

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
Mr Walter Erdelen

Assistant Director-General
for Natural Sciences

at the opening session of the International Round Table on
“Science as an instrument of peace: from talk to action”

on the occasion of the celebration of the World Science Day for Peace and Development

Budapest, 9 November 2003

Mr President of the Hungarian Academy of Science,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today for the opening of this International Round Table on “Science as an instrument of Peace: from talk to action”. What better way to celebrate the World Science Day for Peace and Development than to honour science and scientists involved in scientific co-operation for peace? The crucial role of scientists as promoters of peace is known and documented. Scientists have also been important in aiding peace efforts between states. Science is by nature transboundary in scope and activity, and scientists maintain a transnational dialogue among themselves. The permanent intellectual communication framework used by scientists for mutual co-operation within science can also be useful for contact and co-operation among scientists in regions in conflict.

I wish here to commend those scientists from Israel, Palestine and the United States who are with us here today and have been pursuing scientific collaboration in extremely difficult conditions. By presenting the results of your joint work today, you remind us that peace and development have a positive content and that science can indeed contribute to peace, a precondition for attaining sustainable development and social justice.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our common responsibility to strengthen the scientific enterprise for the benefit of world societies. Through your scientific co-operation you build peaceful bridges among people in conflict. This is in line with UNESCO’s mission to contribute to peace through education, science and culture. UNESCO believes that science must be a global undertaking, and that international co-operation helps us reach key scientific, political, and peaceful objectives. Let me recall that, in keeping with its mandate, an essential aspect of UNESCO's action in general and particularly in the Middle East has been, and continues to be, the promotion of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians by re-establishing and strengthening links among intellectuals, representatives of civil society, and youth from both sides. In so doing, we hope to break the cycle of violence, and support confidence-building actions and measures, thus contributing to a lasting peace in this and other regions of the world.

Let me conclude by expressing on behalf of UNESCO our solid commitment to working with you to bring these efforts to a successful conclusion. I wish also to express my deep appreciation to the Government of Hungary for hosting this important encounter.