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Opening Ceremony: Monday, April 20, 2009 - 17:00 – 19:00

Introduction to the GMA III Programme

Eva Egron-Polak, Secretary-General, IAU

Good Evening,

First of all, let me join all of the previous eloquent speakers in welcoming you to the 3rd Global Meeting of Associations (GMA) and to Guadalajara.

As well I wish to begin by thanking *Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (ANUIES)* and most especially Dr. Rafael López Castañares for the kind invitation the association extended to IAU to meet in Mexico and to organize this Global Meeting of Associations in partnership with them.

Judging by the large number of Associations and networks represented here, we have obviously chosen a great partner, a topic of high interest for many and a great place to meet.

Here my let me express my warmest gratitude to the University of Guadalajara and Rector Marco Antonio Cortés Guardado for their ready acceptance to act as hosts for this Meeting. Initially we had planned to meet in Mexico City, where the ANUIES offices are located. But since our timing coincided so closely with the first Hemispheric Conference that was being planned for Guadalajara by three university associations - CONAHEC, IOHE and HACU, it seemed highly opportune to bring the events as close together as possible both in terms of geography and in terms of schedule, thus offering even more networking opportunities to all the participants. We are very grateful to the University of Guadalajara for so graciously accepting to work with us and make this possible.

Navigating through the increasingly populated global landscape in higher education is, of course, more and more often coupled with the difficulty of finding an uncontested time slot in the meeting agenda of higher education leaders and the leaders of their associations and networks. So we are very pleased that all of you have been able to make time for this meeting.

And this of course allows me to segue into the introduction to this very unique gathering and to the theme for this edition of the GMA, which invites all of us to 'Make sense of the

global higher education landscape and its main actors - associations, networks, alliances, leagues and other groups. At last count you represent more than 36 different associations or networks at national, sub-national, regional and international level, totaling more than 6,000 higher education institutions, give or take a few. It is a unique gathering from many respects, including the fact that we have representatives from so many parts of the world - India, Malaysia, Europe, Latin America, Canada, the USA, Southern Africa, Ghana, the Middle East and many other places. Networks and associations are growing in number everywhere. Only during the last week, I have learned of two new international networks being established and I am sure that by the time this Meeting is finished a few more will be created somewhere in the world.

Let me say a few words about this topic and why we chose it. It is in fact a dual topic - on the one hand, we hope simply to open up a space to learn more about the work of associations, networks and alliances that exist and offer a forum where their leaders learn from each other.

Second, we want to debate and discuss with you where the development of such associations networks and alliances is taking us - this is the second aspect of the theme, namely the global higher education space itself. In fact the notion of agency or our collective role in building this global space is what we also wish to contemplate and discuss with you. Are we agents or do we wish to become agents for defining and structuring this space, and if so how can we do it and where do we wish to lead?

Why did IAU chose these two intertwined aspects of the topic? A first set of answers is related to directly to IAU's mission of 'Building a Worldwide Higher Education Community' our new slogan. IAU is perhaps the only Association that has the capacity to convene this kind of Meeting. Second, since IAU has, as full Members a fairly large number of associations and networks at all levels, it is our duty to offer them a forum or services of this nature. Third, the IAU is perhaps the most interested, given its own mission and role, in considering the nature and structure of a future global higher education space.

A second set of answers is linked to the interests and needs of the higher education and research sector and how each of us is serving to strengthen and improve this sector, now and in the probably quite troubled future.

In an interconnected world, all of us as associations and networks face similar challenges, despite our different contexts and roles -all of us are responding to the exigency of being useful to our members - the institutions of higher education, the desire to promote strong and effective higher education and research systems at home and globally, the wish to understand and balance the various pushes and pulls of the various stakeholders and other forces that influence and steer the sector from within and from without.

We all work with the same raw material - namely higher education institutions - and see an emergence of new actors and new expectations on the global HE landscape. Thus it makes sense to us to see what we can learn from each other and test whether or not we share the same perceptions of the emerging global landscape. Most importantly, we must seek to help each other to serve these similar interests better.

We hope, the GMA, adopting in some respects a more macro and global perspective, will allow all of us to step back and reflect on the opportunities before us, especially as the current situation will throw unprecedented challenges in our way.

When we decided on the theme - about 18 months ago, there was far less talk of the need for some kind of global regulation of the economy, of some rules to be put in place to stave off and actually prevent the worst effects of an unprecedented global economic meltdown. There was far more trust, even though hotly contested, in the market and the laissez faire attitudes including in the global higher education market.

How have things changed? What impact will they have on higher education? Will international mobility patterns change with 'protectionist' employment policies being considered and unemployment reaching even the highly educated? Or what role should we as associations play and how successful will we be in promoting cooperation when competition in education as a lucrative economic sector will heat up even more? These are some new questions, to be considered in addition to those we have already identified in the introductory presentation for GMA III and which you will find the Backgrounder for the Meeting.

While most analysts indicate that it is too early to predict what the impact of the economic downturn will be in the long-run and how it may reshape or transform higher education, these questions are preoccupying all of us, just as tough economic times are starting to affect us directly as well.

Adversity creates a new dynamic. IAU is more than willing to work with all of you to make sure that this new dynamic is a productive one, centered on cooperation, on building upon each others' efforts, on facilitating communications, giving space and a framework for the free flow of ideas and information so that whatever successes we achieve are known and can be replicated elsewhere.

Though these Meetings are closed to institutional leaders, you will notice that several university representatives are indeed here - they are members of the IAU Executive Committee (Juan Ramón de la Fuente, Former Rector, *National Autonomous University of Mexico*, Mexico ; Abdul Razak DZULKIFLI, Vice-Chancellor, *University Sains Malaysia*, Malaysia; Pier Ugo CALZOLARI, Rector, *University of Bologna*, Italy; Madeleine GREEN, Vice-President, *American Council on Education*; Olive MUGENDA, Vice-Chancellor, *Kenyatta University*, Kenya) which have been introduced by the IAU President and several Board Members who have also joined us: Piyushi KOTECHA, CEO, *Southern African Regional Universities Association*; Clifford Nii Boi TAGOE, Vice-Chancellor, *University of Ghana*, Ghana; Manuel J. FERNÓS, President, *Interamerican University of Puerto Rico*, USA; Walid MOUSSA, President, *Notre Dame University Louaize*, Lebanon; Metin Lufti BAYDAR, Rector, *Suleyman Demirel University*, Turkey; Patricia POL, Vice-President, *Université Paris 12 - Val de Marne*, France; Rafael CORDERA CAMPOS, Secretary-General *UDUAL, Union of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean*; Dayanand DONGAONKAR, Secretary-General, *Association of Indian Universities*. I would like to thank them particularly for being here so that they can participate as leaders of their own institutions but also as leaders of IAU. Their presence will ensure that our deliberations will be integrated into the future discussion by the IAU Board about the best ways for IAU to move forward in the global higher education space.

The Meeting is not long - just a short day and a half, but we hope it will offer lots of opportunities for discussion and for mutual learning for all of us.

Let me close by repeating our deep thanks for the collaboration and support we have enjoyed with ANUIES, the University of Guadalajara.