

## *Greetings*

While culture is constantly evolving and its content changes as human beings and societies change, it always feeds on the past, without which we would have no roots. Therefore, one of UNESCO's major tasks - as an institution with an intellectual and ethical vocation - is to ensure the conservation and protection of works which each people have bequeathed to history. The origin of this overriding concern is one of the most novel ideas of our times, that of the cultural heritage of humanity.

Through awareness of a common destiny, humanity has discovered a common history and the memory of each people has become that of all peoples.

As a source of landmarks in time and space, the heritage enables young people in particular to acquire a feeling of belonging and a sense of responsibility. Nevertheless, the past must be presented to them in such a way as to be relevant, worthy of interest and even as a bearer of the present and the future. The first "Forum UNESCO - University and Heritage" constitutes an important step in the series of initiatives and achievements which take account of these imperatives.

By joining forces in a desire to co-operate on joint projects for the protection of the heritage and the environment, the universities can play their legitimate role in giving new impetus to the forces of development. Furthermore, action on behalf of the architectural heritage helps young people to build a new ethic in regard to managing the environment. The contact they have with specialists and practitioners in the relevant disciplines cannot fail to be beneficial. As for the heritage itself, it too will benefit as the interuniversity network will strengthen in the young the feeling of unity and unicity - a single heritage, to be preserved and passed on, together.

**Federico MAYOR**

*Director-General of UNESCO*