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联合国教育、
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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO,**

on the occasion of International Day for Disaster Reduction

"Knowledge saves lives"

UNESCO, 13 October 2015

Knowledge saves lives. This day is an opportunity to focus on the vital importance of traditional indigenous and local knowledge in disaster risk reduction with respect to natural hazards.

The contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to resilience among vulnerable populations was highlighted when the tsunami occurred in the Indian Ocean in 2004. The third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (14-18 March 2015) in Sendai, Japan, particularly emphasized the need to make this knowledge better known for the benefit of all. The Sendai Framework thus campaigns for greater cooperation between governments, local authorities, communities and indigenous peoples in the formulation and implementation of policies and standards for natural disaster prevention.

UNESCO is firmly engaged in this process, through its scientific, educational and cultural expertise. UNESCO is committed to the widest possible dissemination of indigenous knowledge to meet the challenges of climate change and natural hazards, especially in remote areas such as small islands, high altitude zones and the humid tropics. UNESCO has launched an initiative in the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Indonesia to record local knowledge that helps to predict, mitigate and adapt to storms, cyclones and the effects of climate change. It all demonstrates the profound knowledge and mastery of the environment by the peoples who live there, which we must urgently include in natural disaster management policies.

On the island of Ambae, in Vanuatu, UNESCO has helped to develop a participatory approach so as to integrate traditional and scientific knowledge in the management of volcanic hazards. On the occasion of this International Day, we are inviting Vanuatu schoolchildren recently affected by Tropical Cyclone Pam to write

essays, poems and stories that depict the use of traditional and local knowledge. This traditional and indigenous knowledge also helps to protect the cultural heritage against natural hazards and UNESCO is committed to making the best use of it.

Effective and sustainable disaster risk prevention requires the combination of indigenous practices and knowledge with scientific expertise. We cannot afford to ignore the knowledge available to us; instead, we must expand on and integrate knowledge and expertise wherever they may be found. I invite all of our partners and governments to promote this global vision: it is the key to building societies that are all the more resilient when they are inclusive.

Irina Bokova