THE UNESCO
Courier

Special issue
March 2025

UNESCO Director-General
(1987–1999)

unesco

Subscribe to the 100% free digital version.

https://courier.unesco.org/en/subscribe

Follow the latest news from the *Courier*

@unescocourier

Read and share

Promote *The UNESCO Courier* by sharing it with your network, in line with the Organization´s Open Access publishing policy.

2025 • Special issue • Published since 1948

The UNESCO Courier is published quarterly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It promotes the ideals of UNESCO by sharing ideas on issues of international concern relevant to its mandate.

Design: Ana K. Landi

The UNESCO Courier is published thanks to the support of the People´s Republic of China.

unesco

THE UNESCO Courier

Contents

Editorial

Scientist, peace campaigner, poet – Federico Mayor Zaragoza was all of these things. Born in Barcelona in 1934, he was Director-General of UNESCO from 1987 to 1999, during which time he launched several initiatives promoting education for peace, human rights and scientific diplomacy, which have helped to shape the direction of the Organization to this day.

A scientist by training, specialising in brain metabolism, he began his career as a professor of biochemistry at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Granada, then at the Autonomous University of Madrid. An ardent advocate of international scientific cooperation, he was also one of the major architects of the conference that led to the ambitious SESAME project, the synchrotron located in Jordan, often called the 'CERN of the Middle East', which has become a model of scientific diplomacy.

As Undersecretary of State for Education and Science (1974-1975) in the Spanish Government, he joined UNESCO in 1978 as Deputy Director-General, before becoming its Director-General from 1987 to 1993. During his two terms of office, he worked tirelessly to promote the 'Culture of Peace' through a series of initiatives in favour of education in human rights and tolerance, paving the way for the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). As head of the Fundación Cultura de Paz (Foundation for a Culture of Peace), which he created in 2002, he continued his work to promote dialogue and tolerance.

Finally, as a man of letters, he was the author of numerous essays and seven collections of poetry that extended his thinking and the commitment he demonstrated throughout his life, cclebrated by this selection of articles published in *The UNESCO Courier*.

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General of UNESCO

Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO (1978).

A new ethical outlook

by Federico Mayor Zaragoza
Director-General of Unesco

'SCIENCE without conscience spells the ruin of the soul". Much water has flowed under the bridges of history and science since François Rabelais wrote those premonitory words in the early sixteenth century. The author of *Pantagruel* can scarcely have imagined the extremes to which the moral contradiction that he so shrewdly pinpointed has been taken in our own century. In Rabelais' time, the dawn had hardly broken on what was to become in the ensuing centuries the dazzling sun of modern experimental science. And nobody—except perhaps Leonardo da Vinci, with his prophetic vision—could then have suspected the extent to which the world would be conquered by science and technology and the promise of a radiant future which they hold out, still less the dangers that might loom for mankind as the result of so exhilarating an enterprise.

The result is plain for us to see. Never before, until now, has the tension between science and the human conscience, between technology and ethics, reached a point where it has become a threat to the world as a whole. Molecular genetics and nuclear energy, to cite only two outstanding examples, can, depending on how they are used, generate great benefits or wreak great havoc. It all depends on the use to which scientific knowledge is put and on whether it is applied correctly or incorrectly. For instance, so-called "industrial civilization", which has in so many respects been beneficial to mankind, can, when economic criteria alone prevail, adversely affect that precious entity known as the environment, which people were scarcely conscious of only a few decades ago.

This is the other side—the one we are reluctant to contemplate—of the gleaming coin of progress. We are so dazzled that we do not perceive the threats hanging over our heads, warning us of the pressing need for a radically new and universal ethical outlook on the future of present-day science. We have to bear in mind the negative aspects, the dark underside of science which appears when its applications are at variance with profound and far-reaching cultural requirements, when basic human needs in keeping with the principles of equity are disregarded, or when science is not regulated as it should be by the interests of society. Although science and technology can contribute to wisdom, it would be very dangerous if they were to try to supplant it. Bertrand Russell made that point perfectly clear when he wrote that thanks to science and technology, mankind is united in evil but not yet united for good; that people have learnt the technique of mutual destruction, but not the more desirable technique of worldwide co-operation. Russell believed that wisdom becomes increasingly necessary with every advance in knowledge and technology, and that although our age has surpassed all others in knowledge, it has not enjoyed a correlative increase in wisdom; and he called for a "new moral outlook".

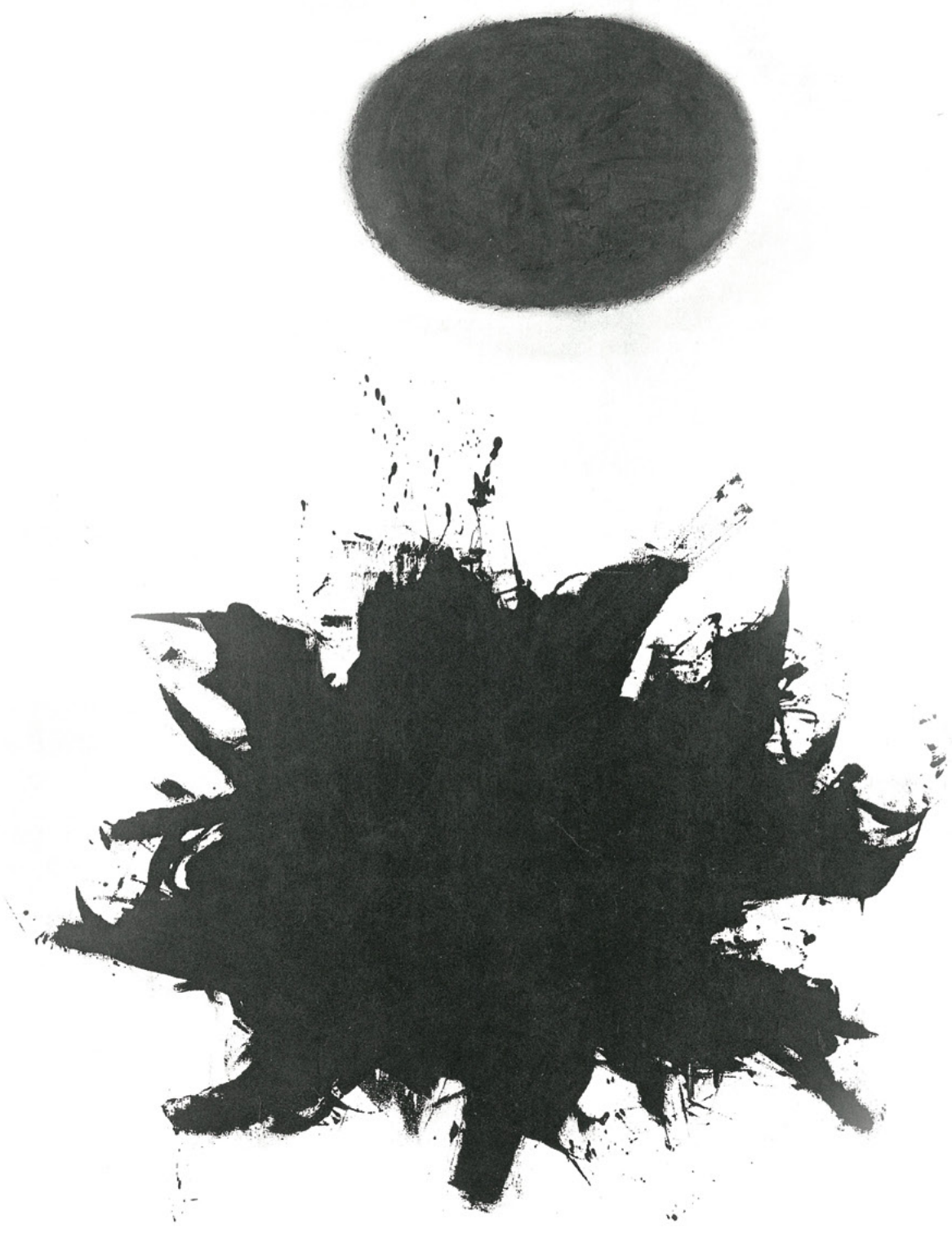
Without such a new moral outlook, the wholesale slaughter that threatens us could become inevitable. Whence the need for a scientific revolution which can take place when knowledge acts as a counterweight to power instead of being subordinated to it. Today, knowledge is increasingly becoming a prop for power, and science is unduly subservient to force—whereas it should work exclusively in the service of reason. The revolution lies in making wise use of knowledge. Thus it is necessary to establish a scientific order which will produce the wherewithal, in the form of nutrition, health, culture, for the survival in dignity of all mankind. Such a new scientific order will undoubtedly entail making far-reaching changes in the course taken by technology, and steering the applications of science in a new direction, far removed from the nuclear landscape and the rampant consumption of the present day.

Ensuring that science goes hand in hand with conscience, and technology with ethics, is our responsibility if we are not to see that "ruin of the soul", which would now be tantamount to the annihilation of humanity. We all bear that responsibility, since we are all in the same boat. But a special responsibility is borne by intellectuals and by the thinkers and scientists on whose work the flowering of theoretical and practical knowledge depends. By virtue of the very nature of their work, scientists and intellectuals should be open to what is universal—this is the very essence of science—capable of reflecting on the grave problems of the modern world with the necessary knowledge and breadth of vision and in a spirit of equity, without being influenced by political expediency or cultural particularities, however legitimate. They are sentinels, capable of thinking ahead, of predicting what will happen and of sounding the alarm.

It is not easy to determine how scientists can exert their influence to change the direction in which powerful interests steer and indeed manipulate their work and the rewards derived from it. However, it is their responsibility to speak out about the dangers stemming from the wrongful use of scientific knowledge, a misuse which fails to measure its social, economic and cultural consequences—in other words, its human impact. Indeed, it is their responsibility to highlight those dangers.

Ever since it was founded, Unesco has endeavoured to be a sounding-board for serene and rigorous thinking by the world scientific and intellectual community and an instrument of peace and development. It is therefore bound to give a warm welcome to any venture that will contribute to a better knowledge of the benefits and risks, the positive aspects as well as the dangers, to which mankind as a whole is likely to be exposed as a result of technological and industrial growth. This is why Unesco took such a keen interest in the deliberations and conclusions of the Conference of Nobel Prize winners held at the Elysée Palace in Paris from 18 to 21 January 1988, at the invitation of Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic, and Mr. Elie Wiesel, the writer, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. Seventy-four leading scientists, intellectuals and political figures who had been recipients of the prestigious Nobel Prize, discussed the threats and promises facing mankind as it approaches the threshold of the new millennium. This issue of the *Unesco Courier* is devoted to the ideas and analyses they put forward, and presents the declarations made by eight of the participants. Its publication is a contribution to Unesco's task of paving the way for that new ethical outlook without which peace and genuine human progress are not possible, and never will be. ■

The World Decade for Cultural Development



Thrust (1959), oil on canvas by the American artist Adolph Gottlieb

Logo of
the World Decade
for Cultural Development
(see photo page 6)

BY FEDERICO MAYOR
Director-General of Unesco

THE experience of the last two decades has shown that culture cannot be dissociated from development in any society, whatever its level of economic growth or its political and economic orientation.

Culture is an intrinsic part of the life and awareness—conscious and unconscious—of individuals and communities. It is a living fund of the creative activity, past and present, which has shaped over the centuries the system of values, traditions and tastes which defines the distinctive genius of a people. Thus culture is bound to make an imprint on economic activity and define the strengths and weaknesses of a society's productive processes.

These conclusions emerge from the experience, both positive and negative, of all countries. Whenever a country has set itself the target of economic growth without reference to its cultural environment, grave economic and cultural imbalances have resulted and its creative potential has been seriously weakened. Genuine development must be based on the best possible use of the human resources and material wealth of the community. Thus in the final analysis the priorities, motivations and objectives of development must be found in culture. But in the past this has been conspicuously ignored.

From now on culture should be regarded as a direct source of inspiration for development, and in return, development should assign to culture a central role as a social regulator.

This imperative applies not only to developing countries, where economic extraversion and cultural alienation have clearly and sometimes dramatically widened the gap between the creative and productive processes. It is also increasingly vital for the industrialized countries, where the headlong race for growth in material wealth is detrimental to the spiritual, ethical and aesthetic aspects of life, and creates much disharmony between man and the natural environment.

The same imperative applies to the relations between nations and between regions, at a time when the processes of social change are rapidly becoming worldwide in scope—a phenomenon which is encouraging a growing exchange of ideas, individuals and goods and is bringing people and nations closer together, but which is also leading to a dangerous uniformity of cultural values, and increasing the inequality of opportunities for progress at world level. As a consequence, human creative diversity may be impoverished and the domination of those who define these values may increase.

A skilfully managed linkage between culture and development can make it possible to strengthen creative identities, to inhibit standardization, and to encourage greater equality of opportunity for self-expression for different cultures, thereby promoting increasingly fruitful exchanges between them. Such a linkage must be based on the rejection of any discrimination, either between nations or between individuals, and on

the assertion of the universal humanist values of democracy, justice and solidarity, without which no dialogue is possible. It must be based on the encouragement of freedom of research, invention and innovation which is the prime condition for any cultural life.

Thus every effort must be made to allow creative diversity to prevail over the dead hand of standardization, the basic aspirations of mankind to prevail over the conflicts of interest groups, and human solidarity to prevail through the free self-expression of the individual.

As I remarked at the ceremony held to launch the World Decade for Cultural Development on 21 January 1988, the aim of the Decade is to promote awareness of the cultural imperative and to foster a new state of mind that will lead to the emergence of a variety of proposals devoted to "a diversity which unites, a creativity which brings together, and a solidarity which liberates".

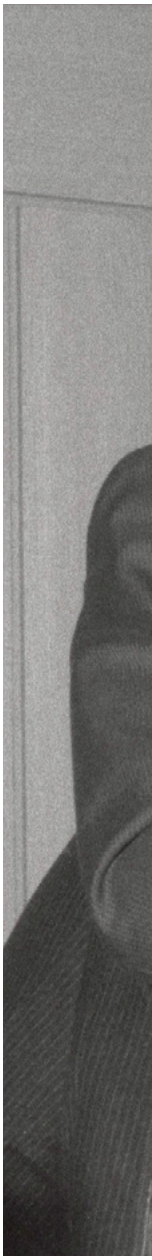
The four major objectives of the Decade constitute guidelines rather than a rigid framework:

– *Acknowledgment of the cultural dimension of development:* ways must be found in which production and creativity can be linked, and economics can be rooted in culture.

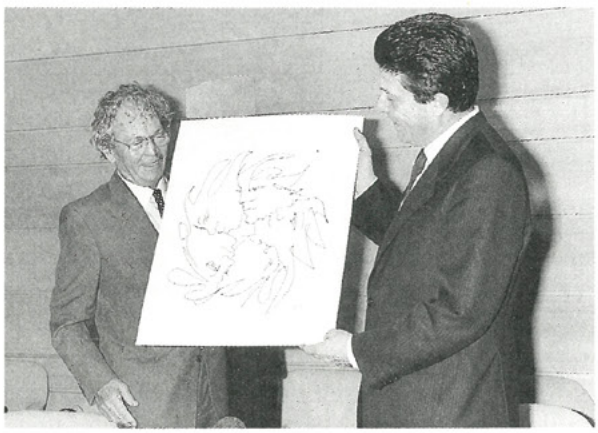
– *Affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities:* the encouragement of all individual and collective talents and initiatives.

– *Broadening participation in cultural life:* mobilizing the forces of freedom of expression and creativity in the individual and the community, in the name of human rights, free will and independence of mind.

– *Promotion of international cultural co-operation:* seeking, increasing and strengthening the means whereby a culture freely draws sustenance from others and in turn nourishes them, while respecting a nucleus of universally accepted truths. ■



The Director-General of Unesco, Mr. Federico Mayor (right), receives the logo of the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997) from its designer, Hans Erni, at a ceremony held to launch the Decade on 21 January 1988. The artist describes his design as "Five faces from the five continents of the Earth symbolizing the manifold creativity of social and cultural life. Expressing the joy of living, they are seen against the sunlight whose rays reflect the many and varied aspects of Unesco's work."



UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor presenting the Simón Bolívar Prize to Václav Havel, President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (1990).

On the occasion of the twenty-sixth session of

Interview with

■ The current session of UNESCO's General Conference is taking place at an exceptional moment in world history. In the last two years we have seen radical changes in the order established by the victors of the Second World War. Are UNESCO's activities going to change as a result?

— Of course they are adapting to these changes. Paradoxically, UNESCO is thus returning to its original mission. The United Nations Organization was created to maintain world peace. The Charter of the United Nations defined several major principles: respect for justice, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of race, sex, language or religion. UNESCO's mission is to develop intellectual co-operation in the fields of culture, education, science and communication.

For over forty years its effectiveness was limited, for two reasons. Four-fifths of humanity lived in colonized and dependent countries where the basic principles of the United Nations Charter could hardly be applied. The bipolar division of the world had provoked the cold war and ideological opposition between East and West. UNESCO's initiatives were confronted and very often paralyzed by this situation. The UN itself could only play a limited role in the prevention and solution of conflicts. The situation today is totally new. Most of the former colonies have become independent and their voices are starting to be heard on the world stage. In the last two years the totalitarian regimes of eastern and central Europe and the Balkans have fallen. The USSR itself has begun a long journey towards democracy and respect for human rights. South Africa is attempting to put an end to apartheid.

The conditions now exist in which ideological confrontations and fear of the Other can disappear. The principles of the United Nations Charter can be taken into account by humanity without the arrière-pensées and manipulations we have known for forty-five years.

■ Does this mean that from now on everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds?

— Certainly not. But I wanted to make these observations which allow us to be more optimistic today than ever before in the past. The problems to be solved today and tomorrow are enormous but we can try to solve them by talking the same language and with a greater chance of success.

There are two things I would like to add. Firstly, although these principles are accepted by everyone, they are not respected by everyone. In its capacity as the intellectual component of the United Nations system, UNESCO has a duty to identify the obstacles which prevent their application and to help to overcome them. Secondly, the principles themselves must be further refined. We live in an inegalitarian world. Below a certain level of poverty and deprivation, freedom loses its substance, civic equality becomes an abstraction. If they are to be given tangible form, these universal values must be accompanied by real acts of solidarity, by an ethic of sharing. If some people enjoy prosperity, knowledge and culture in a rich world while others are deprived of these benefits of civilization, the

UNESCO's General Conference

Federico Mayor

Director-General

world cannot be at peace. The duty of fraternity is an ethical imperative, for humanity is one and indivisible in its diversity.

■ We are still far from this state of solidarity.

— That is why we are going through an uncertain transitional period in which the best and the worst exist side by side, in which the highest expectations are accompanied by terrible risks. It would be more accurate to talk in terms of several transitions, taking place in different time-scales and at different rhythms, yet linked to one another, inextricably intertwined. In some cases national sovereignty and independence are leading to extremes of nationalism based on exclusivity and rejection. Alas, from the blossoming of cultural identities in a framework of freedom it is possible to take a pathological course which leads to the exclusion of others. When there is a rapid recrudescence of nationalism which has been repressed for dozens of years, only democracy can peacefully reconcile the active coexistence of all cultures and languages.

The transition between totalitarianism and democracy is not easy. It implies the passage from a war economy to a peace economy, and above all from a war culture to a peace culture. Our models of economic development have led to the sacrifice of the environment and the human condition to the requirements of productivity. Man and nature share an indivisible destiny.

All these changes vary according to places and situations, but today everything is changing rapidly as developments in communications and the media shrink the planet. Humanity has some interests and hopes that are held in common and others that differ and are even contradictory. UNESCO must in its thinking and in its action take account of this "living matter".

■ Could you explain what you mean by different time-scales, rhythms, interests and hopes?

— Look at a world map. Africa, Asia, Western Europe, North America, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Arab world. The configuration of problems and priorities differs widely from one cultural region to another.

In Africa demands for democratization are making themselves felt. Regional and international co-operation is necessary to make possible an economic take-off based on the realities, the genius, and the creativity of the African peoples.

In Eastern Europe the fall of totalitarianism is opening the way to freedom and national self-determination but also to distrust and prejudices which are rooted in a more or less distant past and which must be overcome because they threaten peace and risk fomenting clashes between peoples.

In Latin America a common trend has become apparent among the peoples of Latin culture since the fall of the dictatorships. These peoples are tackling the problems posed by the modernization of their societies, while at the same time bearing a very heavy burden of external debt.

In Asia, modernization is already under way, but it is accompanied by demographic pressure that is giving rise to new contradictions in a world whose time-honoured cultures must integrate the latest technological and scientific advances.

In Western Europe and North America, where the privileges of wealth, knowledge and power are concentrated, questions are asked about the meaning and use of these advantages. Even there inequality is increasing and leading to turmoil as Western societies search for values adapted to new conditions of life, work and leisure. In a world that is both increasingly united and increasingly inegalitarian, the need for solidarity and sharing is very strong.

■ What can UNESCO do in face of all these transitions?

— It alone can help to encourage in the international community a meeting of minds based on the universal values defined in the United Nations Charter—especially since it has had forty-five years of unique experience.

There is an alchemy of intellectual co-operation, of the gradual coming together of ideas, just as there is an alchemy of incomprehension, discrimination and discord. The former can only prevail if there is a relentless determination to defend everything that brings people together and unites them. Clearly this does not mean suppressing originality in the interests of a generalized uniformity. Respect for differences is of vital importance, for unity can only be achieved in a debate which takes account of the individuality of each person, the specific features of each culture, the flowering of each people.

Culture, the cultural dimension of peace and of sustainable development with a human face, will be at the top of the political agenda, at the national and global levels. It has too often been treated as ornamental in bilateral accords, as the cherry on the cake, added for the sake of decoration without anyone really believing in it.

■ Are there rules of emulation in creativity just as there are rules for economic competition and rules for road traffic?

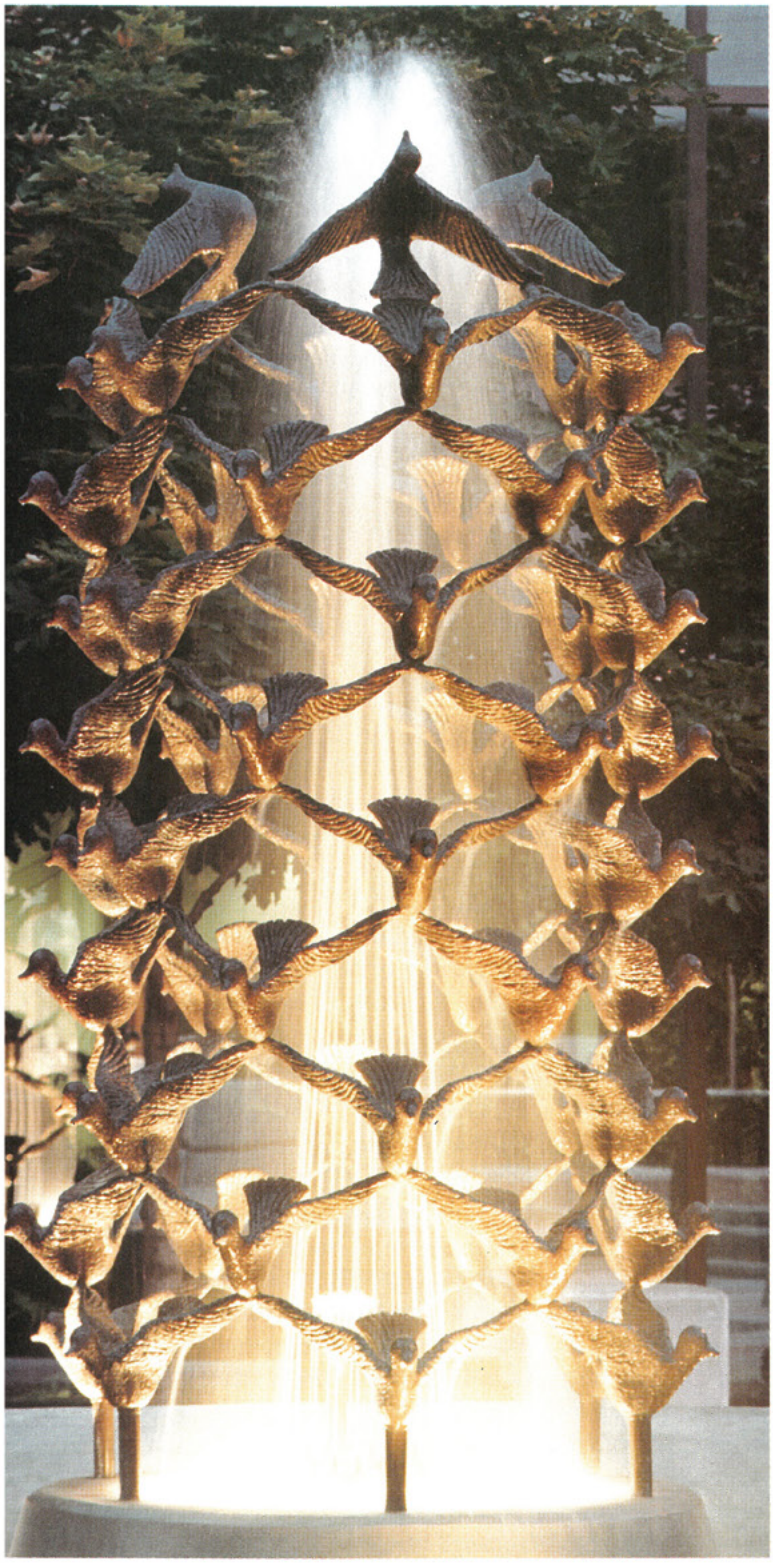
— Yes. UNESCO has a duty to serve two complementary purposes: individuality and universalism. I must repeat that the defence of one's own identity should not lead to the rejection of other people's. We know, however, that this can happen and we must fight against this perversion. It is thus of crucial importance to respect the universal values and rules without which communication and exchange would be impossible.

■ **How can UNESCO help this process?**

— By increasing awareness of what is involved in making choices, by extending the range of intellectual discussion, UNESCO's programmes aim to put the experience of the international community at the disposal of those States that wish to profit from it when they take decisions on matters which fall within the Organization's fields of competence. Some of the main priority areas are: the generalization of basic education; higher education; protection of the environment and management of natural resources; improving the flow of information; encouraging freedom of creativity; taking into account the cultural aspects of all forms of development.

We must give support to decision-makers as they face different choices and encourage them to act; we must offer structures and means of co-operation; we must provide international legal instruments. We can, for example, help to further the advance of knowledge through our oceanographic programmes and through the programme on Man and the Biosphere. We can bring together intellectuals and creative people from all regions to discuss the major problems of our time, as we did recently in Prague, where the theme of the meeting was Culture and Democracy. The positive developments of the past few years are helping to bring about an entirely new openness in the East, the West, the South.

***The Peace Fountain*, a copper sculpture created by Charles Eugene Gagnon for the Peace Plaza at Rochester, Minnesota (U.S.A.)**



■ **Do fields such as science and culture lend themselves to government action?**

— That question was asked when UNESCO was created. As far as science is concerned, there can be no doubt. Without international co-operation, it is not possible to study the oceans, the atmosphere, space, watercourses, deserts, ecology and so on. The fallout from Chernobyl did not respect frontiers.

The situation with regard to culture is more complex. Intellectuals and creative artists need to be independent from political pressure. They have said "No" to dictators, colonizers, arms dealers, polluters. With the end of the bipolar world and the resurgence of democracy, this distrust is tending to diminish, and will continue to do so, even if the duty of intellectuals to criticize is in a sense sacred as a protection against the excesses and distortions of our society. UNESCO has valuable experience of projects that bring together governments, decision-makers and individuals, intellectuals and creators.

■ **Is there a particular image or priority which you would like to mention in conclusion?**

— The culture of peace seems to me to be of primordial importance today. We need to work on this concept. We are intoxicated by our culture of war, often without even realizing that we are. Rejection of other people is accompanied by recourse to violence. We know the cost of war, but we don't know the cost of peace: an active, speedy and respectful justice; an environment protected by the conscious attitudes of everyone; sufficient food and a decent system of health care; but above all an unfettered spiritual framework in which everyone can find fulfilment. On the philosophical level as well as in more mundane ways, we must explore the values and customs that encourage the culture of peace.

It is in this spirit that the United Nations system must evolve without delay. Substantial differences separate the United Nations Organization of 1945 from that of 1995, when it will be celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The new world we are entering needs ideas and values.

A debate at both local and global levels should help the transition from the bipolar world of the Second World War to the new world born of decolonization and the fall of the Berlin Wall. ■

François Mitterrand, President of France, and Federico Mayor at the opening session of the Paris Conference on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (1989).

Federico Mayor with the 1991 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize laureates, Nelson Mandela and Frederik de Klerk (1992).

For a democratic culture

A viable democracy is inconceivable in the absence of an authentic democratic culture. This culture of democracy seems to me to be a space that permits the synthesis of four fundamental concepts: citizenship, tolerance, education, and the free exchange of ideas and people.

Citizenship? "The renewal of citizenship is not a by-product but on the contrary a precondition of democracy," Vaclav Havel has written. "Citizenship is courage, love of the truth, an ever-alert conscience, a freedom within us and a freely accepted responsibility for public life. We can never be certain that we can fully live up to these values."

This analysis sets the ethical dimension in the forefront of citizenship. This ethic, itself fed by values which we must one day dig deep into ourselves to rediscover, reflects both our common humanity and—notwithstanding all the diversity in concepts and in practice—the universal basis of democracy.

Tolerance? A democratic culture is based on the understanding and acceptance of other cultures. It expresses the will to coexist with others. How many authoritarian systems have lodged their power in the celebration of racial distinction and ethnic prejudice! Yet cultural identities are hardly homogeneous. The richest among them incorporates the seeds and fruits of the most widely separated cultures and the most disparate civilizations. If I were asked what it is today that creates "the wealth of nations", I would not refer to their technological power or their economic might. I would speak of the capacity of their citizens—whatever their origins, the colour of their skins, the land or the language of their ancestors—to join together in support of a certain number of ideals and principles which make it possible for them to live together.

Tolerance does not only mean patience toward others: it implies a knowledge of others but even more a respect for the beauty of their cultures. Tolerance is therefore as much an ethical as an aesthetic attitude.

Rather than dwelling on discrimination, I wish to emphasize the role of tolerance in promoting integration.

How, for example, can we reconcile the double imperative essential to all citizenship—of unity *and* freedom, of membership of the community *and* individual liberty? Can we, in societies that are increasingly diversified, continue to identify democracy with majority rule if the latter cannot guarantee the expression and adequate protection, as part of public life, of the demands and beliefs of all groups of citizens? Can we even conceive of democracy if we do not believe in the need to protect minority rights?

A truly democratic culture should deny no specific identity, be it ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural, any more than it should develop at the expense of national identity, collective solidarity and the shared hopes of all. Such a democratic culture offers everyone the opportunity of self-identification through pluralistic and freely assumed loyalties. Thus at the cultural level, democracy must be what it is at the political level: a fusing of personal will with the general interest.

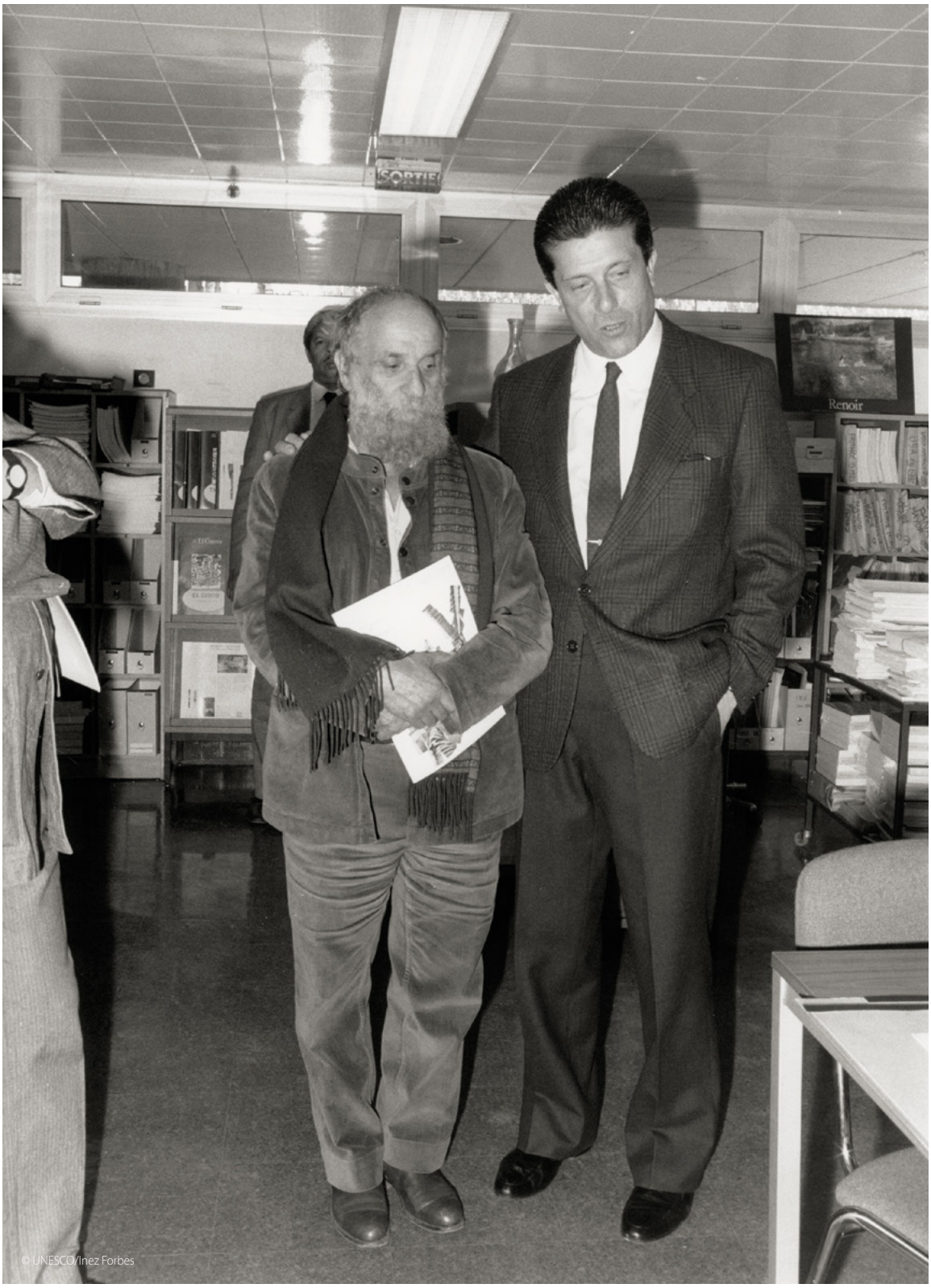
Education? It is clear that a democratic culture, insofar as it defines people as being capable of making choices, cannot develop freely in the barren soil of ignorance, any more than it can flourish in a social setting that remains a mosaic of isolated groups, unable to communicate among themselves other than by prejudice and violence. Ignorance strengthens dictatorships and enfeebles democracy. Education lies at the very heart of democratic culture.

Finally, the free exchange of ideas and of people. The free exchange of people permits them to choose personal lifestyles and modes of expression, and gives them greater control over their individual and collective fate. Total freedom of information and expression is the cornerstone of democratic culture, insofar as such freedom alone can ensure the transparency that is indispensable to the exercise of choice and responsibility.

The choice and responsibility of which I speak are exercised not merely at the level of the community or nation, but at all levels, ranging from the immediate environment all the way to the ecosystem itself. True citizenship must be learned and put to the test in the neighbourhood, the family, the workplace, voluntary associations and, of course, in the daily exercise of public freedoms at village or municipal levels.

True citizenship is also put to the test globally, notably in our assumption of responsibility for the environment, its preservation or its irreversible degradation; and in the limits which—by the choices we make or fail to make now—we impose on the rights of future generations.

To learn to coexist with our environment; to learn to coexist with other cultures—these are, in my opinion, the major challenges confronting us as the twentieth century draws to a close. I am convinced that only an authentic culture of democracy—because it is a convivial culture—will allow us to meet these challenges with success. ❑



Federico Mayor and French sculptor César, at the presentation of original artworks to UNESCO, marking the creation of the International Foundation for Artistic Creation (FICA), aimed at establishing work grants for young artists (1988).

War and peace in the minds of men

RECENT years have seen the confirmation of a vast movement of liberation from totalitarianism, the emergence of a broad consensus among the international community regarding the most basic values of our societies, and the virtually universal recognition of the principles of democracy and respect for human rights. Extraordinary achievements seemed at last within our reach and every hope seemed justified.

Yet even in spite of the undeniable progress made in the direction of democracy, it is painfully obvious that world poverty has not lessened, that an entire continent is still at grips with grinding hardship and political instability and that the impressive liberation movement in the former communist-bloc countries, although rich in promise, has brought in its wake conflicts as numerous as they were unexpected.

We cannot hide from ourselves the grave threats to the world caused by famine and civil war in Africa, the bloody fighting in central Asia, the enormous development problems confronting Latin America and the Caribbean, the myriad obstacles to peace in Cambodia, the murderous war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the damage—possibly irreversible—inflicted on the environment and, in the last analysis, the failure of the pursuit of happiness in the most prosperous nations.

Yet this should not cause us to underestimate the remarkable mobilization of effort on the part of the international community to resolve all these problems which, it seems to me, are without precedent in history. Admittedly, world and regional institutions have in some cases proved unable through ill-preparedness to deal with the new challenges arising at an accelerating rate. However, the debates at recent international conferences, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and the increased collaboration of international non-governmental organizations are opening up encouraging prospects.

Embarked as we are on the path towards a new world understanding, we are currently living in a period of transition which is inevitably unstable and such as to cast doubts both on our readiness and our capacity for action. However, the entire international community now feels concerned by the tragic situations facing so many countries. Its commitment is necessarily strong and unambiguous inasmuch as a worldwide moral contract seems the essential first step towards ensuring that a culture of war—which appeared to be on the decline—is gradually transformed into a culture of peace, which is already beginning to take shape. We can no longer shelter behind the responsibility of the nuclear superpowers. We are all responsible and no one can now say "I didn't know" or "It's not my business".

No one can fail to be aware that the international community has mobilized its efforts under the flag of the United Nations in the case—for example—of Somalia, Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia. Yet, significant as they are, those efforts can not always prevent massive migrations of people—as we are witnessing today—or, looking towards the future, provide populations with aid on a scale that would favour endogenous development.

It is my deep conviction that our incapacity to respond adequately to these dramatic situations constitutes a serious threat to the democratic and ethical foundations of our civilization. For that reason, we must act—and act quickly—in order to equip ourselves against having to accept the unacceptable.

For my part, I do not doubt that the determination of men and women of goodwill must ultimately prevail and that we shall ensure that the basic values we hold dear will finally triumph. However difficult our task, we shall never yield to discouragement. Our commitments, which are those of our Organization, seem more relevant than ever, and we shall keep constantly in mind the famous words of UNESCO's Constitution: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". ■

Towards education for all

NEXT November, the Heads of State or Government of nine large countries will meet in New Delhi in India to give a new impetus to their efforts to achieve education for all. There is an obvious and powerful logic in this initiative. The nine countries—Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan—collectively account for nearly three-quarters of the world's adult illiterates and a sizeable share of the world's out-of-school children. Thus there can be no significant overall progress in education unless there is progress in these countries. They are, so to speak, the key to the solution of the problems of illiteracy and lack of education. If Education for All progresses in these countries, it progresses for the world as a whole. If it lags in these nations, or even in certain of them, world statistics will reflect this failure. These countries, therefore, have a special responsibility to the world community—a responsibility, I should add, of which their governments and peoples are keenly aware.

These nine nations are facing enormous challenges which are linked among other things to their size, cultural diversity and disparities in wealth. But they are, at the same time, nations with vast potential, nations which excel in countless areas, traditional and technological alike. Not only do they have problems; they have, in differing degrees, the means to cope with them. They are thus seen by their neighbours not only as examples, but also as nations which are capable of extending a helping hand, and in many cases they are already doing so. They are fully capable of serving as regional and world laboratories and resources in the quest to bring education to all the world's citizens. The dynamism and the weight of the expertise they possess, not just their sheer size, give high promise and potential to this initiative.

Several of these countries are the cradles of great civilizations. They invented writing systems and used them to record many of the most momentous and meaningful chapters in the human adventure. Their progress is thus of the highest symbolic value. At a moment when our faith in the human vocation is being sorely tried, when our optimism is daily challenged by the follies and tragedies that beset us, how splendid it would be to see these nations where civilization was born lead the world into a new era of hope and enlightenment.

A UNIVERSAL MOVEMENT

UNESCO attaches the highest importance to the initiative of these large countries and will lend it all possible support. But the Education for All movement is not limited to any one group of countries. It is a worldwide undertaking in which all nations, the richest as well as the poorest, have a right and duty to participate. At the World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien (Thailand) in March 1990, the developing countries pledged to concentrate and accelerate their efforts to achieve this goal, while the industrialized countries undertook to lend considerably increased support to such efforts. Initially, it was the sponsoring agencies—UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and UNESCO—that mobilized themselves and made education for all their priority. But there is now clear evidence that bilateral agencies are joining actively in this initiative and providing new resources. Thus it is with great pleasure and satisfaction that I can report to you that the alliance forged in Jomtien three years ago has become a worldwide movement in which a growing number of countries and organizations are actively engaged.

This progress must, of course, be taken as an incentive and not as a reason for complacency. In an age of slogans, it is important to remind ourselves constantly that "education for all" is a message with a real and urgent meaning and a goal that is within our reach, if we firmly resolve to achieve it. But let there be no doubt that the outcome is still very much in question. Nothing will be more decisive in determining it than the progress made in these nine large countries. If they succeed in transforming education for all from a slogan to a reality, I am certain that rapid progress will follow elsewhere and that the world will enter the twenty-first century prepared for a new age of enlightenment. ■

Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, at the launch of the National Plan for the Development of Adult Education in Honduras (1988).

Editorial by Federico Mayor

WHAT is a minority? Does a group become a minority simply by virtue of regarding itself as one? Can any and every minority invoke the right to self-determination? Is it conceivable that the map of the world could ever be redrawn to conform with ethnic criteria? Are there any general principles for ensuring peaceful coexistence between majorities and minorities? These are some of the questions raised in the following pages, in an issue of the *UNESCO Courier* which does not claim to be an exhaustive treatment of the problem but an attempt to investigate its complexity. For myself, I should particularly like to emphasize the worldwide dimension of this question, because it throws light both on its most topical aspects and on conditions for a long-term solution.

Federico Mayor with Malian scientist Cheick Modibo Diarra, appointed as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador (1998).

The context in which the issue of minorities arises today is indeed very closely related to the general characteristics of the age. It is no longer a context of sealed frontiers and isolated regions but one of an integrated global system in which the links of interdependence in finance, technology and communications are growing closer each day. Political, industrial or military decisions made at one end of the world very rapidly have an impact at the other. Because of the scale of production units and the pressures of international competition, regional economic groupings are imposing increasing constraints upon individual countries, to the detriment of their national preferences. Certain role models, symbols and tastes in clothing and food are being propagated worldwide by the mass media.

As a reaction against this trend towards globalization—which is accompanied by growing inequalities between the different world regions—people everywhere are seeking to defend themselves against encroaching uniformity and dehumanization. Individuals and communities alike are thereby voicing their desire to exist, to use their powers of creation, to play an active part in national and international life. Where there is no peaceful and democratic context in which these aspirations can find an effective outlet, extremist, demagogic, xenophobic and even racist ideas begin to spread, transforming the legitimate desire to affirm identity into an aggressive attitude, tending towards isolationism and exclusion and accompanied by a rejection of universal values, disregard for the rights and liberties of the person, and a refusal to seek common ground or to teach the values of tolerance.

The problem of minorities today is a specific instance of this general phenomenon: the globalization not only of economic networks but also of humanist values means that no feasible solution can be based on the establishment of ethnic, national or religious frontiers. Minorities—whether they be cultural communities within a nation or entire regions confronting a centre of industrially developed power—are destined to achieve fulfilment as part of a general democratization of public life, both within each state and worldwide.

The lives of peoples, large and small, today come within the scope of a balance that needs to be established between rights and duties in relation to humankind as a whole, but this balance will only be accepted by all if it commands the allegiance of all, and this in turn presupposes absolute respect for the freedom and dignity of minorities—failure to respect them has so often been the justification for breakaway movements.

Culture is clearly a crucial area of self-fulfilment, the realm in which the particular genius of a people or an individual finds freest expression—provided, however, that it is something other than a memory of the past, looking back towards a mythical identity, provided that it becomes a memory looking towards the future, receptive to others, deriving continual, never-ending enrichment from inner and outer sources.

Minorities and majorities alike, we are all called upon to choose between competing pasts and a common future, between withdrawal into old totalitarian modes that stifle the individual and tear the world apart, and the challenge of freedom for each and every one of us, the challenge of a human race finally reconciled with itself.

THE PRICE OF PEACE

THE world has changed. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of Cold War confrontation between the two major power blocs, which is undoubtedly the most important political transformation of the last few years.

What has this meant for world peace? The geopolitical interpretation, perhaps the commonest, maintains that bipolarity based on the existence of two nuclear powers of equal strength was the guarantee of peace over the last forty years. Now that this balance of terror has disappeared, all kinds of wars are once again possible.

I do not share this view of "negative peace". In the first place, it is inaccurate since, while applicable in some degree to Europe, it does not take account of the hundreds of wars that have devastated other parts of the planet since 1945. Secondly and most importantly, it overlooks the perverse effects of the unquestioned paradox that "war is unthinkable but disarmament is impossible", which made superpower confrontation the inescapable fate of several generations and justified the arms race as the only rational solution.

The end of the Cold War has nullified the logic of this reasoning. The widespread propagation of violence, which is a characteristic of the second half of the twentieth century, today appears to us as a self-evident fact and forces us to recognize that the nature of war and its protagonists have changed. War today assumes the form of civil war and its belligerents are not states but the distinctive communities—ethnic and social—which seek political fulfilment to compensate for their personal, cultural and social frustrations.

This exaggerated desire for political compensation explains why the achievement of freedom in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe has mainly taken the form of a radical affirmation of the integrity of their collective identities and has been reflected in intransigent and violent claims for the restoration of ideal frontiers. The Geophysical Institute of the Moscow Academy of Sciences reported in 1991 that of the twenty-three frontiers that separated the different republics only three were fully accepted, which put at seventy-five the number of potential trouble spots, seventeen of which were already the scene of open conflict.

In the face of these intrastate wars, ethnic and cultural in origin, fluctuating and intermittent, highly varied and changing in form, involving an unpredictable and indeterminate number of participants, traditional conflict scenarios have little to tell us. These situations require profound historical and sociological analysis; they call for a new cultural approach—tenacious and imaginative—that sees prevention as the only possible solution. In other words they demand—more than ever—a culture of peace, and thereby assign UNESCO a key role in this context.

Redefining the concept of security

What are difficult are the conceptual changes, the changes in course that future generations will reproach us for not having made if we do not have the clear-sightedness and spiritual strength needed to embark on them. Not only has war changed; so too have the conditions affecting our collective security, and indeed the very concept of security itself. For that reason I think the United Nations Security Council, as it approaches the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation, could come up with a fresh definition of the idea of security, which is now so different from what it was in 1945. In my opinion, all the global threats to security—deterioration of the environment and living conditions, population problems, cultural and ethnic incompatibilities, lack of respect for human rights and so on—should be regarded as falling within the competence of the Security Council.

If we really want to put an end to this other kind of threat to our security, part of the vast sums spent on military power must be invested in the struggle against poverty, especially in rural communities, so as to prevent the violence and mass emigration that result from it. Money will have to be invested to abolish the shameful situation of street children and child labour. We are accepting the unacceptable. We are continuing to arm ourselves against enemies who no longer exist, and we stand defenceless before those now threatening us.

We are well equipped to contend with the more conventional dangers of war culture. We have armies, and our national budgets include appropriations for defence and armaments. But the amount of aid provided to help developing countries to mobilize their immense potential remains derisory. The results are poverty, excessive population growth, mass emigration, intolerance and violence. We are paying a preposterous price for our short-sightedness. The first threat facing us today is that posed by the deepening chasm that divides the countries of the North from the countries of the South. Yet there can be no doubt that the world is one and that either we go forward together or we shall be unable to avoid chaos and disaster. A global outlook is now the prime condition of our survival.

The most developed countries must realize that they will only be able to solve their own problems within this global and unitary perspective, by contributing without delay to the development of the countries of the South. If we want to sow the

seeds of coexistence in places where today we are reaping the fruits of distrust and intolerance, then the most developed countries will have to decide to invest in collective security before it is too late.

We will have to change our habits even though it may be unpopular to do so. There is an urgent and imperative need for us to think, without self-censorship or fear, about how we can overcome the great contradictions that beset our contemporary world. How, for example, can we reconcile the dichotomy between ethical requirements and technical rationality?

A new civil pact

We find this dichotomy in the different approaches of those who advocate either *development* or *human rights*. While some talk in terms of human rights and democracy, others speak of development. We often forget what is most important of all—the human being—and the need common to all—justice. If the globalization that communication and technology make possible can lead to the best as well as the worst, why not choose the best?

It is clear today that without the agreement of peoples and without their participation, neither states nor institutions can shape the course of history by means of economic or political conventions. We thought that economics and politics would bring happiness and progress, and that they eliminated the need for conscience. It is not so.

Therefore, change we must. We must learn to pay the price of peace just as we had to pay the price of war. We shall have to set fresh priorities. We shall have to convince all statesmen of the need to draw up a pact for education and for social development.

We must strengthen democratic systems, because the big issues of the present day can only be tackled and resolved in a democratic context. The state must concentrate on its role as guarantor, and civil society must take its destiny in hand. Education is the keystone of a strong democracy, as it is of economic growth. The only possible form of development is that in which every individual is both participant and beneficiary. On the world scale, access to knowledge and the transfer of knowledge are the only basis on which we can build democracy, that common dimension where all differences can exist peacefully, side by side, in synergy.

We must guarantee democratic systems in which all individuals, minorities and peoples can freely express the characteristics of their cultures and, at the same time, get to know, respect and—why not?—admire and incorporate characteristics of other cultures. The defence of minority cultures is an issue of the utmost importance and, no matter how sensitive it may be, UNESCO must tackle it, since it is a major source of misunderstanding, isolation, marginalization and violence.

Culture is not spread by retreating into itself or by a process of territorial fragmentation. It is not by drawing frontiers that the rights of everybody and every culture will be respected. Each person is both unique and universal, but the future of humanity lies in intermingling, in the fruitful union of the most varied civilizations. We must protect and foster all forms of diversity. ■

Federico Mayor and singer Barbara Hendricks on the occasion of the concert held for the IUCN's 40th anniversary (1988)

woman

Federico Mayor

A literary man, Federico Mayor was the author of seven poetry collections.

This text, entitled *Woman*, is one of the poems he wrote and published in the *Courier* in September 1995, *Women: one half of heaven.*

Woman,
you brought with you
a new song.
But we did not let you
speak out
although yours
is the voice
of half
the earth.

Woman,
your eyes
saw the world
another way.
But we did not want
to know the meaning
and the warmth
of your vision.

Woman,
you carried under your skin
of all colours
the seed
of the future,
the light
which could illuminate
different paths,
rebellious
yet peaceful ways,
woman-bridge
woman-bond
woman-root
and fruit of love
and tenderness.

Woman,
your hands outstretched
and your open arms
enfold the immensity
of refuge
and of comfort.
But we have not understood
the strength of your embrace
nor the cry of your silence,
amd we carry on
with neither compass
nor relief.

Woman,
with no other master
but yourself,
live
from now on
equal and free,
now as companion
sharing
the same dream
for ever.

THE RIGHTS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

The extent to which future generations will be able to enjoy their rights will depend on the moral and intellectual choices made by present generations—on whether we do our duty to our children and our children's children.

Time to act

For the first time in the history of humanity, awareness of the global impact of our actions—starting with the effects our population numbers have on the environment—compels us to do all we can to avoid causing irreparable environmental damage and preventing future generations from exercising all or some of their rights. Because of this risk we must act before it is too late and correct trends which might otherwise lead to incalculable problems. We must observe, anticipate, and prevent. Prevention is not just an option. It is an unavoidable obligation, an ethical imperative. We must act in good time. We must look ahead and try to see the shape of our common destiny. We must never lapse into fatalism. UNESCO's Constitution has entrusted us with a unique task: to be the conscience of humanity. This task includes consideration for those who will follow in our footsteps, those who have yet to be born.

The survivors of wars think with great intensity of those who will come after them, because they want to spare future generations the horrors they have known themselves. Death, which they have seen at close quarters, has at least given them an opportunity to discover the full meaning of life. Not life lived selfishly and in isolation, but community life in all its aspects, including that of continuity.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the opening words of the Charter of the United Nations should refer to the fate of succeeding generations. What is surprising, however, is that there has been no subsequent attempt to look more deeply into the idea of "future generations", especially from the standpoint of the rights they should enjoy. It is true that the World Heritage Convention adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in 1972 was inspired by a determination to safeguard the heritage so that it could be passed on intact to future generations—those very words appear in its text. Twenty years later, the Earth Summit adopted the Rio Declaration, which strengthens and reaffirms the idea of solidarity between the generations.

Solidarity between the generations

But we must go further. We must recognize and guarantee the rights of future generations. Probably the most striking example of a possible threat to those rights is that of pollution and its attendant hazards, especially in relation to choices concerning nuclear energy—an issue which is rarely as simple and cut-and-dried as it is presented to the general public. The political, economic or financial interests that favour particular solutions must never be allowed to overshadow the interests of future generations. In cases where the foreseeable consequences of investment will extend far beyond the present, it is worth considering whether an impact study should not be made of the consequences of the various options on offer over a fifty-year period, the span of two generations.

In fact there is little doubt that several of the rights of future generations are affected: the right to life and to the conservation of the human genome, the right to development and to individual and collective fulfilment, and the right to an ecologically balanced environment. These are indeed human rights, that is, universal and universally recognized values which are a legitimate cause of concern for the international community as a whole. This is a far cry from rights regarded merely as legally protected vested interests.

The duties of the present

The fact remains that the rights of future generations belong to a new type in comparison with the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. First of all because, by definition, those entitled to them do not yet exist—although since Roman times the law has admitted cases in which the rights of persons yet unborn are acknowledged. We must now extend that possibility, without, however, ending up with a precise legal status for the unborn child or embryo, issues which are now under discussion in many countries.

In reality, these new-style rights are only rights because today's generations have obligations whose counterparts are the rights of future generations. In other words there is a dialectical relationship between rights and duties which should make us aware of the inherent unity of the human race, in space and over time.

Which rights of future generations should be recognized? It has often been correctly pointed out that all the rights set forth in the thirty articles of the Universal Declaration can be condensed into a single one: the right to live in dignity, which is indeed the sum of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The same synthesis could probably be applied to the rights of future generations, with the added dimension of the continuity of human life, i.e., guaranteeing the right to live in dignity on an earth that is habitable. This brings us back to the preoccupation with the environment which will probably, with hindsight, be seen as the major qualitative change that has occurred in the twentieth century.

However, it is preferable, if only for educational and legal reasons, to consider the rights of future generations on an individual basis. First of all, the exemption of persons belonging to future generations from all individual responsibility for the crimes of earlier generations should be regarded as a human right. I have long believed, to put it bluntly, that history kills and that accordingly we are in duty bound to "disarm history", since it is axiomatic that future generations cannot continue to shoulder the burden of the crimes, actual or alleged, of their forebears. Make no mistake: this has nothing to do with the moral responsibility which each person, each community and each nation must assume in complete freedom, but concerns legal responsibility, with its attendant criminal and civil consequences.

The right to live in peace

The second right which is of great importance at the present time is that which has been formuated as "right to peace and right not to be a victim of war". In this context I think particularly of the pioneering work carried out by the recently founded Tricontinental Institute for Parliamentary Democracy and Human Rights and by Captain Cousteau and his associates. We know that war does not stop when the guns fall silent but continues long after, to the detriment of those who were not responsible for it. The acknowledgment of this new right for future generations is part of the culture of peace for which UNESCO is working.

If it is true, as the French philosopher Henri Bergson once said, that "the idea of the future is more fertile than the future itself", we must start to work on this idea, extract all we can from it, and ensure that it flourishes. The rights of future generations are the duties of today's generations. Their lives tomorrow depend on the concern we show for them today. ■

living in tomorrow's cities

What will tomorrow's cities be like? Above all, will they be decent places to live in?

The city is a focus of far-reaching changes in our time. By the year 2025, an estimated 83 per cent of the population of the industrialized countries and 61 per cent of the population of the South will be living in urban areas. But while cities are focal points of progress and social change, they are also crucibles of crisis and social tensions.

Urbanization is taking place on three levels: in megacities, in medium-sized cities and in inter-urban areas.

Megacities, cities with more than 4 or 5 million inhabitants, are not specific to the industrialized countries. By 2025 18 of the world's 25 largest cities are likely to be situated in the South. As great centres of international communication and exchange, these "global cities" form part of an emerging new world map which increasingly ignores the North-South divide between industrialized and developing countries.

Medium-sized cities with a population ranging from 100,000 to 2 or 3 million are autonomous from and subordinate to the megacities. They give structure to rural areas and connect them with the urban world. Developments of this kind in Asia and Latin America are the world's fastest-growing urban areas, facing management problems comparable to those of large metropolises.

Thirdly, the networks of exchange that link these cities form a global urban framework within which the labour force is being redistributed and large-scale population movements are taking place.

While cities are places of dynamism, innovation and opportunity, they also harbour poverty, violence, pollution, unemployment, social exclusion, criminality, insecurity, drugs and squalor. The problem of urban poverty is today being discussed in terms (*exclusion* in France, *underclass* in the United States, *marginalidad* in Latin America) which reflect three different representations of urban space—inside/outside, high/low and centre/periphery.

Cities for citizens

The city is thus a meeting-point of three crises: a crisis provoked by cleavages in society linked to social and economic injustice; a crisis affecting the types of social relations traditionally associated with the urban habitat; and a crisis of governance and political representation.

Although no two cities are alike, urban development must follow one common guideline. The city and the economy must be made to serve humankind, and not the reverse, as is the case at present.

The enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms presupposes the exercise of citizenship and participation in the life of the community. The right to housing, the right to a roof overhead for oneself and one's family, is a prerequisite for citizenship. UNESCO therefore has a duty to remind the international community that the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights requires that "appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right" be taken.

Natural resources should be effectively managed in big cities, but at present these are places where water and energy are squandered. Cities also swallow up increasing amounts of land as they continue to expand over arable areas and green spaces. The expansion of coastal cities even affects the marine environment. In the last quarter of a century the population of New York City has risen by 5 per cent, but the area it covers has increased by 61 per cent. Measures must be taken to ensure that activities to protect the urban environment become a source of income and enable the people who live in cities to take charge of running them.

In many cases the management structures of large cities are inconsistent with their demographic development. UNESCO supports the introduction of urban governance structures that clearly delineate the respective areas of jurisdiction and responsibility of central and local authorities. But it should not be forgotten that democratic and effective urban governance is based on the participation of city-dwellers and citizens' organizations in the life of their community.

An open-ended heritage

Three main challenges face the cities of the twenty-first century. The first is the introduction of democracy and the creation of an urban community to which all citizens belong; the second is the control of urban development and hence the governance of cities; and the third is the development and control of urban engineering, especially during the current transition to a renewed sense of public interest and to flexible negotiating procedures between public bodies and private individuals.

Urban development has the potential to promote social progress, improved access to information, education and health, and the enrichment of ways of life and cultural exchanges. But this calls for equality of access to the city—to its physical infrastructure, to education facilities and employment. UNESCO intends to work towards this end on two fronts: knowledge generation and action in the field.

The city is an essential link between the individual and the state. Just as local democracy and citizenship are the cornerstones of the city as a moral edifice, social apartheid is a sign of its degeneracy. Citizenship must be rooted in a sense of solidarity arising from an urban culture that is neither a standardized international culture nor a patchwork of antagonistic cultures but the outgrowth of a sense of place and membership of a great urban community.

The city is an open-ended heritage and each city has its own cultural personality. Modern building materials, which bring improvements in terms of space-saving, health and safety, are often at odds with aesthetic and climatic considerations in the countries where they are used. Science and the arts must be harnessed to serve the city via an interdisciplinary approach that encourages the emergence of a new generation of builders. The architecture of the twenty-first century will have to strike a difficult balance between modern energy-saving technology and aesthetic traditions which exist in their own right and which it would be wrong to ignore.

Training for city-dwellers

This kind of strategic urbanism must be seen in terms of sustainable urban development. The use of durable materials that are consistent with sound management of the environment must be encouraged. Water, which is indispensable for hygiene, is being wasted at such a rate that it is bound to be a major international issue in the coming century, if it is not one already. Cities are heavy consumers of energy, and will have to find new renewable and less polluting energy sources. World energy demand, which is expected to double in the next thirty years, will have an incalculable effect on raw material reserves and on the environment.

As a place where people live and move and have their being, the city must provide equal access to the modern communications and information media. In this way everyone will have an opportunity to participate in the life of the community and of the world. If tomorrow's city dwellers are to be well adapted to their urban environment, they will have to learn as early as possible to consider the city as a living environment, to feel self-respect and respect for others.

UNESCO has developed an approach to these problems which has three complementary components—understanding, action, and information—and has created a number of programmes to implement this threefold strategy. The Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), and the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP) all aim to increase and disseminate knowledge. Secondly, a number of training schemes for those concerned with urban issues are built into the MAB and MOST programmes. They include schemes supported by non-governmental organizations in many parts of the world for restoring historic buildings, rehabilitating urban centres, and promoting vernacular architecture and environmental and population education. Finally, since knowledge and expertise are only useful if they are shared, UNESCO has developed a clearing house for information-exchange and a data bank as part of the MOST programme. UNESCO is also pursuing a communication policy designed to help town-planners, officials, educators, journalists and civic organizations to strengthen solidarity, tolerance, respect for cultural diversity and the culture of peace—in a word, everything that can form a common bond between men and women everywhere. ■

UNESCO AT WORK:
peace, development and democracy

Through its work in education, science, culture and communication, UNESCO seeks to free the individual. It combats poverty, exclusion and violence, promotes tolerance and multicultural dialogue and helps to protect human diversity.

Convinced that it is only through freeing the individual that the political participation essential for democratic coexistence can develop, UNESCO defends human rights and the "personal sovereignty" of each and every one. Democratic values give strength and cohesion to the unlimited diversity of the human species and promote its unity. UNESCO does not represent a particular civilization but all countries without exception: it represents humanity as a whole.

Its mission is to build peace in people's minds by contributing to human development within a framework of justice and freedom, for the right to peace is a premise on which all other human rights are based. With this in mind, UNESCO encourages all citizens to learn about and respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights are neither given nor received; they are put into practice on a day-to-day basis. They are indivisible. Exercise of and respect for human rights underpin the three great principles that inspired the founders of the United Nations system: peace, justice and freedom. While states and other entities or institutions cannot grant these rights they must ensure that they are respected.

UNESCO maintains contact with all peoples and all sections of society in order to encourage the general mobilization that is needed to bring about the transition from the law of the strong to the law of reason, from a culture of war based on coercion and power to a culture of peace based on dialogue and persuasion.

Discouraging war and strengthening peace are two sides of the same coin. Democracies do not have to be vulnerable. Citizens must feel that they are protected by the rule of law and take pride in its enforcement. For these reasons we need a new concept of security and of the role of the armed forces. Astronomical sums are today earmarked by states to protect their territory from potential international enemies. Civil society is left completely exposed, and watches with dismay the establishment of regimes which fill daily life with terror and suffering, while intensive and profitable trading in weapons of mass destruction continues all over the world.

A shared reponsibility

The seeds of non-violence, tolerance and solidarity must be sown very early. This is the only way in which peace can become cultural, i.e. inherent in the organization of life in society. We must plant the seeds today if they are to bear fruit tomorrow. This germination will take place in the schools. This is why education is the key to the different future that we desire for our children.

Education frees individuals and empowers them to shape their future, to accept or reject according to their own judgement, to act always "by their own lights". The prime beneficiaries of this education are, of course, the excluded, but lifelong education is of concern to all, rich and poor, scholars and the wider public, heads of government and ordinary citizens. For living together in a spirit of good understanding is a collective and shared responsibility.

This is UNESCO's field of action. It promotes the transfer of knowledge and the access of all to the communications media, without which reforming ideas do not circulate. Freedom of expression is a prerequisite of justice. And laws are only just if all citizens have the right to express their views.

This is why UNESCO is constantly reminding governments that education is a fundamental right for all and as such must be accorded political and budgetary priority by states. A country's development depends on improving the level of education of its people. There is a direct link between reorganizing budgetary priorities in this way and the achievement of sustainable socio-economic development. Subsidies and loans from outside sources can make a valuable contribution for a time, but external aid can never replace a nation's political commitment to the education of all its citizens as a matter of top priority.

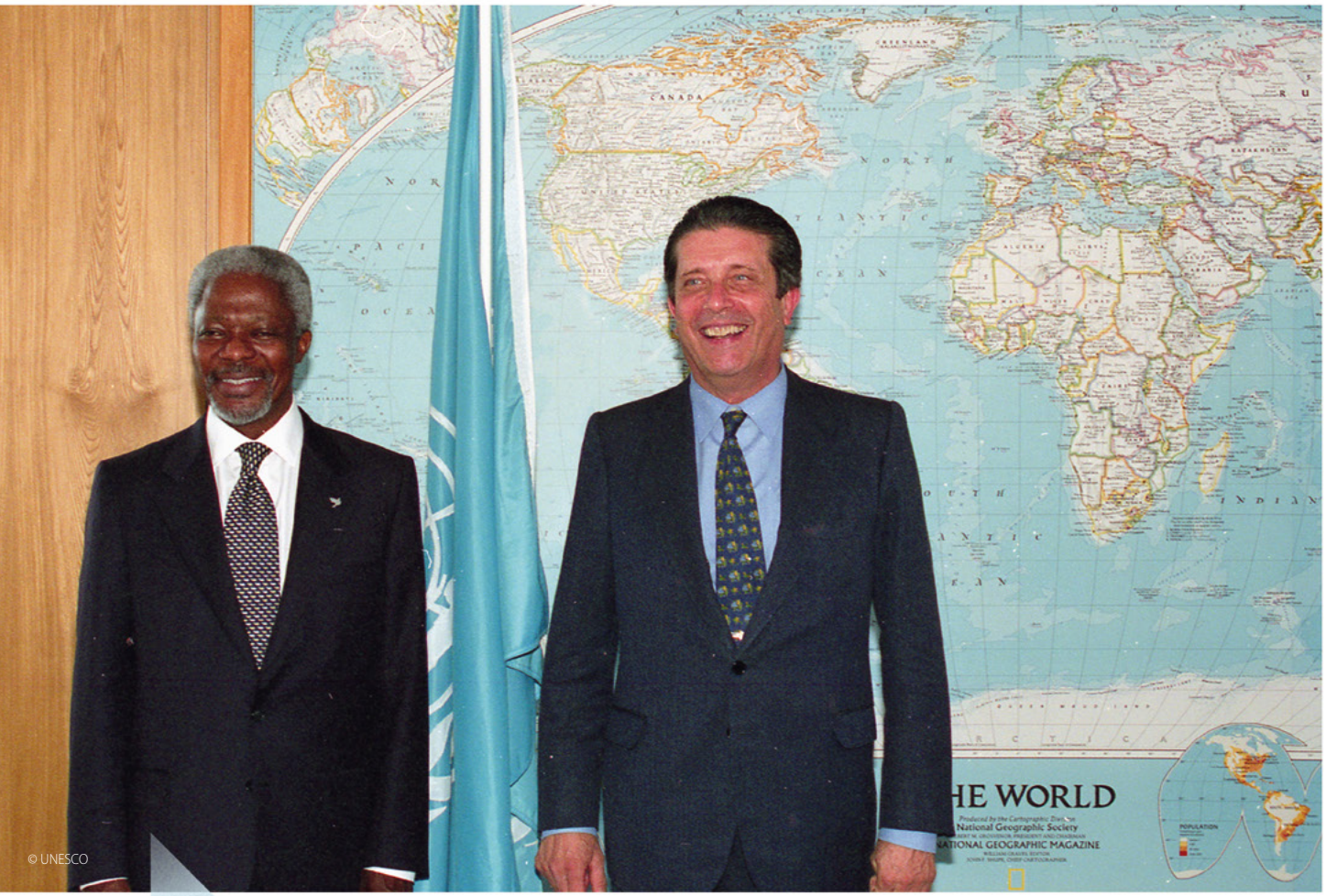
The conscience of humanity

Education is a priority mission for UNESCO, but not its only task. These tasks are many, and all are linked to the promotion of the ideal of peace set forth in the Preamble to its Constitution.

UNESCO works to safeguard the heritage—natural, cultural (tangible and intangible), genetic and ethical—and fosters creativity in an endeavour to build the cultural heritage of the future. Through far-reaching programmes on the environment (Man and the Biosphere, oceanography, hydrology and geology) and in the social sciences (MOST), UNESCO encourages scientific rigour in research and fosters the establishment of exchange networks for reflection and training capable of providing rapid and sound solutions to many of the questions facing humanity. The World Science Conference to be held in 1999 will present a retrospective of the major scientific achievements of the century.

The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome, based on the excellent work carried out over the past five years by the International Bioethics Committee, is the first ethical and legal framework of worldwide scope on a subject that is profoundly scientific and human, as well as being a major standard-setting contribution made to humanity by UNESCO.

It must never be forgotten, however, that at the end of the day it is up to nations to put all these ideals into practice by incorporating guidelines into their laws and striving to reach the goals that they, with others, have set at international conferences. In accordance with its mandate UNESCO is required to denounce any situations or actions that are contrary to the standards and ethical values so clearly laid down in its Constitution. For UNESCO is also a conscience of humanity. ■



© UNESCO

Federico Mayor with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1998).

FOUR CHALLENGES FOR A NEW WORLD

UNESCO/Ines Forbes

Federico Mayor

The issues and proposals outlined in this editorial are developed by Federico Mayor in his recently published book *Un Monde Nouveau*.[1]

Federico Mayor has served as Director-General of UNESCO for twelve years. His second mandate at the head of the Organization comes to an end in November 1999. The nomination of his successor is a key item on the agenda of UNESCO's forthcoming General Conference (October 26-November 17). Each member state has a vote within this sovereign body of UNESCO.

"We can't predict the future, but we can prepare it," chemistry Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine once observed. For the most part, the future will be what we make of it, even if by definition and through circumstance its fabric consists of uncertainty, change and unpredictable creation.

Two major upheavals have profoundly changed our vision of the world. First, the scientific revolution has taken us from an age of certainty and dogmatism and plunged us in an ocean of uncertainty and doubt. We believed in the predictability of phenomena governed by the imperious certainties of science: now the paradigms of determinism are yielding to a concept of nature and history whose hallmark is uncertainty. Secondly, the third industrial revolution, based on the information age and the rapid introduction of new technology into all facets of human life, is changing the world into a global one.

Paradoxically, this globalization, far from creating a homogeneous global society, whether desired or deplored, is subjecting societies to a logic of disintegration. It is a logic of selective pairings, of exclusive groupings, of separation, rifts and disaffiliation. The highly asymmetric economic success of a system which is based on the concept of liberty but has forgotten equality and solidarity is a virtual political failure: it is coupled with an ethical vacuum and with a complete lack of purpose. The power of globalization is devoid of meaning.

In the face of these fractures and this vacuum, four challenges must be faced. The first is that of peace, which is the precondition for successfully tackling all the others. Since the end of the Cold War, a fourth category of countries has appeared on the international stage, in addition to the industrialized and developing countries and those in transition. It comprises countries at war or emerging from conflict in which the state has often foundered in genocide and intercommunal massacres.

The second challenge: will the coming century witness the onset of a new kind of poverty whose victims will live side by side with unprecedented wealth? According to the United Nations Development Programme, in 1960 the 20 per cent of the world's people who live in the richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20 per cent—by 1995 they had 82 times as much income.

Sustainable development and the wise management of the global environment pose the third great challenge. Everywhere humanity is draining the resources which could have fed tomorrow's generation. We have to find our way towards another type of development, one that is more economic, more intelligent, more caring. Because humanity has acquired the technical capacity to commit collective suicide, it has to learn to assume the "mastery of mastery", in the words of French philosopher Michel Serres.

The fourth challenge is that of the "erratic boat" syndrome. As a result of globalization, many states appear to have mislaid their maps, compasses and direction-finding instruments, even the will to set a course. They are tossed about by the waves, as though history had fallen into the hands of "anonymous masters" who can no longer be controlled—financial markets, raw materials markets, statistics of all kinds.

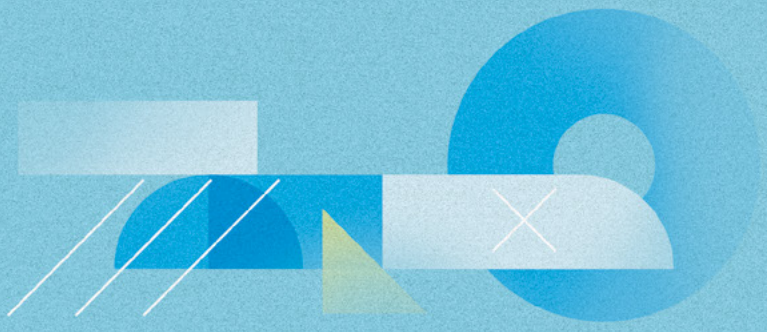
But awareness of these problems has sharpened and solutions exist: hope remains. If only we can find a way to give millions and millions of silent people a real opportunity to use their freedom of thought and of speech, we would see the decisions of the mighty bow to the only power that counts: that of the people.

Globalization must never remain confined to only the networks, telecommunications, computers, the media world or markets. It will have to be based on the consolidation of a public democratic space worldwide. It is only on this condition that we will succeed in rendering globalization humane, making it a project with truly universal promise, and giving it a meaning.

This is the course we must plot for the twenty-first century. ■

1. *Un Monde nouveau* by Federico Mayor, in collaboration with Jérôme Bindé of UNESCO's Analysis and Forecasting Office (Editions Odile Jacob, Paris). The English version, "The World Ahead: our Future in the Making" is forthcoming.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza, UNESCO Director-General (1996).



The UNESCO Courier

7, Place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP, France

https://courier.unesco.org