The Speech of the Minister of Education

President of the National Committee of Education,

Culture and Science

In the Syrian Arab Republic

Dr. Ali Saad

At the Opening of

UNESCO General Conference

at its 34th Session

Director-General of UNESCO
President of the Conference,
Heads and members of delegations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The accompanying delegation and I are pleased, while participating in UNESCO general conference representing our country Syria, to express Syria's appreciation to UNESCO and its activities and programs that fulfill its noble message which focuses on building peace, achieving sustainable development and enhancing dialogue between cultures through education, science, culture, communication and information.

I am pleased to congratulate on this occasion the president of the conference on being elected to run this conference and I wish him all the best in this job. I am also pleased to congratulate the general director of UNESCO and his assistants on their successful preparation and their exceptional efforts to hold this conference and organize its documents especially program and finance project and the medium term strategy for 2008-2013 that are characterized by inclusiveness, depth and specified needs of member states that enhance confidence in advanced technology and the quality of the presented initiatives and new approaches to UNESCO.

The level of cooperation between our country Syria and UNESCO in achieving development, communication and implementation for a number of programs and activities in education, science, technology and communication in the last course has pushed us to emphasize our will and desire to deepen this fruitful cooperation that embodies UNESCO's principles as a platform for confronting global challenges that faces humanity on grounds of equality, justice, and respect for human rights and democratic principles.

In this context, I would like to mention that education, learning, and culture sector in Syria is a top priority in comprehensive development plans for its basic role in human development. The strategic education development plan is heading to improve the quality of education so that it can fulfill the needs of economical and social development and thus provide the required professional and scientific qualifications.

For this reason the ministry of education has prepared national standards for education curricula in all education stages. It is a top priority at the ministry of education where the ministry has announced a national and international competition to compose text books and teacher's guide according to national standards. This emphasizes our concern in Syria to open up to international scientific and educational experiences in addition to national experiences to improve the quality of curricula and textbooks. In this context the education system has allocated great space to citizenship, environmental, health and population issues, children and human rights and being talented and distinguished in all textbooks and in all education stages. This is based on national principles of the education policy to enhance the sense of
belonging, cultural identity and the right to defend as a right to all nations once its land is violated and occupied.

In the same context, logical and timely accordance has been taken into account in developing all educational elements in both quality and quantity. At the same time, a wide range of programs have been applied to deepen educational rehabilitation. The number reached /30,000/ teachers in the last three years through open learning and net learning. In this way teachers will be able to teach new curricula in addition to other programs like integrating technology in education, the program of expanding kindergartens, developing early childhood education, developing evaluative systems, establishing a national centre for talented students within a framework of developing the abilities of talented and distinguished students and developing education program in rural and Bedouin areas for Bedouin families and issuing a decree that organizes special educational institutions in all levels of pre-university education.

These programs are implemented within a framework of providing free education in all stages and making it obligatory in basic education starting from the first grade till the ninth grade. This has helped in achieving high rates of the aims of the education plan which is to provide education for all, currently our schools absorb more than /5/ million students which is about 30% of the population; this is a developmental and educational indicator made clear in the report that as has been given to UNESCO about medium-term evaluation of learning for all.

While talking about the national program for education development plans, I would be happy to mention a number of exceptional experiences in this regard with Arab and international organizations like child friendly schools, teaching girls program, societal school with UNICEF, vocational training programs with the European training institution, the German cooperation institution, united nations development program and cooperation with the European Union and the World Bank and programs, activities and various experiences with Isesco and Alecso organizations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Caring for education in Syria arises from a firm belief in the right of each child to get education and to prepare children and enable them to play an active role in building their nation and take part in its development and protection through their intellectual, scientific, cultural and professional role and finding a spurring educational environment for them.

International organizations and UNESCO on top urge in its documents and programs on the importance of education and some member countries have pressed on the implementation of education for all, yet our sons and daughters in the Syrian occupied Golan and the occupied lands in Palestine are still suffering from deprivation of their basic rights in education and from counterfeit and deformation in their education curricula in consequence to the practices of the Israeli occupational authorities in destroying cultural and educational institutions and suppressing their history
and identity without regarding any national, human, and international recognition.
This is clearly contradicts with UNESCO approach and its priorities in providing education for all and its strategy to support education on the national level, hereby I renew the invitation to UNESCO and the honorable conference to take practical measures to activate the resolution that the previous conference of UNESCO no /33/70 concerning educational and cultural establishments in the Arab occupied territories and exerting efforts to stop all these arranged aggressive practices; so is it possible for good education to exist under oppression and occupation and constructive destruction?

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the conference,

Dear participants,

It is no secret for all educationalists that the oppression and aggression on school children and families in the Arab land under occupation that is taking place at the moment will have negative effects on the human and social values in the process of educating generations through distorted educational systems. For this reason we are addressing the education leaders in this very conference to take sufficient measures to stop spreading these distorted values into the educational systems under false names far from accuracy. Here we can ask the following question: Does those responsible for creating these crises in the world have the right to get away from it and from finding solutions?

Ladies and gentlemen,

All of us realize the destructive consequences left behind by plans and aggressiveness of some political trends and some dominating countries that control the fate of the world at the present time. These effects make us wonder about the danger that threatens the world in these days and about the similarity between the two sources of danger. We all agree that blind terrorism that targets innocents is a threat to humanity. We should also agree that the desire to control the world in this brutal way is more dangerous and leaves more victims.
A differential comparison between fundamentalism that combines political and religious ideologies that hide behind new conservatism and call its members new conservatives is more dangerous than fundamentalism that uses religion as a cover for it because the first uses methods and platforms to control the world.
A very good example of this, is the danger of this new political fundamentalism and its destructive war on Iraq and the sufferings of Iraqi people such as immigration and instability. Statistics and facts confirm that millions of Iraqis have migrated outside Iraq and around 1.5 million Iraqis migrated to Syria. UNHCR confirms that around /300.000/ Iraqi students are in Syria and that large numbers have been absorbed in our schools; it is no secret that these increasing numbers started to negatively affect the educational system in Syria;
If Syria is now bearing the burden of the criminal acts that others committed against Arabs and has now to absorb these large numbers of students in schools the international community should be aware of this suffering and contribute to bearing these burdens and it should also provide the required financial and spiritual aid instead of giving empty promises as if it were the fate of Syria to pay for the ambitions of people's and humanity enemies and Palestinians and Iraqis cases are true example of this. We are facing this bitter and instable reality and we all realize its dangers and its educational, social and economical dimensions. Now and in the future we ask members of this respected conference to issue a decree that enables UNESCO to contribute to support Syria financially and spiritually to face this problem through building new educational institutions and getting advanced technologies through education and providing required teaching cadres. We aspire that the suggested resolution urge the international society to mobilize its efforts to handle this crisis and meet the needs of Iraqi students in Syria now and in the future.
Ladies and gentlemen
Dear audience,

Syria led by Mr. President Bashar al-assad and through his government and his ability to face challenges that confront our Arab nation and through his vision to build and develop the country and protect its land and dignity has stressed its desire to anchor the rules of comprehensive and just peace and firmly establish good relations with nations of the world and to deepen the culture of dialogue and understanding among them and the right of nations to choose their fate and live securely, freely and with dignity according to united nations resolutions and international legislation. This basically corresponds to the Arab nation expectations, its history, and its cultural and civilized message. Building on this we confirm our right to return our Syrian occupied Golan in all means and the right of the Palestinian people in choosing their fate and establishing and independent state on its land with Jerusalem as its capital and liberating the occupied part of southern Lebanon.

We look forward with eager and desire to deepen fruitful cooperation with UNESCO in different levels of education, science, culture, programs, and culture that are going to be specified by the conference and to contribute in implementing them within our national plans that work to develop the quality of education and learning believing in UNESCO great role in firmly establishing peace and disseminate knowledge and science and enhancing the role of education in developing nations and their well-being.

We wish all the best to the president of the conference for his new task. We also wish the best to the director-general of UNESCO and his assistants in implementing these plans and ambitious programs and achieving their goals for the development of humanity and their well-being.