

**ANNEX II****Opening address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,  
Director-General of UNESCO**

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Ministers of Education,  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 46th Session of the International Conference on Education (ICE). I would like to immediately express my sincere thanks to you, Mr President, for your opening address, which provided a number of perceptive observations highly relevant to the thematic issues that this Conference will examine. I would also like to thank the Swiss Federal authorities and the authorities of the Republic and Canton of Geneva for the long-standing hospitality they have offered to this Conference and to the International Bureau of Education (IBE). Geneva is truly an international city and it is a pleasure to resume here the great tradition of the ICE after an interval of five years.

I am pleased to see so many ministers and vice-ministers here today. Their presence testifies to the uniqueness of this international forum and to their interest in its thematic concerns and the importance of Education for All. With the greatest respect to the other participants, I would like to emphasize that this is, without question, your conference. Indeed, it is the centrality of your presence, participation and contributions that gives the ICE its distinctive quality compared with other international conferences on education.

However, a vital ingredient of the ICE is the contribution by other participants from the domains of academia, research, international cooperation, and civil society, drawn here by their interest in the Conference's themes and the very nature of the event itself. Your active participation in the Conference is warmly welcomed. Thus, I am pleased to welcome the representatives and observers of non-Member States, United Nations agencies, inter-governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all those who have helped in the preparations for this Conference by providing intellectual and/or financial contributions: the ministries of education, research centres and training institutions of several countries (Argentina, Canada, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland); the Commonwealth of Learning; the Training Programme for Bilingual Intercultural Education for the Andean Countries; the BERUM Project in Peru; the Graduate Institute for Development Studies in Geneva; the Cité des sciences et de l'industrie in Paris; the NGO Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa. Last but not least, I would like to both thank and congratulate the IBE Council for its hard work, dedication and creativity in designing and preparing this year's Conference; the Council's Chairperson, Mr Pieter De Meijer, Chairman of the National Commission for UNESCO of the Netherlands, deserves our particular thanks.

The ICE is an event with a rich and interesting tradition. Under the name of 'the International Conference on Public Education', it was first organized in 1934 by the International Bureau of Education at a time when militarism and fascism were on the march. From 1947 onwards, each Conference was organized jointly by the IBE and UNESCO. Since 1969, when the IBE became an integral part of UNESCO, this event has been known as the International Conference on Education.

As the only event addressed to all of the world's Ministers of Education, the ICE serves as a unique international forum for high-level dialogue on educational issues and their policy implications.

The International Conference on Education, like the IBE, is an integral part of UNESCO. Notwithstanding the lapse of time since the 45th Session, the ICE is one of the most important events in the Organization's calendar. It is my honour and responsibility to invite the participants. Meanwhile, it is the General Conference of UNESCO that approves the themes of the ICE in light of proposals submitted by the IBE Council, whose members are chosen by the General Conference. Through the national reports submitted to the ICE and the presentations, discussions and exchanges occurring during the Conference, an abundance of data becomes available to the IBE and to UNESCO more widely. I can assure you that UNESCO greatly values this occasion as a singular opportunity to listen to and interact with many of the world's key decision-makers in the field of education.

As with all the other activities organized by the IBE, the International Conference on Education is embedded within the framework of the UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (2002-2007). In fact, the timing of the ICE could not be better, coming as it does just weeks before the Strategy will be submitted to the General Conference for approval. The leitmotif running through the next Medium-Term Strategy is the following: "Contributing to peace and development in an era of globalization through education, the sciences, culture and communication". For UNESCO, the unifying theme shaping all of its programmes and activities is the challenge of humanizing globalization so that it works for everyone, not just for a privileged few. Central to the process of giving globalization a human face is education, especially in terms of globalizing the right to education so that good quality basic education is available to all.

It is also very timely that the ICE is being held now, when the Dakar follow-up process is gathering much momentum. The meeting of the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 was a decisive turning-point for UNESCO. As required by the Dakar Framework for Action, UNESCO has placed the outcomes and priorities of Dakar at the heart of its work. Building upon the reform and structuring that I initiated and completed, UNESCO has refocused its education programme within the Medium-Term Strategy and is fulfilling its mandated role of coordinating EFA partners and maintaining their collaborative momentum. Let there be no mistake: Education for All is UNESCO's highest priority for the period ahead and, thanks to the commitments freely made in Dakar, we are not alone in this endeavour. Without effective partnership, the EFA goals will not be reached. With effective partnership, we have a good chance of achieving something quite remarkable. The true test of partnership will be found at the country level, where the combined efforts of national and international actors must be primarily focused.

Consequently, UNESCO accords great importance to the theme of this year's ICE – "Education for All for learning to live together: contents and learning strategies – problems and solutions". It is most timely and appropriate that the ICE is to address this theme shortly before the 31st session of the General Conference. The outcomes and recommendations of the ICE will be immediately channelled into the deliberations of the General Conference in October and November. I believe that this will serve as a great incentive to make our discussions, debates and decisions in the next few days as relevant and well-conceived as possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of "learning to live together" must be addressed from two main angles: first, from the perspective of social cohesion, harmony and non-violence within our societies, and second, from the perspective of international peace, mutual understanding and friendship between our societies. These dimensions, of course, are connected: a country at war with itself may also be a

threat to its neighbours, and external wars have a habit of generating many internal conflicts and tensions. Concern for the contribution of education to world peace, international understanding social cohesion and non-violence has always been at the heart of the ICE's deliberations. It is precisely for this reason that it has maintained its relevance for almost seventy years. Through the choice of theme for this session, the ICE shows once again how close is the link between the themes of its debates and the priorities of the whole international community.

At this Conference, we have a golden opportunity not only to reinforce the commitments made in Dakar to achieve quality basic education for all by 2015 but also to reflect further upon the meaning and purpose of Education for All. What does quality basic education for all mean? What aims and purposes explain and justify the enormous efforts required to achieve it?

In this regard, it is important to note that the Dakar Framework for Action clearly links the improvement of the quality of basic education to the effective acquisition of literacy, numeracy and essential life-skills. What is literacy today if it does not develop our ability to communicate so that, by opening local, national and global participation to everyone, our personal freedom is enlarged? What is numeracy today if it does not develop our ability to analyse and organize data concerning the many dimensions of our lives and enhance our capacity to participate in the knowledge society? Clearly, literacy and numeracy are not merely technical but are social in character, vitally linked to our capacity for personal freedom and social action.

And what do life-skills mean today if they do not embrace the desire as well as the ability to live together in peace? The term "essential life-skills" must include the abilities to mix with others, cooperate, communicate, undertake joint actions, participate, and build mutual trust as well as self-confidence.

These considerations convince me more than ever that EFA makes good sense for many kinds of reasons but the core of the rationale for EFA is ethical; it concerns the rights of each person to fulfil his or her potential and to live a full human life in society. Living in peace with one another is an integral part of this vision. And learning how to live at peace with others is an indispensable part of all education.

But we still have a long way to go. Since the last session of the ICE, the world has moved into a new century and, indeed, a new millennium but we remain beset by familiar problems. Thus, different groups and entire communities in all the regions of the world continue to suffer from the effects of war, internal conflicts, injustice, poverty, intolerance, racism, marginalization, and different forms of violence. The basic rights of millions remain unfulfilled, including those which go to the heart of personal and group identity such as language and culture. The world remains a place where the conditions for living at peace with one another are fragile and are particularly vulnerable to the resentments arising from injustices and structured social inequalities.

The main educational preoccupation of the past century was to guarantee wider access to educational opportunities but much remains to be done in many countries. The achievement of quantitative educational goals is still important where universal primary education and universal literacy are far from being realized. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the quality of basic education must also be improved so that everyone is well prepared for participation in modern life. Each of us needs the tools, aptitudes and values essential for facing a world of rapid change, increasing complexity, widespread uncertainty, and inter-dependence. Above all, a basic education that fails to equip us to live together peaceably does not deserve to be called an education of genuine quality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been very impressed by reading a preliminary analysis of the content of the national reports prepared for this Conference. Clearly, much progress has occurred in raising awareness about the need to educate in favour of values, concepts and capacities that help young people to learn how to live peaceably together and, just as important, encourage them to want to live peaceably together.

The analysis contained in the Conference's main working document is very useful. It shows how human rights, the protection of cultural diversity, respect for local languages and mother tongues, the call for peace and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the application of scientific procedures and new technologies are being incorporated into the planning of curricula and other aspects of national policy-making.

We also note that Ministries of Education have identified a number of problem areas and related questions. How can learning about peaceful daily life be developed within formal school settings? How can the importance and urgency of this educational issue be matched with available resources? How can learning about peaceful daily life be incorporated into a framework of lifelong learning opportunities for all? Moreover, in many of the preparatory meetings organized by the IBE in various regions of the world, a common refrain has been that violence is a fact of life in many schools. We believe that these critical appraisals arise from an increasingly firm resolve to face these problems squarely: first, by recognizing them; second, by sharing them; and, third, by learning co-operatively to overcome them.

I also applaud the way in which good practices and viable innovations have been collected by the IBE, with the support of UNESCO's Education Sector, the country, cluster and regional offices of UNESCO, national commissions, and numerous non-governmental organizations, especially those NGOs representing teachers involved in education for learning to live together. These lessons from practice show that solutions to existing problems do exist, that such solutions are plentiful and diverse, and that greater knowledge of them can help us to provide fresh responses to the difficulties faced on a daily basis by teachers and pupils alike.

Many ideas and much information will circulate during this Conference. I hope that those responsible for national education will be able, as a result, to make better, more informed decisions. It is important that the duly constituted national authorities do indeed retain the will and capacity for decision-making in education. Some analysts have argued that, given the influence and effects of globalization, the nation-state is losing its validity. I do not agree. On the contrary, I am convinced that the state's guiding role and the legitimate and authoritative character of its policies are more important than ever. On the other hand, we must acknowledge that the definition of the state's role and the performance of its functions are under challenge from a variety of forces: for example, the internationalization of knowledge, the shifting balance between centralization and decentralization, and the sheer variety of national and local policy options available.

In addition, quite a number of countries are seeing new actors enter the national education picture. A few of these new actors are international in character, but most are national and local. Some of these actors may not be so 'new' but, due to processes of decentralization, improved communications or democratization, they may be finding their voices or strengthening their presence in the educational domain. UNESCO clearly encourages all states and public authorities to fulfil their core obligations towards education; at the same time, we recognize that the state cannot do everything and need not do some things only by itself. Thus, in regard to certain educational responsibilities, the state may find it useful to build strategic alliances with civil society institutions

and the private sector. Within an overall framework of state regulation, monitoring and quality assurance, considerable advantages and benefits may ensue.

In recognition of such trends, and in keeping with the clear message from Dakar about the need to involve civil society more actively in all aspects of the EFA process, a Special Session will be held on Saturday. This Special Session, which I will chair myself, will be devoted to “the involvement of civil society in promoting education for all”. UNESCO is convinced that productive state/civil society relations in the field of education are necessary not only for achieving the quantitative and qualitative goals agreed in Dakar but also for assisting the design and implementation of initiatives for learning to live together. Partnership and cooperation begin at home.

Obviously, the way to promote effective and appropriate education for living together is not the same in all cultures and in all contexts. However, in this globalized world, the intelligent and creative combination of relevant global strategies with a diverse range of local and national solutions offers the greatest promise.

I very much look forward to the outcomes and recommendations of this Conference. I am sure that you will find that the theme of ‘learning to live together’ intersects with many of your most pressing concerns, ranging from violence in the classroom to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), from language teaching to citizenship education within the perspective of lifelong learning. The framing of these issues, problems and concerns within the context of Education for All shows that it is quite wrong to see EFA just in terms of quantitative developments, important though these are. The agenda of EFA must be seen to include the improvement of the quality of basic education. This is our shared challenge.

Thank you.