, vital to understand how girls and boys continue to be socialized differently - and to a large extent according to stereotyped expectations from birth on. It might seem as if we still do not know how to educate a human being - only a girl or boy.

Women and a Culture of Peace

The Women and a Culture of Peace Program (WCP) was established in 1996, as part of UNESCO's follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, notably Strategic Objective EA on promoting women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace, Resolution 5.15 of the 28th General Conference (1995), the UNESCO Agenda for Gender Equality (1995), and to help mainstream a gender perspective on the trans-disciplinary Project: Towards a Culture of Peace. The Program has as its basis the UNESCO Statement on Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace (1995), and has developed through a series of resolutions and plans of action agreed upon notably by a broad number of women's organisations and civil society partners.

The priorities of the Program are to:

1. Support women's initiatives for peace,
2. Empower women for democratic participation in political processes to increase their capacity and impact in economic and security issues, and
3. Contribute to gender-sensitive socialisation and training for non-violence and egalitarian partnerships especially geared towards young men and boys.

Women's peace initiatives often stem from frustration and anger over decisions that they have not been in a position to influence, while they too have had to suffer the consequences. Women's actions for peace are manifold and often provide alternative visions and approaches, whether it is Colombian women refusing to give birth to children as long as violence is prevailing, inspiring themselves from the mythological figure from ancient Greece, Lysistra, who according to Aristophanes managed to stop the war between Athens and Sparta through getting all the women together to refuse to make love until their men stopped fighting; or Russian soldiers' mothers refusing to send their sons to war (Tchetchenia) and rejecting the hero-status medal which could never be a substitute for a living son; Somali women presenting themselves as a sixth clan to be allowed into the peace negotiations; Afghan women continuing to teach their girl children in the homes despite Taliban prohibition; or Liberian women initiating a broad disarmament process; or South African women insisting on gender equality in the parliament; or the Mums Against Arms in the USA, or the Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo, in Buenos Aires demonstrating for human rights and justice, and who recently received the UNESCO Peace Education Prize; or the Pro Femmes Twese Hamwe, an umbrella organisation of 33 women NGOs, who was supported in their work by UNESCO, through the Special Project on Women and a Culture of Peace in Africa, and was awarded the UNESCO Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-violence for their construction of peace villages which adopt orphan Hutu and Tutsi children, their efforts to educate young boys who were released from prison, and their advocacy for reform of the heritage laws that give women the right to inherit land. The UNESCO film "The Doves of Rwanda" have contributed

to the comprehension of how support given to a population's own initiatives can be decisive, and more specifically, how women's capacities, creativity, experiences and courage are important in the reconstruction and healing of society.

Partnerships and networks

The challenge of building a culture of peace is so broad and far-reaching that it can only be met when it becomes a priority not only of UNESCO but also of the entire United Nations system, governments, UNESCO National Commissions, educators and schools, researchers, media professionals, artists, women and youth groups among others. This process of transforming societies towards a culture of peace and non-violence is already under way. However, the scope must be broadened to also include the world's businesses, including multinational companies and corporations. It is through building broad partnerships and networks that we can move towards a better understanding of the implications of our interdependence and in practical terms develop and realize a culture of peace. In this our global village actions in one part of the world most often do have worldwide implications - environmental devastation being a scaring and powerful example of how we mistreat our global common goods. Already, Leonardo da Vinci stated that: "we are all in the same boat in peril of sinking".

A main challenge before us is to build a sense of global identity, bringing us closer to intercultural understanding and respect, so vital to peaceful relations. Strengthened solidarity both between women from different regions and different levels of society, and between women and men is also part of this challenge. Such a global identity would also provide a sense of common humanity among all the peoples as citizens of the world. It is this universal human identity that could provide the strongest assurance for the protection of human rights that is the hallmark of a culture of peace.

I do wish you full success in your endeavours, both in your reflection over the coming days - and more importantly in your daily work with children- our future generations., and I would like to end this presentation by a quote from Albert Camus in his letter to his teacher when he received the Nobel Prize in Literature: "Without you, without your caring hand that reached out to the poor child that I was, without your teaching and the role model that you were, nothing of this would have happened". Helping to release the potential of every child - whether they are born a boy or a girl and wherever they are born - is the noblest task of all.

Thank you for your attention.

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