



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

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

**on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of  
Violence against Women**

**25 November 2013**

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive violations of human rights today. Globally, as many as seven in ten women report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at one point in their lives. Violence occurs in all countries, across all socio-economic groups.

This violence is a major barrier to development and an affront to individual dignity, which prevents girls and women from exercising fully their human rights – notably, the right to education.

Missing in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls should be recognized as essential to the pursuit of gender equality in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

Education is a starting point to halt violence. This is why UNESCO is working to prevent gender-based violence in and around schools, and to ensure that the right to education for all is not violated.

Violence against women draws on deeply rooted attitudes. UNESCO is supporting research to identify these roots in order to transform them, working with women and men, girls and boys, to promote positive representations and gender-equal attitudes. This includes efforts to foster

cultural values and to eliminate harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting.

In March 2013, I signed a *Joint Statement on Ending Violence against Women and Girls* with other Heads of United Nations agencies. This Statement confirmed UNESCO's readiness to strengthen synergies throughout the United Nations system and redouble its efforts in creating a more just world of equal dignity for all.

All women and girls must live free of fear and violence. This is UNESCO's commitment and our pledge today.

Irina Bokova