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联合国教育、
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Message from Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of World Arabic Language Day

18 December 2015

In 2015, World Arabic Language Day is dedicated to science and scientific communication. This is an opportunity to highlight the historical role of the Arabic language in research and the dissemination of knowledge, and the importance of multilingualism for the research community today.

Science has been a pillar of Arab culture since the beginning. This scientific appetite is expressed in ancient texts through a curiosity about the world, initially in the form of alchemy, astrology and Hermeticism, then developing into modern science. In the Middle Ages, Arabic emerged as an international scientific language as none other before. The Arabic language has contributed to the preservation and transmission of knowledge from antiquity to the present day; Arabic-language authors have passed into posterity and have been translated worldwide, such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes).

The great scholar Ibn al-Haytham is certainly one of the most brilliant figures of scientific tradition in the Arabic language: born in Basra, Irak, he laid the foundations of the science of optics, and we celebrate his achievements in 2015, the International Year of Light. Professor Ahmed Zewail, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry and former President of the Jury for the L'ORÉAL-UNESCO Prize "For Women in Science", and Professor Hayat Sindhi, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, both embody scientific excellence in Arabic today.

Science is stronger and more beautiful when it is open and nurtured with the diversity of talents and the multiplicity of perspectives that advance research. Multilingualism is not only a core value to which UNESCO is deeply committed, it

also guarantees effectiveness and is the surest way to disseminate knowledge, share the benefits of research for all, inspire vocations and increase the number of researchers that contribute to the advancement of our knowledge.

In this spirit, UNESCO is committed to scientific training and education for all, including in the Arabic language, especially for young people. I call upon all our partners to strengthen their efforts for the production of textbooks, educational content and literacy programmes, which are all essential to ensure the emergence and influence of a new generation of men and women scientists in the Arabic language for the greater good of humanity.

Irina Bokova