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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO**

**On the occasion of the *International Day against Homophobia and  
Transphobia***

**17 May 2014**

Everyone has the right to quality education. This fundamental right is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it has been reaffirmed in several United Nations conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which draws on the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education. Universal rights are not reserved to a few -- they apply to all, including children and young adults who are lesbians, gays, bisexuals or transgender (LGBT). This position was clarified in 2003 by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, when it states that discrimination based on the sexual orientation of adolescents is prohibited.

Studies show that violence and harassment in schools often target children and young people who are perceived as not meeting 'normal' gender standards, including children and young people perceived as LGBT. This violence is a direct threat to the right to education. It affects learning at the difficult time of transition to adulthood. This violence reflects on the society as a whole and it perpetuates a culture of intolerance and hatred. This is a deep waste, measured in human lives, as homophobic and transphobic violence can be deadly.

School is a place for personal and collective development. It is the place where we build today the societies of tomorrow. How can a child love school if she/he is afraid of being harassed? School should be a place dedicated to scholarship, to personal development and openness to others -- a place to learn to live in peace, not only in books but in everyday interactions in the classroom and the playground. Because quality education goes beyond reading, writing or calculation, it is inseparable from the transmission of the values of respect for all individuals, without distinction of

origin, skin colour, sex, language, religion, disability, health status, and sexual orientation.

This struggle is all the more urgent today, when countries have adopted laws that discriminate against LGBT people. Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent -- when one right is violated, all others become vulnerable.

UNESCO will continue to support its Member States to develop and implement policies of tolerance and respect through and in education. This is the meaning of the work done since 2011 to prevent and fight against homophobic or transphobic harassment in education. In 2013, UNESCO launched, with the support of The Netherlands, a global initiative to document and share best practices, to collect comprehensive data on the phenomenon in order to produce the first global study on homophobic violence in education. As an encouraging sign, several States have recently taken strong measures to reaffirm the equality of rights by clearly addressing this taboo issue. On this day of solidarity, I reaffirm our commitment to continue this struggle.

Irina Bokova