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Speech by the Honourable
Monique Vézina, Minister for
External Relations, at the
28th Annual Meeting of the
Canadian Commission for UNESCO
Ottawa, April 17

OTTAWA

April 18, 1986.

Mr Chairman:

I am very pleased to be with you for this 28th annual meeting of the Canadian Commission for Unesco. Personal obligations prevented me from attending last year, but I was determined to meet with you this evening to take stock of the situation after the crisis period we have just gone through and to report on the Sofia General Conference.

Without being patronizing - or perhaps I should say matronizing - I would sincerely like to thank all of you for your interest in Unesco. This afternoon I had an opportunity to look at the general report of your Secretary-General, Mrs Thomson. You are doing a remarkable job, and you are doing it in a remarkable way. In its founding statutes, Unesco was endowed with an incomparable work instrument in the form of national commissions. Many international organizations would do well to take inspiration from this model.

In my address this evening I should like to move from the general to the particular. First I shall consider the underlying reasons for a meeting like this. Secondly, I shall of course discuss the conference in Sofia, the objectives that we set and the results. Finally, being a practical woman, I shall detail the enhanced relationship between the Canadian International Development Agency, the Canadian Commission for Unesco and Unesco itself.

I THE UNESCO IDEAL

My attention was caught by a section on the Unesco Ideal in one of the documents distributed to you. It says that war is born in the minds of men, so in the minds of men the bulwarks of peace must be erected. I am firmly convinced of this. By definition, violence and war are always a rejection of dialogue. We are here tonight precisely because we believe in an organization whose main purpose is to bring men together to exchange their ideas,

to explain their values and their ideals, and to advance the cause of learning.

I might be an idealist, but personally I believe in the philosophy that the world operates on ideas. The ideas circulating in our universities, schools and scientific research institutions are what shape society and give it direction. To neglect the intellectual and spiritual development of man would in my mind be a very serious mistake.

As you know, the government of which I am a member places great emphasis on economic viability. Having said this, I can also confidently affirm that this same government will not regard culture, education and science from a facts-and-figures viewpoint. You cannot place a numerical value on a book, a painting or a philosophical discussion.

I feel that the development of economics and contemporary management principles in public administration is a step forward. At the same time, I wish to point out that these disciplines are there to serve us, not for us to serve them.

This is a point that I emphasize, since I feel that principles of management are there to help us give concrete form to our values, not to eradicate from our lives everything that is spiritual and cannot be quantified. Our companies and our public administrations always have a few of those woeful types who are always attacking the cultural institutions in the name of what they feel is sound economics. These people do not have the ear of the government. I really hope they got the message of the last budget, which increased the amounts available for culture by \$75 million, even though the emphasis was on budgetary restraint.

II - THE SOFIA CONFERENCE

Tonight I also wish to report to you on the latest General Conference, in Sofia. Your Commission contributed in an exemplary way towards preparing and achieving the objectives that we set at the conference. At this point I would like to pay special tribute to Ambassador Clark, Mrs Thomson and Mrs Rabinovitch for the remarkable job they did.

We went to Sofia with two main concerns. First, we knew that to weaken the international multilateral system would be detrimental to Canada's interests. Second, the problems of Unesco were such that we and others had to seriously question whether we should remain in it. Unesco absolutely had to adopt some reforms and learn to remain within its terms of reference in implementing its programs.

The Sofia Conference met with our approval on all these

points. The program and budget that it adopted were rigorous enough to satisfy us. Some said that we might have done better, but I say that to have a large number of productive compromises reached by 160 Member States was a remarkable success. Some said that we did not push our advantage far enough, but I say that Canada has too much respect for the mechanisms of multilateral negotiation to try to force all its views on its partners.

Although there are still problems, Unesco proved in Sofia that it is capable of reform and that the best approach is to work from within to restore the organization. That was our decision, and I was pleased to be the bearer of it.

I also wish to tell you that Canada has done very well in Unesco recently. We were elected to the intergovernmental councils of the International Bureau of Education, the World Heritage Committee and the International Hydrological Program. We were selected to represent the Western group on the Unesco Executive Board. We played a key part in settling problems related to the American departure. Finally, we have had Quebec City included on the official World Heritage List. These accomplishments are a credit to us.

III - ENHANCED COOPERATION BETWEEN CIDA AND UNESCO

Let me raise on final point. When I returned from Sofia, I informed the House of Commons of my intention to enhance cooperation between CIDA and Unesco in small cooperative projects in education, science and culture. My thanks to Mrs. Thomson for drawing my attention to the fact that this would give CIDA an avenue of intervention where we could obtain impressive results with relatively few resources.

This evening I am pleased to announce that CIDA will provide the Canadian Commission for Unesco with \$500,000 over the next two years to enable it to meet requests for assistance from non-governmental organizations, institutions and private individuals for small development projects.

I am also pleased to inform you that last January I approved \$110,000 in extra-budgetary support for the International Program for the Development of Communication. Two other IPDC projects will receive \$120,000 in funding: the first is for training journalists and information officers in the health field, and the second for training women in developing countries in communications skills.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that in 1986-87 we will increase by 20% our regular support to the International Institute for Educational Planning, and CIDA has earmarked \$100,000 for an IIEP project to train instructors in educational administration and planning.

I would ask that you take these grants that I have announced as a source of encouragement to continue your defence of the goals and ideals of Unesco.

Thank you very much.