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Statement by

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to the

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

(Kyoto, 1 to 10 December 1997)

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Mr President,

- The issue before this meeting is whether there will be the political will to engage in the necessary measures leading to a reduction of green house gas emissions. This political will needs to come first and foremost from the industrialized countries. However, 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. Yes, reducing greenhouse gas emissions is no easy task and has its costs but the world has the means and the capacity to act now if this objective is considered a high priority.

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 third session of the Conference of the Parties. In his view, it is imperative that the meeting succeeds in agreeing on commitments to prevent the dire prospects related to global warming from occurring during the next century.
- Among the key instruments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are science and education as addressed in the respective Articles of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Chairpersons of UNESCO's five major science programmes presented a Joint

Statement at the recent 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 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 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. 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 ».

Mr President,

- I believe 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, UNESCO's General Conference adopted a Declaration on the Safeguarding of Future Generations. Article 4 of this Declaration states « The present generations have the responsibility to bequeath to future generations an Earth which will not one day be irreversibly damaged by human activity ». Without farsighted decisions resulting from this meeting, 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 50 years of experience in the field of environmental sciences including climate sciences. The five scientific programmes to which I referred to earlier are: the activities of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Hydrological Programme, the Man and the Biosphere Programme, the International Geological Correlation Programme which pays increased attention to paleo-climatological studies, and the social sciences Programme on Management of Social Transformations focussing also on the interrelationships between environmental and socio-economic changes. Based on this long-standing experience, UNESCO and its IOC will continue to make a substantial contribution to improved understanding of climate variations and 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. The Executive Secretary of 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. 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.

Mr President,

- Investment in renewable energy resources remains woefully insufficient although they are the most environmentally sound source of energy, and given the fact that more than one

billion people in 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 in order to work jointly towards the wider use of all renewable sources of energy. I take this opportunity to call on all nations to join in the implementation of the World Solar Programme.

Mr President,

- Article 6 of the FCCC requires the Parties to the Convention to implement public awareness and education policies and measures. Preventing global warming and moving towards sustainable development will not be possible without informed and active citizens, and knowledgeable political and economic decision makers. Educating people on the climate change issue is indeed essential in order to achieve public support for the new policies and measures needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the required behavioural change in energy consumption where appropriate. Sustainable development like all human development must ultimately be embedded in culture. This week at Thessaloniki UNESCO and the Government of Greece organized an international conference on education for a sustainable future. I hope that the expectations of the educators and scientists gathered there, on a successful outcome to the Kyoto Conference will not be disappointed. This is to say that UNESCO strongly supports enhanced efforts in public awareness raising, education and capacity building in the context of the Framework Convention.

Mr President,

- UNESCO's action in the fields of climate related science and systematic observations, in renewable energies, as well as public awareness raising and education is undertaken in close cooperation with the relevant authorities in countries, other UN organizations and bodies, including the Secretariat of the Framework Convention, and with relevant international non-governmental scientific and professional organizations. 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, climate and terrestrial ecosystems. All these activities and programmes require strong support by Governments and other stakeholders.
- UNESCO is firmly committed to continue playing its part with the broadest possible range of partners inside and outside the UN system in order to strengthen the implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The awareness created by the Kyoto Conference must now be used to forge an alliance among the widest possible array of actors including also the parliaments, media, NGOs, youth associations particularly, and decision-makers in the public and private sector. The overriding leitmotif of this alliance should be **IT IS TIME TO ACT NOW**. We await the farsighted decisions of this meeting.