ADDRESS BY SECRETARY-GENERAL TRYGVE LIE AT THE

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO, PARIS,

MONDAY, 18 JUNE 1951

This is the first time that I have had the honour to attend a session of the General Conference of UNESCO.

I am especially glad to have been able to accept the invitation of my friend and colleague Mr. Torres Bodet, because it is meeting at a time of great political difficulty and uncertainty.

It is stimulating at such a time to attend a meeting whose deliberations go beyond the tangled foreground of political struggles towards the great long-term human objectives which lie beyond.

In times of crisis it is doubly important that the direction and stability of long-term international programs should be maintained. It is precisely at such times that courage and imagination have their greatest opportunity and may pave the way for the greatest advances.

It cannot be said too often that the United Nations family of organizations is designed for peace and is based on the assumption that peace is the normal and rightful condition of mankind. All our organizations must have sufficient confidence in themselves to continue to build the foundations of peace without being intimidated by the fear of war.

The disturbances, which will inevitably continue to arise in various parts of the world for some time, are simply an added reason for pressing on with the fundamental work of establishing the basic conditions for a rational world order. They should never be considered as a reason for delaying or reducing this work.

In the present state of the world it is very important that the international agencies should close their ranks against the forces of skepticism and despair and should persist in their great -- and seldom spectacular -- task of making possible a peaceful world.
Of course we must, in all our organizations, continually exercise all the necessary care to see that our efforts are realistic and that they meet some real need. We must make sure that the resources available are concentrated on tasks of primary importance and are used to the best advantage and with the utmost economy. We must also ensure that we keep in step with each other and work in the closest co-operation towards common objectives.

I feel that in all these matters of co-ordination substantial progress has been made in the past few years.

I think we have all also made real progress in weeding out well-intentioned but ill-advised projects. Our efforts in this direction must continue, but at the same time we must be careful not to fall into the opposite mistake of stifling the creative power and imagination which can infuse new and vital ideas into our work.

There are always many voices in any democratic body which urge caution, and I agree that caution is a virtue.

But now there are even more voices in the international world which preach despair and imply that no effort of the human race to consolidate its great achievements and improve its condition can succeed before what are often loosely termed the "realities" of the situation.

All the great historical movements of the human spirit have had to contend with these voices in their early years. In some ways these prophets of failure are even more destructive than the open opponents of international organization for they sap the confidence and destroy the momentum of a growing institution. It is very easy to question a great idea. It is much more difficult to turn that idea into an effective institution.

UNESCO has a key position in the effort which the United Nations organizations must now make to realize in an unsettled world the great purposes for which they were established. Through the wide scope and diversity of its various activities it has an immense range of contacts throughout the world. Through the nature of its work it has the possibility of influencing the minds of men and the ideas which motivate men's actions. It has a vital role to play in support of the total United Nations effort for peace, a role with many different aspects.

In this connection I recall that UNESCO is now being requested by the Economic and Social Council to take appropriate measures to bring its relationship with the United Nations into line with the collective security proposals adopted last autumn by the General Assembly in the "Uniting for Peace" resolutions.

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As the program for 1952 shows, UNESCO is already engaged on a wide range of activities, but these tend increasingly to crystallize around certain main themes. Two of these themes are of especial concern to the United Nations and are among the ten points of the two-year peace program which the General Assembly endorsed at its last session. I refer to technical assistance for economic development and social progress and to the advancement of human rights.

The United Nations representative to the last session of your Conference spoke at some length on the second of these, and I shall confine myself in this case to saying how crucially important to the whole human rights program of the United Nations is the contribution which UNESCO can make and how gratifying has been the co-operation which it has already given.

I propose to say a few words about technical assistance. I note that the Conference has before it a new proposal which goes to the very roots of the problem of the under-developed areas of the world, the special project on fundamental education.

The importance of such a project is clear when one reflects that perhaps three-quarters of the adult population of the world do not in fact have a formal education. Thus the possibilities are enormous.

Perhaps we may have here an essential key to the problem of how to help this vast sector of the human race in the struggle to emerge from their poverty, hunger and disease.

Perhaps this program of fundamental education, in whatever form it seems best to develop it, may become a lever which can move large areas of the world towards a better future.

This concept of education, intimately connected as it is with social and economic progress through community organization, is related to many aspects of the whole program of the United Nations and the specialized agencies to raise standards of living and to promote economic and social progress.

If international efforts in this field are to succeed, active methods must be used and interest must be focused on the practical problems of local communities.

Indeed, I believe that the whole technical assistance program will depend to a great extent for its lasting success on the degree of confidence and support that it can command at the local community level and on its ability to stimulate local action with a view to lasting improvement.

Although UNESCO has a primary responsibility in the field of fundamental education this new project must be a co-operative one. It touches on fundamental problems at the heart of the work of other agencies, such as social
welfare, agricultural extension and nutrition, standards of health and the
development of technical skills and skilled man-power. The United Nations and
the specialized agencies concerned have in fact co-operated with UNESCO in
working out the plan, and are prepared to give it the fullest support at all
stages of its execution.

It should, I believe, provide an opportunity for the agencies to bring
their collective experience to bear in many countries at the community level,
at the most basic level of social life in fact, on the great problems that
face the under-developed areas.

I note with the greatest interest that on the 9th of May 1951 the first
regional fundamental education center was opened at Patzcuaro in Mexico.

The Government of Mexico is to be congratulated on the initiative it has
shown in assisting UNESCO in this pioneer development, from which many most
valuable lessons will undoubtedly be learned.

In the coming weeks the Conference will be bringing its combined efforts
to bear on the final framing of this plan. Given the firm support of govern-
ments, and all the various departments concerned in those governments, I believe
that it will develop into one of the most effective elements in laying the firm
foundations of a peaceful world.

There are, of course, many other points of common interest between the
United Nations and UNESCO, but I do not propose to take up your time by dis-
cussing them now. Your Director-General has given the United Nations the
opportunity of commenting in advance on your 1952 program and I hope that our
comments may have been of some use just as our consultations with UNESCO on
many of our own problems have proved of value to us.

The task of the United Nations family of agencies is by its very nature a
long, perhaps an endless, one. Quick results and spectacular triumphs will not
be ours; and we should be foolish to expect them or to encourage others to
expect them.

It was partly for these very reasons that just over a year ago, at a time
of acute political tension and frustration, I drew up a ten point twenty-year
program of long-term objectives for the United Nations. The General Assembly
welcomed the presentation of this program and requested it be given further
consideration by all the appropriate Organs with a request for a report on
progress achieved to the next session of the Assembly. I hope it may
help to provide a goal and in some sense a yardstick for our efforts.

(more)
These early years of the United Nations have been and will continue to be difficult. But I think we should remember that any successes we may have, especially in the economic and social fields, can lead to greater results from future efforts.

The work for a peaceful world and for better understanding among peoples must go on in all circumstances, and despite all obstacles. In the present stage of crisis in the world it is sometimes difficult not to become discouraged. But if we can maintain a sense of perspective, we shall realize that the constructive work accomplished in the past five years by the United Nations and the specialized agencies will bear fruit increasingly as time passes if we are both patient and persistent in carrying forward our great task.