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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
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of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

on the occasion of the High Level Roundtable:
“Learning to Live with Risk”
at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction

Kobe, Japan, Tuesday, 18 January 2005

Mrs Alma de Leon,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to join you here for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. I would especially like to thank the Government of Japan and the people of Kobe, Hyogo, for hosting this important event. As we all know, yesterday marked the tenth anniversary of the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake which devastated Kobe. I would like to commend the people of this city, who showed outstanding courage in the face of large-scale destruction and who have displayed remarkable resilience by rebuilding their community. I also greet my colleagues in other bodies within the United Nations system, in particular the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction for servicing the Conference.

I am especially happy to be taking part in this particular Round Table, entitled "Learning to Live with Risk". Learning is the keystone to human development. While we tend to associate the word "learning" with youth and formal education, I firmly believe that learning should be a never-ending process and can be enriched by all forms of experience. Learning throughout life is essential if people are to retain mastery of their own destinies.

