Speech
July 22, 2004

**Education International, 4th World Congress**
Porto Alegre, Brazil, 22-26 July 2004

**Video message from the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Koichiro Matsuura**

On behalf of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, I take pleasure in sending my warm greetings to all the participants in the Education International Congress being held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. I am sorry that I cannot be there with you in person but, as the head of the United Nations specialized agency for education, I am with you in spirit.

Education for All (EFA) is today not only the principal priority of UNESCO’s Education sector; it is also the principal priority of the whole Organization. Four years ago, at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, UNESCO was given a mandate that embodied a dual commitment. The Dakar Framework for Action affirmed that ‘UNESCO will continue its mandated role in coordinating EFA partners and maintaining their collaborative momentum’ and, at the same time, ‘refocus its programme in order to place the outcomes and priorities of Dakar at the heart of its work’. This is what we have done and this is what we shall continue to do.

Education for All is no easy task and no single body can assume the full burden of EFA, which is a collective enterprise that brings together many constituencies: national governments; civil society; multilateral and bilateral donors; UN agencies and other international organizations.

The role of civil society, especially through education NGOs, is vital. I would like to pay particular tribute to Education International, which is the international umbrella for many teachers’ organizations whose combined membership amounts to approximately 40 per cent of the world’s teachers. EI is a global educational actor which, with other members of international civil society, exercises considerable influence upon the EFA agenda at all levels: national, regional and international. In recognition of the important role played by Education International in the global EFA movement, UNESCO regularly invites EI’s President to the annual meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA. UNESCO regards EI as a major partner, one with whom we share many concerns and a similar vision of the key contribution of teachers to educational development.

Education for All – as an aspiration, as a high principle, as a fundamental right – must be for everyone and by everyone. It is a challenge for each society and for all societies together. It is truly a global challenge.

EFA, therefore, is at once a common dream, a shared responsibility and a vehicle for realizing the right to basic education of good quality. This is something that educators understand. This is why UNESCO places so much confidence in teachers. Without teachers who are strongly motivated, well-trained and professional in their outlook and in their practice, and who enjoy decent working conditions and society’s respect, we shall never achieve Education for All. The role of teachers is indispensable. In the education of children, young people and adults, there is no substitute for a good teacher.

At the heart of my message to you is that teachers are recognized by UNESCO as vital for the quality and vitality of educational processes everywhere.

Let me close by wishing you a successful and enjoyable Congress.