

## **UNITAR HIROSHIMA OFFICE OPENS, 15 JULY 2003**

### **STATEMENT TO THE PRESS**

**UNITAR Hiroshima Office for Asia and the Pacific, Hiroshima,  
July 22, 2003**

**Statement of Ms. Nassrine AZIMI, Director**

Let me start by welcoming you here and thanking you for your interest in UNITAR. As many of you are aware, this Office, part of the United Nations family, is the culmination of three years of work, research and negotiations, including a two-year pilot phase. On behalf of Dr. Marcel Boisard, Executive Director and all my other colleagues here, at UNITAR's Geneva headquarters and New York Office, I would therefore like to say how happy we are to begin our work in Hiroshima – and how hopeful that the results will justify the trust so many people have put into us. I wish to here thank the Governor and staff of the Hiroshima Prefecture for outstanding and efficient work and a timely opening. I would also like to pay tribute to the many friends of UNITAR in Hiroshima for their support, and to the Government of Japan and particularly its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The UNITAR Hiroshima Office will focus on providing training for government officials and scholars from the Asia-Pacific region, most notably developing countries. Over the coming years many training workshops and seminars will thus take place under the auspices of UNITAR, here and in other countries of the region. UNITAR's training mandate covers a vast field related to peace and security, and economic and social development. In our first three years of activity, we will concentrate on a few themes, namely: post-conflict reconstruction (with special emphasis on Afghanistan), management and protection of World Heritage sites, sea and human security, UN peacekeeping, international economics and finance, and training methodologies. We will continue to work closely with our many partners, national and international, in Japan, the region, and elsewhere.

Allow me a few personal words: I have worked with UNITAR for more than 15 years -- extensively at the Institute's Headquarters in Geneva first -- as project officer, coordinator of our environmental activities and deputy to the Executive Director. In 1996 I was given the mandate to open and direct UNITAR's New York Office. Over the last two years, my energies have been almost exclusively devoted to the Hiroshima project. Nothing can quite compare with the privilege of establishing the first UN presence in Hiroshima, and I feel honored by the task entrusted to me. I hope that my life has, in a way, prepared me to embrace the 'spirit of Hiroshima': I was born

in Iran, am a Swiss citizen, and most of my immediate family is American. I grew up studying in Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools, and have worked over three continents. May that these direct experiences of diversity, universality and tolerance guide me in my new assignment.

Japan, which I have known and loved since 1985, is an active, prominent and respected member of the international community. By supporting the establishment of UNITAR' s Office for Asia and the Pacific here, the people and authorities of Hiroshima have demonstrated their will to become increasingly engaged in the world around them, and to transform their experience of war and tragedy into a positive force to help their neighbors.