

## DISCURSO DE FEDERICO MAYOR, DIRECTOR GENERAL DE LA UNESCO

En ocasión de la inauguración de la Reunión sobre la factibilidad del establecimiento de una Universidad de los Pueblos de Europa. (UNESCO, 26-27 de febrero de 1990).

*El discurso que a continuación presentamos - dirigido a las universidades europeas - tiene un especial valor para todas las universidades del mundo. En él se tocan valores que como la universalidad y el humanismo, son claves para la cooperación y el desarrollo armónico entre todos los pueblos del planeta.*

*Por otro lado, la propuesta de una Universidad de los Pueblos de Europa, también puede ser una fuente de inspiración para pensar en la posibilidad de crear algún día la Universidad de los Pueblos de América Latina y el Caribe.*

"Mr Minister,

Distinguished Vice-Chancellors,

Mr Chairman,

Mr Chairman of the French National Commission for UNESCO,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank you for having accepted my invitation to attend this meeting, and to say how very pleased I am to see the intellectual community of Europe represented here by government officials, directors of academic associations, eminent scientists, vice-chancellors and senior university officials from a variety of countries. I am particularly happy to welcome a large delegation from CRE, chaired

by Mr Seidel, a CRE that is happily now representative of Europe as a whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One cannot help being struck by the extraordinary inspiration that prompted the Ministers of Education of the Europe region meeting in September 1988, to recommend that a feasibility study be undertaken with a view to the establishment of a university of the peoples of Europe. It was the advance expression of an aspiration soon to be resoundingly confirmed by the awakening of so many peoples of the region. And now, in early 1990, the idea has become particularly topical and relevant. A new hope has spread through the ancient continent of Europe, with the ending of an era of confrontation and mistrust between the blocs, the pursuit of open-door policies by European leaders, the promising initiatives by the two superpowers and the powerful wind of freedom now blowing.

In the period of upheaval that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall, European societies are all in search of their identity: some trying to decide on the political, economic and social system best suited to their needs and others reacting to the changes in accordance with their various sensibilities, their aspirations and indeed their fears. People everywhere are pondering the developments in Europe and trying to bring their ideas on the subject into focus.

In such times of crisis, which are also times of creativity, who is better qualified than the

intellectual community to advance our thinking, to set the debate on a rational course and to compile a list of proposals? Throughout the history of Europe, the universities have demonstrated the role they can play in such research, striking a fine balance between tradition and innovation and harmoniously blending the diversity and unity that form the basis of European identity. When Europe's social and cultural structures were taking shape, the principles of humanism, freedom, equality, democracy and solidarity left their imprint on the lives of its inhabitants. The same principles underlie the present endeavours of the peoples of Europe to overcome their ideological and political differences. They firmly stand as *values* shared by a whole region. The emergence of the new European identity may be facilitated by focusing on these values.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the Minedeurope IV Conference, the project for a university of the peoples of Europe has aroused considerable interest in the academic community and among European public authorities. The Secretariat has already received specific proposals; some institutions or countries are prepared to become involved in setting up a university or are even willing to accommodate its activities. While I am very grateful for these generous offers, I wish to point out that for the time being we are at the stage of preparing a feasibility study decided on by the General Conference at its twenty-fifth session. To my mind, the formula adopted by Minedeurope IV provides a sufficiently broad framework for reflection on both the content and the structures of such a university.

As I have said, Europe pioneered the search for the value systems that engendered the various forms of humanism. Its venerable humanist tradition was created essentially by its universities. It now falls to these same universities to lay the foundations for the new humanism required by the events of the late

twentieth century. You will probably agree that the first steps towards this new humanism in Europe were taken at the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. 1990 could be a milestone on the historic journey towards a new Europe. UNESCO intends to play a leading role in the preparations for Helsinki II by undertaking to involve European intellectuals in the process. We may hope that the gradual exorcism of the bogeys of nuclear warfare and ideological stereotypes will ensure the survival of the human race. But other hydra-headed monsters are appearing, in particular different varieties of fanaticism, the destruction of the environment, the growing imbalance between North and South and development problems. It is of the utmost importance that today's decision-makers and the young people who will be the decision-makers of tomorrow should develop a keen awareness of global interdependence. What better crucible in which to forge this new awareness than the university of the peoples of Europe?

But it is not for me to prejudge the outcome of this consultation. You are in the best position to decide, within the extremely flexible framework outlined by the Minedeurope IV recommendation, what is or is not desirable and, hence, what is 'feasible'. As regards the running of such an institution, you are also familiar with existing systems and know which are most efficient. Should the university of the peoples of Europe have a specific location, with one campus or several campuses? Should it take the form of a new network? Or should it be a combination of the two? It is up to you to decide. Academically, you represent a very varied range of theoretical and practical disciplines; your analyses and exchanges of views will therefore make it possible to reach a working hypothesis geared both to the aims of the project and to practical realities. You will obviously be careful to avoid duplication, taking into account the purposes of existing structures and networks and also the extent to which those purposes are actually fulfilled.

One last word before I hand over to Mr Seidel. If the university of the peoples of Europe becomes a reality, one of its first tasks should, in my view, be to give form and expression to European cultural identity as it stands at the end of the twentieth century. Once that identity has been defined, so that individuals join a collective body that is both familiar to them and conducive to their personal development, and once the moral or aesthetic values with which they identify have been established as well as the way in which they assimilate history, traditions and the way of life of their community, then of course a universal approach will be imperative in keeping with a European university tradition dating back 900 years. Those who feel and know

that they are deeply European are not by any means Eurocentric, and the peoples of the Old World would be wrong to confine their ambitions to the construction of a self-contained Europe. Shota Rustavelli, a poet of the Eastern Renaissance, said: 'What you give to others you will recover, but what you keep for yourself is lost forever'. Europe's future lies in openness to other continents and civilizations so as to foster exchanges, not only between East and West but also between North and South, in full awareness of the interdependence and duties this entails. Moreover, history teaches us and the time has come to turn the lesson to account -that Europe is only itself when following a path- or blazing a trail - that is truly universal".