

UNESCO's constitution defines one of the Organisation's principal tasks as being to 'maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge by assuring the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science.

The disparity that exists between the scope of objectives and the limited means of conservation of the heritage throughout the world points to the need for international efforts to be made to secure the willingness of young people in the universities to perform voluntary work for the benefit of the cultural heritage, under the guidance and supervision of professionals.

The participant universities in *the International Forum UNESCO: University and Heritage* in Valencia 1996 and Quebec 1997 confirmed their determination to reinforce the Forum UNESCO network's leading principles by an ethical and benevolent engagement in favour of the cultural heritage, on the national and international level, and a solidarity based on the sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources in a spirit of mutual understanding. This third *Forum UNESCO - University and Heritage* in Deakin University in Melbourne 1 998 will certainly develop, after the above greatly successful seminars, this Forum UNESCO network on the planetary level.

By joining forces in a desire to co-operate on joint projects for the protection of the heritage and environment, universities can play their legitimate role in giving impetus to the forces of network and conservation program development. Furthermore, action in favour of the cultural heritage helps young people to build a new code of ethics as regards management of the environment. The contact they have with specialists and practitioners of the relevant disciplines cannot fail to be beneficial. As for the heritage itself, it too will benefit as the inter-university network will nurture in the young a stronger feeling of unity and unicity-one Earth, a single heritage, to be preserved and passed on, together.

Let us never forget that safeguarding the past is important insofar as it contributes to a new design for the future.

Federico Mayor
Director General
UNESCO