

Greetings from UNESCO

The formal program of the Conference was opened by Mr. René Maheu, Acting Director-General of UNESCO:

MR. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am very happy to receive you at UNESCO, where I hope you will feel quite at home. UNESCO is the only international organization that in a general way deals with science. Other organizations have the power to deal with science in a particular way, but UNESCO is the only one that has the word science in the title itself. I do not need to tell you, who know so much more than I do, that in the world of science physics is considered as a basic science. For UNESCO, therefore, concern for the teaching of physics is a fundamental duty. On this teaching depends the progress of science in general and to a great extent also depends the whole driving force of our civilization. It is for this reason that my colleagues and I are so very pleased that you have all been able to hold this meeting here to which we attach great importance.

I would like to thank all those who have helped you in the preparation of this Conference, including the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, under whose auspices, as well as those of UNESCO and the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics, you are gathered here. I would also like to thank those private organizations who have given you financial help to make this Conference possible.

We at UNESCO hope that as a result of these various meetings definite recommendations will be born which UNESCO's Secretariat will be able to place at the disposal of its 82 members. Throughout the world, and in many different situations, there is a great need for modern standards for the teaching of physics. From the less-developed countries we continually receive demands for help to enable them to modernize their methods of teaching.

It is obviously an impossibility to draw up a universal textbook for the teaching of physics, because even though physics is universal, the conditions of teaching of physics most certainly are not, and the degree of progress in the various countries varies considerably. It is,

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therefore, I repeat, not possible to produce a textbook that could be used in every country in the world, but we *can*, and I think that we *must*, give to those countries who are members of UNESCO, and who ask us for help, suggestions and examples and offer advice, and so forth, which will allow them to adapt suggestions to their own particular needs.

Education touches so closely the lives of nations that it is essential to the sovereignty of the various nations to leave to national authorities the freedom to adapt our ideas to their own customs. But we must, I repeat, give them concrete suggestions to work on. I hope, therefore, that from this Conference will emerge the possibility of giving to the various countries a service of the kind I have suggested. I thank you, and I hope that this Conference, to which UNESCO attaches so much importance, will be a great success.