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Extracts Address by
Mr Koïchiro Matsuura

Director-General
United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

on the occasion of the ground-breaking ceremony
for the SESAME Centre
Allan, Jordan, 6 January 2003

It is a great honour for me to be present, Majesty, with you for this historic event. I was honoured, in June 2000, to be with Your Majesty in Amman for a meeting of the SESAME Interim Council when the generous offer of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to host the Centre was accepted. I said then, and I repeat now, how much this project owes to your personal commitment and enthusiasm, as well as to the unfailing support shown by the Jordanian Authorities as a whole and by the scientific community of your country. I thank you and your Government for all that Jordan has done for the project, and in particular, for its having offered to host the Centre, for generously providing the land on which the Centre is to stand and for financing the construction of the building.

His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad has also been a firm supporter of the project from the very moment that it was brought to his attention.

I also wish to express special appreciation and gratitude to the Minister of Education, H.E. Khaled Toukan, for his sterling role in taking this initiative forward.

My thanks also go to the German Authorities that so kindly donated the 0.8 GeV BESSY I storage ring and injector system that is to be at the heart of SESAME. I must also salute the work of a distinguished citizen of that country, Professor Herwig Schopper, a renowned scientist and administrator, and President of the Interim Council, whose tenacity and visionary drive have been crucial for the project to have reached this great stage.

I thank the delegates on the International Interim Council of SESAME, whose spirit of solidarity and high scientific competence have made it possible to develop the concept of the Centre and have led to the approval of both an optimum technical plan of the accelerator building and a design for up-grading the energy of the SESAME machine. Thanks to the delegates' work, the region is to have a Centre that can carry out experiments at the forefront of science. Their Governments deserve recognition and commendation for having nominated them to the Interim Council.

In December 1999, very soon after I took over UNESCO's helm as Director-General, I have been making it a matter of policy to ensure that the goals and objectives of the

culture of peace be implemented *inter alia* through active support for regional and sub-regional initiatives and projects that, beyond the more confined spheres of pure politics, enable peoples to come together in concrete activities in which they have common interests in education, the sciences and culture, in order to gain a better understanding of each other and therefore enhance tolerance, and ultimately, the chances of peace.

In SESAME, I saw all of that. A project born out of exchange and contacts among scientists of all parts of this troubled region, helped on and encouraged by the scientists of other regions, and notably Europe. A project designed to promote economic development from within. A project seeking to move across frontiers for the common good.

I therefore promised that UNESCO would do all it could to ensure that this innovative and exciting project would come to fruition. Since then, I have kept my word and, thanks to the efforts of many partners, the project has gone from strength to strength. With the endorsement and firm support given by all Member States at our General Conference in autumn 2001, UNESCO's Executive Board was able, in May 2002, to place SESAME under the auspices of UNESCO.

The establishment of SESAME is part of the follow-up to the World Conference on Science that UNESCO convened in Budapest in 1999, in conjunction with ICSU (International Council for Science). Many of you will remember that delegates at the Conference welcomed the establishment of SESAME and it is easy to understand why.

There are many benefits arising from a Centre such as this. It will help to improve basic research in the region as well as applied research in such fields as medicine, the environment and technology that have an impact on every-day life. It will facilitate the creation of an infrastructure for regional scientific cooperation. Science institutions from different countries will be involved in its work, and this may well give rise to a regional network. The SESAME Centre will be a bridge in the region between the South and the North and it will open new vistas for North-South and South-South cooperation.

The Centre will offer training for scientists and engineers from the Middle East and elsewhere. It is to be hoped that its very existence will inspire and attract more young people from the region to specialize in science. Its existence will also help to reduce the feeling of isolation so often felt by scientists in scientifically less-advanced countries. It may also result in a decrease in brain drain. For a change, science in countries of the region will be on a par with Western science, enabling their scientists to become partners and not merely customers of science institutions in the industrialized world. The diverse cultures of people working at the Centre will create an enriching environment conducive to open discussion, fresh ideas and inventiveness. Joint work at the Centre will pave the way to solidarity and mutual understanding. These features, along with research at the Centre that addresses common basic needs, are unifying factors and a means of building up a culture of peace through science.

UNESCO is a firm believer in the benefits to be derived from centres of excellence and, during its history, it has established a number of them that have contributed significantly to progress in science. In the first instance, I think of CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research), which was set up as early as the mid-nineteen fifties under UNESCO's auspices in the aftermath of the terrible war that had torn Europe apart.

UNESCO hopes that the SESAME Centre will be as successful as CERN. Indeed, there is no reason why this should not be so. Jordan is a country that is very open to science; it has good universities and an established scientific community. The work to be carried out at the Centre is at the cutting edge of science and this will make it a stimulating and exciting environment in which to work. Moreover, there is goodwill on the part of its Members.

UNESCO has been very active in the preparations to establish SESAME. I would like to assure you that you may always count on UNESCO's intellectual help and partnership, and one of the highlights of our action in the basic sciences will be the promotion of international cooperation by the Centre with countries from the North and the integration of SESAME in a world-wide network of centres of excellence.

The Centre's activities are very much in line with one of the three main strategic thrusts of the Organization's mission for the years 2002-2007, which is to promote empowerment and participation in the emerging knowledge society through equitable access, capacity building and sharing of knowledge. What SESAME will be doing fits exactly into this frame of reference.

On behalf of myself and the Organization I represent, I wish the Centre and all those involved in its operation many years of efficient and fruitful work, to the benefit of science in the region and the cause of peace.