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Oral presentation

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND
CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

Statement

by

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to the

**Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties
to the Framework Convention on Climate Change**

(Buenos Aires, 2-13 November 1998)

Mr President,

- The results of Kyoto were a sign of hope that the world community will muster the political will required to engage in the measures necessary for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. ~~This meeting in Buenos Aires will be crucial in improving the chances for a vigorous implementation of both the Framework Convention and its Kyoto Protocol.~~
- The political will to move further in this direction needs to come first and foremost from the industrialized countries. However, ^{realities} ~~commitment~~ to address the problem of climate change is the responsibility of all groups of countries and every individual country. ~~At stake are fundamental questions relevant to all people such as food security, water availability, control of diseases, the viability of low-lying coastal areas and islands for human habitation, and the survival of whole island States.~~ The people most affected by climate change will be those living already in precarious conditions in developing countries.

Mr President,

- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this meeting on behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Federico Mayor. ~~He has asked me to convey his best wishes for a successful outcome of this fourth session of the Conference of the Parties.~~ In his view, it is imperative that the world community accelerates the implementation of the international agreements to fight global warming. In Mr Mayor's ^{(press release he said (quote))} words «We must make new choices to face ^{the pressing} ~~new~~ ^{change radically the} challenges and define ~~new~~ investment priorities». ^(End of quote)

- Among the key areas in which ^{enhanced} investments are required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, are science, cleaner technologies, in particular renewable energies, and education as addressed in the respective Articles of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. ~~The application made of scientific knowledge and technology during the 20th century have caused the problem of increasing greenhouse gases in the global atmosphere. Scientific progress and technological innovation must now be geared towards finding the solutions to this problem.~~

Mr President,

- ~~Scientists recognize their responsibility to work with policy-makers and other major stakeholders, in particular in business and industry to prevent the dire prospects related to global warming from occurring during the next century. The Chairpersons of UNESCO's five major international science programmes, including the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), presented a Joint Statement at the last session of the Organization's General Conference. They considered that threats to environmental security have become as great a risk to peace as military threats were in past years. They~~
They stated: (Quote)
 continued: «As the current public and intergovernmental debate on climate change so vividly demonstrates, many of the complex problems linked to the environment and development are characterized by inherent uncertainties and gaps in knowledge; yet these ^{some remaining}
 uncertainties and our limited long-term predictive capacity in no way justify delaying the implementation of «no regrets» policies and measures to prevent possible irreversible environmental damage. ^(End of quote) ~~Scientists must share with policy-makers the responsibility for scientifically sound risk assessment and management of environmental, technological and socio-economic transformations. If emerging serious problems are to be dealt with at an~~

~~early stage and sustainable development is to be given a chance, then there has to be a shift in emphasis from a situation of crisis management to a pro-active, adaptive management regime».~~

- In the same vein, we at UNESCO believe ^{that} there is an ethical need to act in time before unwanted processes set in motion become irreversible. In line with the Organization's ethical mission, ^{Governments act} UNESCO's General Conference adopted a Declaration on the ^{responsibilities towards} ~~Safeguarding of Future Generations~~. Article 4 of this Declaration states ^(Quote) «The present generations have the responsibility to bequeath to future generations an Earth which will not one day be irreversibly damaged by human activity». ^(End of quote) ~~Without a more vigorous implementation of the Framework Convention and its Kyoto Protocol, the world community will not live up to this moral responsibility of the present generations for the well-being of future generations.~~

Mr President,

- UNESCO has ^{more than 40} 50 years of experience in the field of environmental sciences, including ^{notably} ~~climate sciences~~, ^{through the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)} ~~Based on this long-standing experience, UNESCO and its IOC are substantially contributing to improved understanding of climate variations and climate change, to systematic global observation of the climate system, to research on the impacts of climate change, as well as to developing scientifically sound response strategies. In particular, the climate system and climate change cannot be adequately understood, modelled and predicted without taking the role of the ocean properly into account. My colleague from IOC will make a statement later today on IOC's important work in the context of the Climate Convention. Moreover, very little is known so far about possible~~

effects of climate change on water availability in the different bioclimatical regions of the world. Is there a looming water crisis to be faced much before other effects of climate change will be felt? This is an area of great concern to UNESCO and, in particular, its International Hydrological Programme.

- UNESCO and its IOC are among the co-sponsors of the Climate Agenda interlinking the climate related activities of the UN organizations concerned and ICSU, as well as of the three global observing systems being developed on oceans, terrestrial ecosystems and climate. ^{scientific} All these activities, ^{and observing systems have} and programmes require strong support by Governments and other stakeholders, in particular with respect to the needs of developing countries. ~~The~~

✓ The issue of the adequacy of the existing efforts to develop global observational systems was discussed here in Buenos Aires ^{by SBSTA. The conclusion was that} during the last days at the ninth session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice. ^{they are inadequate to meet the needs of the Climate Convention} UNESCO fully supports the ^{conclusion} ~~conclusion~~ of this debate and the recommendations addressed to the Conference of the Parties.

← in order to improve the situation.

Mr President,

- Investments in renewable energy resources remain woefully insufficient, although they are the most environmentally sound source of energy, and given the fact that more than one billion people in remote rural areas of developing countries are without basic energy services. ~~A major concerted global effort is needed in order to change this situation.~~ UNESCO and the World Solar Commission chaired by ~~His Excellency~~ President Mugabe of Zimbabwe have launched the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, aimed at the wider use of all sources of environmentally-friendly, renewable energies, as well as at improving people's quality of life, notably in the rural areas of developing countries. The United

Nations General Assembly at its current fifty-third session has adopted a Resolution endorsing the World Solar Programme and inviting all Member States of the United Nations ^{and other United Nations system organizations} to contribute to its successful implementation. ~~The General Assembly in this Resolution also invites the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO, to ensure that the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 is fully integrated and mainstreamed in the efforts of the United Nations system towards attaining the objective of sustainable development.~~

UNESCO is fully committed to play its part to this end.

Mr President,

- Article 6 of the FCCC requires the Parties to the Convention to implement public awareness and education policies and measures. Educating people on the climate change issue is indeed essential ^{as implementing} ~~in order to achieve public support for the new policies and~~ ^{requires informed and active citizens} ~~the~~ measures needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ^{as well as the required behavioural} ~~change in energy consumption where appropriate.~~ Mitigating global warming and moving ~~towards sustainable development will not be possible without informed and active citizens, and knowledgeable political and economic decision-makers.~~ It might even prove that the long-term success of the Framework Convention and its Kyoto Protocol will depend, to a large extent, on the availability of well-designed public education, training and awareness programmes without which public support might be too weak to allow for the objectives of the Framework Convention to be realized. ~~Public education and awareness on climate change will be effective only if it takes into account the socio-economic context that is meaningful to a specific audience.~~ UNESCO is willing to support, through its broad array of educational programmes ~~including its «education for a sustainable future» initiative,~~ relevant initiatives of Governments, the FCCC Secretariat,

and other ~~important~~ ^{concerned,} partners aimed at a vigorous promotion of the necessary education, public awareness and training activities ~~called for in Article 6 of the FCCC.~~

Mr President,

- In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that UNESCO is firmly committed to continue playing its part in ~~climate science and systematic observations, in promoting cleaner technologies, in particular renewable energies, as well as in education and public awareness raising.~~ We will continue to do this ^{working} ~~with the broadest possible range of partners, starting~~ with the Governments and the scientific community, and all other concerned partners inside and outside the UN system, in particular in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the Framework Convention. What is needed now is to forge a strong alliance among all actors concerned, including also educators, NGOs, media, civil society, parliaments, business and industry. We must altogether ^{move from words to action.} ~~accelerate the implementation of concrete measures to protect our global climate.~~ The only responsible option left open to us is to act now.

Thank you, Mr. President