



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Message from Davidson Hepburn,
President of the General Conference of UNESCO,
to all participants of the World Harmony Run, 2011 and beyond**

I note with admiration the many inspirational events supported by the World Harmony Run in over 100 countries during recent years. The Harmony Run Torch, passed from hand to hand, has encouraged millions of individuals to aspire for a world of oneness and peace.

Harmony and peace are not mere "buzzwords". As we look toward the future, I am reminded of the message of my dear friend Sri Chinmoy, founder of the Run, which can strengthen us on our way forward. He said that world harmony and world peace are "the realities, divine realities and supreme realities." Dynamic activities such as yours have demonstrated the reality of peace across the globe. Yet there is still so much to do, and I believe the World Harmony Run has only just begun to demonstrate its capacity to help create a better world. In this spirit I encourage you to continue, and to go beyond the great successes of previous years.

Among the achievements of the Run to date, I am pleased to note the following:

Your support of the UN and UNESCO's goals during the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010) significantly engaged many NGOs, civil society groups and individuals. This broad support is critical to our success. As future activities and events are identified by UNESCO and the United Nations to further strengthen the culture of peace, appreciation for diversity and interfaith cooperation, I know the participants in the World Harmony Run will continue to play a significant role in carrying these messages and providing opportunities for local expression around the world.

Importantly, many schools and summer camp programmes eagerly participate in the Run. Youth involvement complements the UN and UNESCO-supported International Year of Youth and its theme of dialogue and mutual understanding, being celebrated through August of 2011. By encouraging young people to express their aspirations for harmony today, the World Harmony Run is surely building the foundation for a culture of peace tomorrow.


I was delighted to see the Run visit a number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in recent years, creatively drawing attention to the efforts of the international community to protect the unique offerings of so many cultures around the world. You perform a great service by encouraging people to experience and value the heritage of others.

The simple but striking World Harmony Run theme song has been performed enthusiastically in many locations. The multilingual musical performances and harmony-themed art exhibits associated with the Run are wonderful ways to bring people together to express universal aspirations. As we share the wealth of our multifarious cultures in the spirit of peace, we realise that there is far more that unites us than divides us.

The World Harmony Run has been welcomed by people of many different religions, beliefs and faith-based communities. Passing the Harmony Torch is a simple, tangible and powerful way to express love of one's neighbour, so central to many traditions and personal convictions. Conveying this message of interfaith harmony and understanding in churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship will surely help foster a culture of peace and a growing feeling of universal oneness.

The Torch-Bearer Award programme, which acknowledges individual efforts at both the international and grassroots levels, is a wonderful idea. Please continue to seek, recognise and honour leaders of harmony and peace so that others may be inspired to emulate and build on their important contributions. By providing opportunities for individuals and communities to express their hopes for peace, you strengthen the social, cultural and spiritual fabric that connects the entire world family.

I wish you continued success as you expand your efforts, guided by Sri Chinmoy's visionary spirit, to encourage active world citizenship from individuals on all continents. I am certain that initiatives such as the World Harmony Run contribute significantly to the realisation of one of UNESCO's principal mandates: mutual understanding and our shared determination to build and strengthen a culture of peace and harmony.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DL Hepburn', written in a cursive style.

Davidson L. Hepburn