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Message from

Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of *International Jazz Day*

UNESCO, 30 April 2014

On 30 April, musicians and music lovers the world over are celebrating International Jazz Day for the third time. Throughout the world, for more than a century, artists have embraced jazz. They have adopted its spontaneity and its freedom of expression. They have played on its ability to decompartmentalize genres, and its links with painting, dance, cinema, literature, photography and more. They have celebrated its power as a participative, interactive music, blurring the boundaries between performers and audiences.

Jazz is so much more than music: it is a lifestyle and a tool for dialogue, even social change. The history of jazz tells of the power of music to bring together artists from different cultures and backgrounds, as a driver of integration and mutual respect. Jazz gave rhythm to the struggles of the civil rights movement in the United States, and has done so elsewhere in the world. Through jazz, millions of people have sung and still sing today their desire for freedom, tolerance and human dignity.

UNESCO established International Jazz Day to promote these values. This year, once again, hundreds of events and concerts will be organized or improvised worldwide, by authorities, music schools and concert halls. The main event will take place this year in Japan – in Osaka, a city where jazz draws strength from a tradition that dates back to the 1920s, and which has kept its energy vibrant up to the present day. With its numerous jazz clubs and its world-renowned annual competition, Osaka is at the heart of the modern jazz movement. By choosing this city to celebrate jazz, UNESCO also wishes to highlight the extent to which cultural influences and musical interactions forge links between cultures beyond borders and oceans.

On behalf of UNESCO, I would like to pay tribute to all our partners, in Japan and all other countries, who are organizing events to celebrate jazz and the values it embodies, along with our Goodwill Ambassador Mr Herbie Hancock and the Thelonius Monk Institute of Jazz, who have supported us from the start. I invite you to join us in spreading the message of energy, sharing and peace through culture and music.

Irina Bokova