In an increasingly competitive and globalized world, cooperation is not always easy. Nevertheless, as evidenced by major breakthroughs in modern science, where the effort is made it can lead to great success—even in small things.

Good cooperation has been growing over recent years between UNESCO and United Nations University (UNU), based on the complementarity of our missions, good relations and respect for the contributions of our diverse expertise.

There is intensive cooperation in areas as distinct as access to and benefit sharing of deep-seabed genetic resources; strategies to prevent deserts from expanding, and to expand and improve agriculture in marginal drylands; protection of mangrove forests in Asia and the Pacific; prevention of land degradation in the mountains of Central Asia; prevention and proper management of floods, landslides, and other disasters; and education for sustainable development.

Cooperation becomes visible in seemingly small things. To facilitate it, UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura and I have established an exchange program that enables one researcher from each organization to work at the other each year, for weeks or even months, on a project of mutual interest. In this way, we can learn effectively about what is being done and planned in both organizations, and thus ensure optimal preparation and implementation of all projects that have our shared interest. A number of Japanese universities are also involved in this cooperation, in Hokkaido, the Kanto region, and Kyoto, Tottori, and Okinawa prefectures.

One example of the consistent cooperation between UNESCO and UNU is a series of annual conferences, begun in 2001, that deal with the challenges
and opportunities posed by globalization. The shrinking of distances and the opening up of markets and borders have had a great impact in many sectors of our daily life.

To help ensure that globalization benefits all, these conferences have addressed several critical issues, including the hidden dimensions of globalization (such as those relating to social, cultural, and religious life); dialogue among civilizations; intangible cultural heritage, like music, dance and literature; and education for sustainable development for all, both inside and outside schools.

This year's conference, "Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities for Science and Technology," will be held at the Pacifico Yokohama Conference Center on Aug. 23 and 24. The introductory keynote speech will be given by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand.

The conference will focus on the links between globalization and science and technology. While globalization is in part driven by science and technology--particularly, new information and communication technologies--it in turn has strongly influenced the ways in which scientific knowledge and new technologies are produced and disseminated.

The impact of globalization has been largely positive, offering new opportunities to promote social and economic development for the benefit of all. In some of the developed countries, in particular, science and technology are developing with breathtaking speed.

Knowledge is becoming an ever-more important strategic advantage for a seemingly decreasing number of countries. To prevent the race to the top from leaving more people behind, in developed and developing countries alike, it is becoming crucial to share knowledge and make use of all the communication tools we have at our disposal.

Only through such sharing can globalization and the progress of science and technology be made to benefit us in every way--from human (including economic) development to health care, environmental issues to disaster preparedness, and the safe and dependable provision of water
and energy.

Yet globalization has also created new challenges and policy questions that cannot be ignored. Increasingly, ethical questions have emerged in international debates on such topics as bio-diversity, genetic research, cloning, and stem cell research. There are also questions regarding intellectual property rights and knowledge sharing. The uneven distribution of an increasingly important production factor--knowledge--may now be the ultimate difference between economically successful and unsuccessful countries, between rich and poor. Given that the development of knowledge is so expensive, doubts are being expressed about capacities to contribute to the next stage.

Knowledge transfer has thus become a top issue in all trade negotiations. I am reminded of a remark made by one of my mentors, Prof. Walter Kamba of Zimbabwe, former chairman of the UNU Council: "Do you think that knowledge is expensive? Try the opposite!"

It is therefore vital, I believe, to further explore the relations between globalization and the development of science and technology. In particular, we must try to understand and strengthen the role of science and technology so as to improve the human condition and the things that matter to us all: food, water, shelter, health, environment.

These are the issues on which we at UNESCO and UNU focus. It is in many small things that good cooperation becomes visible, through people cooperating on projects, sharing thoughts and knowledge. People building the common future of humanity through creative, innovative science and technology has proven to be capable of making highly valuable contributions. This will be the focus of the discussions at this year's conference in Yokohama.

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