

One of UNESCO's principal tasks is defined in its Constitution 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 gap between the scope of that objective and the limited means available for conservation of world heritage is huge. International efforts to involve the universities in voluntary work for the benefit of the cultural heritage, under the guidance and supervision of professionals, play an important part in bridging that gap.

The participating universities in the international *Forum UNESCO - University and Heritage* in Valencia in 1996, Quebec in 1997, Melbourne in 1998 and Fez in 1999 illustrated through concrete actions their commitment towards Cultural Heritage, both tangible and intangible, at the national and international levels. The universities confirmed their solidarity based upon the sharing of knowledge and know-how.

By joining forces to co-operate on joint projects for the protection of heritage, both tangible and intangible, universities, professors and students, can play a central role, giving impetus to sustainable development which is one of the major objectives of the network. Action by young people in favour of their cultural heritage helps them to build a new code of ethics as regards management of the environment. The contact they have with specialists and practitioners in the relevant disciplines is also highly beneficial. Their involvement in heritage projects nurtures a stronger feeling of unity: they can see the Earth in its cultural diversity, as a single heritage, to preserve and pass on together.

This fifth international seminar of *Forum UNESCO - University and Heritage* in Byblos, city of the World Heritage, will certainly confirm and reinforce the ethics, the commitment and the dynamism of this network.

**Mounir Bouchenaki**  
**Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for Culture**