



## **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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