



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

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Dear sister and brother Scouts,

I have already attended five regional Scout conferences and visited all regional offices of the World Scout Bureau as well as a number of countries on the occasion of various international events. I have had several opportunities to meet some of you, so by now I should no longer need to introduce myself as the "new" Secretary General. After a quite intensive eight-month initiation period, I would prefer to focus now on the new directions taken and the challenges that lie ahead.

The world has changed

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, distances between rich and poor, between advantaged and disadvantaged people, have too often 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.

A hundred years of Scouting

Almost a hundred years ago, on the small British island of Brownsea, our Founder, Robert Baden-Powell – B-P as we all know him – unwittingly 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 have to coordinate worldwide to convey this message.

The challenge for the future

The ultimate goal of a Scout is "to leave this world a little better than you found it". This means working for an inclusive society, characterized by social justice and full respect of human rights:

- a world where human progress is respectful of God's creation, promotes the environment and cares for sustainable development and the life of future generations;
- a world of dialogue and cooperation, openness and tolerance;
- a world where the primary interest is in the common good and solidarity;
- a world of peace.

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 on a new start.

B-P thought of Scouts as "citizens of the world". More than ever, in today's world, there is a strong need for a renewed commitment by every Scout to overcome differences, to break barriers, to work for social justice. It is a way of "bridging the world".

Day by day, let's translate our Scout Promise into concrete actions, gifts to humanity, "Gifts for Peace".

Don't wait until 2007. Take action now!

One Organization serving One Movement

The main task of WOSM is to serve the Scout Movement and achieve its mission by listening, understanding and interpreting the needs, aspirations and dreams of young people and giving a growing number of them, girls and boys, the opportunity to live the unique experience of excellent Scouting.

To that end, we the leaders of WOSM, who share the same Promise and Law, need to work towards "one" solid, efficient, effective, dynamic, modern organization supporting one Scout Movement where young people, women and men, enjoy increasing participation in decision-making, a Scout Movement capable of reacting to the rapidly and ever-changing scenario of a globalizing world, but deeply rooted in the tradition and values that make Scouting unique.

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"One World One Promise" is the theme that will lead us to the centenary celebrations.

"One Organization serving One Movement" will help us to face the challenges of the XXI century.

At the World Scout Bureau we have already taken the first steps in that direction.

Three departmental Executive Directors in Geneva and the six Regional Executive Directors now form, with me, a single board of directors which manages one highly-integrated World Scout Bureau with clear decentralized responsibilities.

Together we have already laid the basis for the progressive integration of our work and for ensuring maximum synergy among the central and regional offices.

We have identified inter-regional teams and are considering extending them to include volunteers in national Scout organisations and collaboration with various Scout centres.

We have committed ourselves to sharing knowledge, experience and resources through an integrated planning process that will lead, for the first time in the history of our Organization, to a Triennial Plan, to be presented at the forthcoming World Scout Conference.

At the same time, we will work together to build a new, worldwide "corporate identity" for WOSM and promote it through a joint communication strategy.

Analysing and sharing our present work and defining the challenging emerging issues, we have also identified three areas of common concern in which to develop joint inter-regional projects:

- a review of the Scout programme for adolescents and young adults, with a new focus on the "Rover Section";
- the urgent recruitment and training of adult volunteers;
- supporting the development of institutional and managerial capacities of national Scout organisations.

Rover section

How do we measure the quality of our work at local, national or global level?

Not by an increase in membership. What if we enrol millions of new Cub Scouts every year but they drop out within one year?

If we want to make a difference, we need to develop "autonomous, supportive and responsible individuals who are capable of contributing effectively to the development of society". This is our Mission.

We can only expect this to be accomplished at the end of the complete personal progression envisaged by the Scout method, possibly from the age when children are able to cooperate within a group (6-7 years) to the age when young people enter adulthood (20-22). But the most critical period remains from adolescence to early adulthood.

The number of young people who graduate from the Rover section and remain a "Scout forever" in their human, professional, social and political commitment is the number that will measure our success and be a possible indicator of our impact on society.

Recruitment of adult volunteers

To be effective in applying the Scout method, at all ages, we need trained and motivated adults.

Besides Rovers who may be later retained as leaders, it is also vital to attract and recruit other young adult volunteers intensely committed to the values and method of the Movement.

This will also require the development and adoption of appropriate, high standards of Scout training to be applied worldwide.

National Scout organizations for the XXI century

"We are a movement, not an organization," B-P declared when he was concerned about the bureaucratic, institutionalized evolution of Scouting.

Scout units or groups and their individual members are the Movement. To thrive, the Scout Movement needs to be supported. This is the task of the national organizations, which in turn need to be supported by the World Organization of the Scout Movement, and by the World Scout Bureau in particular.

Within the framework of the strategic priority "An Organization for the XXI Century", an important step is the creation of common criteria for the modernization of our associations.

For the Movement to grow globally, it is also necessary for its member organizations to make progress.

Many of the problems we face have their roots in a lack of organizational culture and good administration.

Let me say frankly that the excessively high average age of our leaders and the totally imbalanced gender representation in decision-making positions are an additional obstacle.

To be a Movement of young people, and not only for young people, and to be credible and effective, it is of paramount importance to increase the number of young adults, women and men, in world and regional governing bodies. In view of the forthcoming World Scout Conference, it is up to you to propose and support the right candidates.

Governance of World Scouting

As a result of the globalization process, the weight of national-state relations has been reduced enormously.

As Scouts, we have promised to do our duty towards our homeland. We are all proud of our cultural identity but are aware that our homeland today is the world and that our commitment must be global.

In this sense, I believe that a Movement that tries to look towards and even anticipate the future must redefine its representative and participative mechanisms.

I am thinking about the cultural richness and special situations of many Scout associations that are politically dependent "territories" of far-away geographical, social and cultural national states. As such, they cannot be adequately represented at the level of the World Organization. Some of those associations are participating in this conference without enjoying the benefits and rights of full membership.

This is just one of the issues that we will have to consider as part of a wider medium- to long-term review of the governance system of our World Organization. The World Scout Committee will prepare a proposal to submit to the World Conference.

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A "glo-cal" Movement

Whilst recognizing the "global" characteristics of our Movement, we cannot forget that we are mainly "local". Our primary commitment is to girls and boys in their communities. More and more today, education in "global citizenship" starts with the promotion of full social, economic and political participation at local community level. This begins with involving Scouts in community development initiatives as an integral part of our programme.

With the same purpose, Scouting must, wherever possible, include children and young people in difficult circumstances that society has excluded, leaving them in the street, pushing them into violence and crime. I know there are Scout projects working on this problem in this Region.

International recognition

Much more can be achieved by working in collaboration with other institutions and organizations, at local and global levels.

The alliance with some international and global partners, especially programmes and agencies of the United Nations which share our interests, has proven to be of great value; and we must also increase our links with other civil society movements and organizations that share our vision, one example being The Alliance of Youth CEOs of the so-called "Big 7" youth organizations.

We are already credible partners of many organizations of the United Nations system. But a lot more still has to be done for the Scout Movement to acquire the international positioning it needs and deserves.

While preserving the autonomy of the Movement, we should aim for the widest possible international recognition of the social value of Scouting and consequent public support.

One possible development would be the creation of a specific international agreement related to Scouting. This idea has already awoken significant interest among parliamentarians who were Scouts and continue to support the Movement. To achieve such an agreement, the alliance with the World Scout Parliamentary Union (WSPU) and supportive governments would be fundamental.

New frontiers also have to be opened up in this region. Mainland China is one of the biggest challenges, and we will have to work together at regional and world level with all the interested parties to achieve the appropriate breakthrough. As in any other similar situation, however, this process must start from inside, through open dialogue with the national authorities.

The foundations of this process have already been laid. It is now a challenge of the nature of "bridging the world".

Dear sister and brother Scouts, as you can see, there are many challenges to be faced. Let's redouble our efforts to show that social, cultural, political and economic barriers can be overcome, that differences can enrich our lives, that another world is possible: a world of peace.

Let's show that Scouting has made, is making and will make a difference.

"Change the world for the better: be a Scout!"

8/12/04