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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 Youth Day**

**12 August 2015**

International Youth Day is an opportunity to celebrate the creative force and the innovative impetus that young people bring to every society. This year's theme – “Youth Civic Engagement” – emphasizes the role played by the involvement and inclusion of young people in building social cohesion and collective well-being. From social entrepreneurs to journalists, from voluntary workers to members of community organizations, young people contribute to shaping society to lead it towards political, cultural and economic renewal.

We must support their civic engagement at every level, beginning with recognizing that young people form a separate social group with specific characteristics and expectations. Civic engagement is a way to exploit this potential to enrich society, further human rights and enable improved living conditions for all.

These goals are at the core of UNESCO's projects, to offer young people the space and skills they need to develop, which reflects on all societies.

That is the spirit of UNESCO's project to strengthen youth networks in the Mediterranean. Young people must be considered the drivers of change, and not only beneficiaries or targets. That involves reinforcing exchanges and cooperation between generations to ensure that young people are actually involved in developing the policies intended for them. The ninth UNESCO Youth Forum, held in October, will provide a unique platform to convey this message, and I invite young people from all over the world to attend and make their voices heard, to shape the action of world leaders. These voices carry the hope of half of the planet, for a sustainable future for all.

Irina Bokova