



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

**MASTER ON SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
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**MESSAGE BY MS PILAR ALVAREZ-LASO,
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**on the occasion of the
closing of the specialization courses (Rome session) of the Master**

13 April 2011
Diplomatic Institute of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, Italy

Distinguished Representatives of Universities,
Dear Professors,
Dear Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to send you this message today, at the conclusion of the Rome specialization session of the third edition of the Master Programme on Social Sciences and Humanitarian Affairs.

This Programme is a major and ambitious initiative to stimulate and promote a culture of peace and dialogue, through cooperation and exchange between students and academics from Israel and the Palestinian Territories. By bringing together young Palestinians and Israelis, as it has brought you all in the past weeks in the university classrooms in Rome in a common effort of communication and mutual understanding, it is a vibrant tribute to the construction of peace.

As such, this Programme is particularly close to UNESCO's mission of 'building the defences of peace in the minds of men'. First of all, by involving foremost young students, it places an accent on youth as principal vectors for the building of a better future. By focusing on education, it helps lay the foundations in the shaping of knowledgeable, responsible and open-minded citizens as valuable pillars of their societies. And by directly involving universities, which are the centres *par excellence* of the scientific quest for objective knowledge, openness and the rejection of all forms of ignorance, it places rightly the stakes on these civil society actors and on scholars who should be key in all efforts of cooperation and exchange.

Indeed, the same noble commitment to construct peace on the basis of dialogue, mutual understanding, free exchange of ideas and knowledge, education, culture and common values, is the very essence of our Organization.

I am therefore certain that the dialogue which has been initiated several years ago with this Italian-supported Programme and which still continues today despite difficulties related to current realities in the region, will contribute to enhance a shared understanding of the challenges ahead and to build a common vision of the ways and means towards durable peace and concord. UNESCO is thus honored to be taking part in this ambitious project.

We hope that this joint part of the Programme is also helping create the basis for the establishment of networks and communities of practice, thus contributing to building a culture of regular academic exchange and cooperation.

By ending your joint specialization courses today, we hope that you, as students, have taken a step further in developing knowledge, worldviews, competencies and values that will allow you to be tomorrow's messengers of peace in your region and in your respective societies.

I wish you all success with the continuation of the Programme and with your future work.


Pilar Alvarez-Laso