



Opening comments of Dr. Eduardo Missoni Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement

24th Arab Scout Conference - Cairo, Egypt November 28th - December 3rd 2004

OPENING CEREMONY

His Excellency Anas Al Feky, Egyptian Minister of Youth,
and Chairman of the Executive Bureau of Arab Ministers
of Youth,

Ambassador Nancy Bakeer, Assistant Secretary General
for Social Affairs, Arab League,

Dr. Marie Louise Correa, Chairman of the World Scout
Committee,

Mr. Mohamed Al Triki, Chairman of the Conference and
member of the World Scout Committee,

Dr. Mustafa Juma Salem, Chairman of the Arab Scout
Committee,

Mr. Fawzi Farghali, Director of the Arab Scout Regional
Office,

Leaders of Arab Scout associations,

Scout Sisters and Brothers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference takes place at an historical turning
point for the Arab Region: 50 years since the
foundation of the Arab Scout Organization. But
celebrating anniversaries should not be a time for us to
look to the past. On the contrary, looking at what we
have achieved should give us the energy to look
forwards, to prepare ourselves to face new challenges.
As we approach 2007 and the first hundred years of the
Scout Movement, we are not concentrating on reaching
the date of our centenary, but to a new start.

With the tremendous acceleration of globalization, the
world has changed considerably in the last ten to fifteen
years. Communication and transport technologies have
dramatically reduced both physical and mental
distances offering unprecedented opportunities for
many young people to share ideas, knowledge and
experience. At the same time, too often, distances
between rich and poor, between advantaged and
disadvantaged people, have grown.

Most young people live in poor countries, cut off from
human progress and opportunities. They may drink
Coke, but often lack clean water. On TV they see the
glamorous prosperity of richer societies, but must
resign themselves to living without any chance of
having such prosperity themselves.

More than half of those who are of working age are
jobless, and too many children are prematurely
involved in hard labour. Too many children find the
street to be their only home, a home which exposes
them to risky behaviour, crime and violence.

Tension and conflicts are constantly increasing. Youth
are becoming involved in conflict around the world with
alarming frequency, either as victims or, just as
tragically, as soldiers.

Almost a hundred years ago, on the small British island
of Brownsea, our Founder, Robert Baden Powell – B-P
as we all call him, unknowingly started the Scout
Movement when he brought together 20 boys of
different social classes. For ten days they lived, played,
sang and camped together. Could they have imagined
what Scouting would become?

In 1920, Scouts from all over the world gathered for
the first World Jamboree. Scouting was breaking
cultural barriers, bringing together Scouts from
countries that had been fighting each other until just a
few years before. The same thing happened after World
War II, and more recently in other areas of conflict.
There are many more examples of Scouts actively
working for peace.

Scouts promise to be friends to everybody and brothers
and sisters to every other Scout, no matter what their
religion, language, ethnic background, skin colour,
social or economic conditions. In Scouting, differences
do not represent distance, but an opportunity to learn
from others, and experience solidarity.

More people need to know that investing in Scouting is
the best investment society can make for peace.

We don't need to re-invent Scouting, nor give up its
values, but to be effective Scouting has to open more
to others; understanding their aspirations and
interpreting their dreams, we must give more young
people the opportunity to join. More than ever there is
a strong need for renewed commitment by every Scout
to overcome differences, to break barriers, to work for
social justice.

Day by day, let's transform our Scout Promise into a
gift to humanity...into a "Gift for Peace".

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