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Organización
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para la Educación,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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联合国教育、
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**Message from Davidson Hepburn,
President of the General Conference of UNESCO,
to all participants of the World Harmony Run**

The International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures presents a wonderful opportunity to creatively celebrate cultural diversity and its role in forging ties between cultures and people. There is great value in bringing together different kinds of people, different forces, different views, different religions, and different beliefs. The rapprochement of cultures is at the heart of UNESCO's mandate, and the International Year is an opportunity to reinforce this mandate in both the international community at large as well as in civil society.

By carrying a torch to over 100 nations this year, World Harmony Run reinforces the goals and objectives of 2010: International Year, and provides a chance for all participants to expand their awareness and living experiences of other cultures. It is indeed an excellent opportunity to develop an appreciation of diversity through art, culture and sports. This communal sharing of our hopes and dreams is fundamental for building the foundations of peace and harmony.

I knew my friend Sri Chinmoy, the founder of the World Harmony Run, for over three decades, and I participated in many of the world-uniting events that he encouraged. I feel his spirit preserved and perpetuated in this remarkable event. The multi-cultural, international, and local participation of the World Harmony Run demonstrates the concept of peace and harmony in a unique and practical way and reinforces the goals and objectives of UNESCO's mandate and the International Year.

A guiding principle of UNESCO's mandate, and all its work, is the notion that "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." Therefore, it is with great pleasure that I support and encourage initiatives like the World Harmony Run that touch and inspire people's hearts and put values of diversity, dialogue, and understanding so central to UNESCO's work into action.

Throughout 2010: International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, I wish all the organizers and participants in the World Harmony Run many successful events and joyful shared experiences. May your activity contribute to the global recognition of the intrinsic relationship between sustainable development and the promotion of cultural diversity, mutual understanding, and a culture of peace.


Davidson L. Hepburn