



### **Beijing Declaration on Economic Globalization and Cultural Diversity. Draft<sup>1</sup>**

Exactly six hundred years ago, a large fleet sailed from Nanjing, China, on a naval expedition. In the next twenty-eight years, under Zheng He's command, the fleet crossed the South China Sea and Indian Ocean at least seven times, reaching as far as the Arabian Peninsula and the East Coast of Africa. In the century that followed, western explorers such as Bartolomeu Dias, Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus (Cristóbal Colón) and Ferdinand Magellan (Fernão de Magalhães) extended their voyages from Europe to many parts of the world, thus inaugurating a great era in geographical discovery. The subsequent trade and colonization promoted the accumulation of capital worldwide, and new chapters were written in the diffusion of knowledge and cultural exchanges among the varied branches of human civilization.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized primarily by globalization and by the rapid evolution of science and technology. Confronted by the opportunities and challenges offered by these changes, different regions, countries, and people with differing cultural traditions will make important judgments and decisions, particularly on the part of their intellectuals, in light of their own experiences and in their specific cultural contexts. In all such decision-making, an understanding of history will play a vital role. Since the history of science and technology plays a crucial role in the evolution of human society, we, as representatives of the history of science and technology, hereby appeal to the political leaders of all countries, heads of relevant decision-making bodies, private and public institutions engaged in education and cultural activities, publishers and the media, as well as intellectuals everywhere, to:

- Recognize the importance of research, study, promotion and use of the history of science;
- Support serious development of this field;
- Facilitate the cultivation of junior historians of science; and
- Encourage history of science to play a more important role in the cultural life of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Recent studies of the history of science and technology have established that industrialization and scientific revolutions have promoted the diffusion of scientific knowledge and technology worldwide. In addition, they have narrowed geographical and conceptual distances between people,

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<sup>1</sup> The English text was approved in principle at the Council Meeting of the IUHPS/DHS, held in Athens, Greece, in December 2004. It was circulated, and after comments from many sides, it was modified twice. The Declaration will be submitted to a vote of the DHS General Assembly, which will be convened during the 22<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of the History of Science.

and expanded the means of human exchanges and cooperation. All these historical processes have resulted in the advent of economic globalization. We believe that the on-going process of globalization will add increased momentum to advancing the prosperity of human society, but only if it takes into account the needs of the countries under development. In any case, this process will inevitably affect the spiritual life of mankind, impact different cultures in new ways, and help reshape them significantly. Globalization is an objective phenomenon confronting the human race, as economic links and the interdependence of countries and regions become ever more significant. No single country or region will be able to exist independently of the evolving globalized economy.

While we view globalization with optimism, we do not mean to overlook the many cultural differences and traditions that comprise the international community. Even in the globalized era, national and cultural differences persist. One of the important factors that must be kept in mind is the phenomenon of cultural diversity. This can be compared with the diversity of different species on earth and their perpetual vitality: the world is greatly enriched by such diversity, which has become an integral part of the human spirit. Likewise, cultural diversity encourages vigour and vitality, as it fosters respect for history and appreciation of the diverse varieties of human cultures and civilization. Differing traditions should and do co-exist, complementing each other with their merits and contributing to the entirety of human civilization in their respective ways. We are confident that just as mankind will continuously advance, history will not come to an end. The extent to which cultural traditions and local histories are valued will be an indicator of how well a country or an ethnic group is able to develop successfully in the wake of globalization. On the other hand, neglecting or abandoning traditions will render a country lifeless and put it at a great disadvantage in the international arena, as the history of the past one hundred years amply testifies.

However, globalization does not necessarily mean the even distribution of material wealth and natural resources. Rather, the sharing of knowledge and culture should constitute a short-term goal, the fulfilment of which mankind must strive to achieve. We, as representatives of historians of science from all countries and regions, appeal to leaders from around the world to utilize our expertise and networks for the diffusion of knowledge, and call upon political leaders and the public alike to:

- Recognize the significance of international scientific cooperation;
- Acknowledge the significance of scholarly research in every field, but in particular the history of science and technology;
- Take seriously the discovery and protection of regional cultural and scientific heritages;
- Encourage and promote internationally the exchange of the wealth of human knowledge; and
- Strengthen communication between scientists and humanistic scholars, and strive together for a better future for all mankind.

To value, foster and preserve cultural diversity in the face of globalization is in accordance with the logic of historical development; but it is also a rational choice to make in the hope of promoting and securing the best possible future for all of mankind in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The history of science and technology is not simply a record of mankind's achievements in the past, but also guides us towards the realization of our hopes for generations to come.