



Message From The Director-General Of UNESCO
Koichiro Matsuura
To The World Congress On Language Policies
(Barcelona, Spain, 16-20 April 2002)

It is the diversity of cultures and languages in our modern world that makes it such a rich mosaic of experiences and which offers such potential for future generations. We have the capacity to build dialogue and understanding between peoples, cultures and nations through language. It is one of humanity's defining features and perhaps our greatest gift to one another. Communication, conversation, and the free flow of ideas and thoughts that contribute to the development of intellect would be impossible without language, as would our creative diversity expressed through song, ritual and poetry. Wherever we turn, language is at the centre of our creative processes. At the same time, language is at the core of the political stability of our societies. The democratic process itself is built upon freedom of expression and respect for all members of society regardless of their ethnic or linguistic origins.

Today more than ever, we need to recognize the importance that language plays in defining our identities and we must develop policies that reflect this importance. Herein lies the significance of this World Congress on Language Policies. UNESCO is actively engaged with language issues in three of its main areas of activity: in Education, in Culture, and in Communication and Information. UNESCO's aim is to develop appropriate strategies, policies and recommendations for the international community. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity approved by the General Conference last year further underscores the importance which our Member States give to these concerns. We therefore look forward with great interest and anticipation to the outcomes of this Conference.

May I congratulate the region of Catalunya and the Government of Spain for this important initiative. I wish you every success in the work of the coming days.

(Presented by **Linda King**, Senior Programme Specialist. Section for Education for Universal Values)