

ANNEX X

Message by a pupil of Summerhill School (UK), during the closing ceremony

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am a student studying out of personal choice at Summerhill School, a democratic boarding school in England.

I have come here to speak of democracy in schools and its relevance when learning about citizenship, and more importantly the individual, or should I say the individual child.

At my school, pupils and teachers live together in a democratic community, where we have an equal vote and an equal say. It is an international school, with pupils from Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America. We all learn tolerance and respect through living together, and accept each other's cultural and ethical backgrounds. Using this, I have been elected as school ombudsmen, that is, the person who is responsible for solving disagreements between all members of the school – teachers and pupils – using peaceful dialogue, patience and understanding. I have been elected every term for three and a half years.

Participating in community democracy has given me: a sense of responsibility for others; the skills needed for peaceful resolutions in disputes; a way of taking part in the creation and use of law and justice; and space to understand who I am and what I am to the world. In this way I am able to participate as a citizen of the world.

As Jacques Delors said in the report, "Learning – The Treasure Within", UNESCO was founded, based upon the hope for a world that is a better place to live in. I share that hope, and like to think that every child will have the opportunity to learn what I am learning, for these values that I hold are evident in the spirit of this conference.

A number of these schools already exist in many countries, such as: New Zealand, Japan, the United States, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Costa Rica, Portugal, France, Germany, Denmark, Israel and Palestine. It is my hope that such schools will prosper and be successfully founded in other countries as well.

I and many other pupils attending these schools have been lucky in what we have experienced, but why only us?

Despite the fact that Summerhill and schools like it correspond so precisely to what you are recommending here, some of them are facing the threat of closure.

These schools may close and need your support, as the hopes of this conference are in these schools. All that I ask is that these schools are recognized, and have a chance to prosper. In this way you can show the world that using democracy, participation and respect for children's rights, you help form the strong individual citizen, but only if you take action and do not make these simply the words appearing in the final report of a conference.