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Message of

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**UNESCO**

Degree awarding ceremony  
of the  
**Programme of University Cooperation**  
**“Masters Programme on Social and Humanitarian  
Affairs” (second edition)**  
**2008/2009**  
coordinated by the University of Rome “La Sapienza”

Jerusalem, 19 July 2009

Dear Rectors,  
Distinguished Representatives of Universities and Institutes,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to send you this message today, on the occasion of the degree awarding ceremony of the Masters Programme on Social and Humanitarian Affairs 2008/2009.

The challenges in the region are numerous, and the sphere of education is the one in which efforts to construct and reinforce a culture of peace and mutual understanding for the citizens of tomorrow are, in this context, most worthwhile.

Since its inception, UNESCO has steadfastly given its support to all the initiatives which aim at enhancing mutual understanding on the basis of dialogue and exchange. Activities in the Middle East have been no exception. For instance, since 2002, UNESCO has coordinated a 'Civil Societies in Dialogue' programme. In this context, joint Israeli and Palestinian teams have prepared methodological tools with a view to building consensus among stakeholders around a proposed set of principles for academic cooperation in the context of the Palestinian/Israeli current realities, and thus guiding and nurturing the enhancement and exercise of dialogue and cooperation.

The objective of the Masters Programme on Social and Humanitarian Affairs has been precisely to create an atmosphere of exchange and dialogue and, as a result, to lead to mutual understanding, by gathering students and academics from Israeli and Palestinian universities and institutes in a programme designed to provide, through a multidisciplinary and interactive approach, a good understanding of the main issues related to social sciences and humanitarian affairs. This implied studying issues related to ethics and human rights, human security, crisis management and resolution, peace-building, intercultural understanding, the fight against poverty,

food and environment, etc. Needless to say that all these topics lie at the core of UNESCO's preoccupations.

In this context, we have been pleased to support and associate UNESCO's name to this second edition of the Programme of University Cooperation "Masters Programme on Social and Humanitarian Affairs" (2008/2009).

By receiving your degrees today, we expect that you, as students, have taken a step further in developing worldviews and competencies that will allow you to be tomorrow's ambassadors of peace in the region. We hope that the knowledge and skills acquired will help you, and even push you, to participate, both actively and in any other manner, in the processes of peace-building and deepening mutual understanding in the Middle East. For no action in favour of peace will yield results if it is not in itself the fruit of direct interchange between all parties which have to build together a common future. We hope that the Programme has also created the basis for the establishment of networks and communities of practice, thus contributing to the building of a culture of regular academic exchange and cooperation.

Before concluding, please allow me to thank the Italian Government that has made this Programme possible, as well as Professors Manuel Castello and Massimo Caneva from "La Sapienza" University in Rome for all their personal efforts for the successful conclusion of the Programme. Last but not least, I should also like to thank the rectors of the universities involved in this Programme, and the professors and students who have taken part in it, for their work, commitment, efforts and perseverance.

I thank you for your attention.

Pierre Sané