

Introduction to A Culture of Peace

The United Nations and UNESCO were founded to bring about a world at peace. Peace is more than an absence of war. It means justice and equity for all as the basis for living together in harmony and free from violence, now, but even more so for our children and succeeding generations. The General Assembly has designated 2001–2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. This decade will provide a unique opportunity to translate solemn declarations and good intentions into reality. We always must renew our shared pledge to attain this goal: a world at peace with itself in a new century and a new millennium.

By focusing on our children, we implicitly pledge ourselves to education for all, a concept that combines formal and non-formal education and seeks to promote quality basic education that is grounded upon the universal values – and practice – of a culture of peace and non-violence. Such a task must engage every one of our fellow citizens in all dimensions of life: in schools, workplaces, the home; at the national and at the community levels; in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Above all, children themselves must be empowered to become actors, not mere spectators, in shaping their own visions and futures. . . .

A global movement in the finest sense is emerging: a marshalling of all existing forces for social improvement arising from the world's civil societies and a mobilization of their energies, ideas and commitments. Such a movement must enjoy full support from both the United Nations family and all Member States. It will be one avenue for harnessing the forces of globalization for the common good and for a better and more humane world.

Peace can be at hand; it is in our hands.

Koïchiro Matsuura

The purpose of the Organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.

Constitution of UNESCO, 1945, Article 1