Excerpts from The New Page
by Federico Mayor with Tom Forstenzer

The "New Page" to which we are turning in this book is one of a culture of peace, based on a culture of democracy.

It would be foolish (and self-limiting) to try to predict precisely the outcome of such a process.

But it is clear that the beginning of this "New Page" can be written by all of us living right now.

A movement away from war to peace also means a transition from societies dominated by the State, sole organizer of security in a dangerous world, to the civil society of everyday life: where individuals work and create and invent the texture of their lives in their local communities freed from the fears of the "war culture".

The State, and the international system of interstate relations, will slowly give up the stage to the non-governmental, private and voluntary communities. Governments will assure the watchtower functions of ensuring that certain basic democratically agreed rules are respected, but more and more the individual and the local community will become more directly involved in decision-making. In Hegelian terms, we will move from being "subjects" to becoming "actors".

In a culture of war, all bodies, all mentalities, all souls, if you will, are permanently tensed for the worst. The "other" in another camp, another country, another continent, is a threat. Differences between individuals and communities become rallying points for mobilization and hatred, not simply the rich pluralism history has given us.

Science, technology, art and communication become weapons or buttresses to secure us from our enemies, and soothe us in the righteousness or superiority of our "cause" or identity.

The weapons become so secret that the civilian, non-scientific leadership of nations may not be trusted to understand their own arsenals. "Security" becomes an obsession - and it is defined as secrecy, unaccountability and dissembling.

Indeed, the culture of war is such that it has pervaded our ways of being in ways other than we might have expected. The culture of war may have taught us certain survival skills in an extremely hostile world, but it may have taught us skills which are inadapted to a world which offers new possibilities for our personal achievements, societal progress and world development.

We too are divided. We have created chasms between people of different skin colours, different ideological persuasions, different religious convictions and different languages.

We have adopted ways of producing things and doing business which glorify not the productive aspects of our work but the competitive ones. Competition is useful, competition

is even playful but competition when raised to the level of seeking the humiliation or the suffering of others is not a proper way in which to pursue the development of a humane world. Perhaps the worst aspect of the culture of war, which even exists in times of peace, is our constant definition of us against them, our constant notion that there is a barrier between who we think we are, the people with whom we interact normally and outsiders. Thus we divide the world between hostile groupings....

For, in the midst of this "culture of war" were visionaries and rebels who could not or would not conform. they were individuals, men and women, who could understand that war was not necessarily a solution to the problems that confronted their society and their nations.

Indeed, every culture, every great world religion has a strand in it which emphasizes that which is common between us, that which is peaceful between us, that which is a dialogue between us and can be used in the place of hostility and aggression.

The culture of democracy, as an essential building block of a culture of peace must welcome and promote citizen participation in national and international affairs. It must construct "peace in the minds of men" and women by linking the individual to global networks of shared interests and specialties and local communities to the international.

Moving from culture to culture, region to region, political system to political system as my work has required me to do since 1987 has taught me one fundamental truth that lies at the heart of the United Nations Charter and UNESCO's Constitution: the human race is far more united than divided by its cultures --its systems of belief--than we have yet fully understood. Perhaps the culture of war and its histories have placed far too much emphasis on what divides us than on the underlying, shared values that can, and should , bring us together.