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Message from

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

on the occasion of the International Francophonie Day

20 March 2013

Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, laureate of the Nobel Prize for Literature, has described French as a “complete language, comprising both the kernel and the bran, a *metissee* language”. French draws its strength from the diversity of the peoples and cultures that share it and contribute daily to its enrichment and vibrancy.

Today, International Francophonie Day, UNESCO celebrates the power of the French language in bringing peoples and cultures together, as a tool for mutual understanding and peace.

UNESCO highlights also the importance of linguistic diversity as a condition for sincere and authentic international cooperation, whereby each person's thoughts can be expressed directly and faithfully, without borrowing words from another language. This is an issue of equality and respect; it is also a matter of efficiency and clarity. That is why UNESCO promotes French as a working language and as a source for the renewal of ideas and for precision in fulfilling its mandate.

Paying tribute to Francophonie is ultimately a mark of UNESCO's attachment to values, such as democracy, personal dignity, human rights and freedom of expression, that are historically conveyed by the French language and that it helps to promote today, by providing a forum for dialogue and mutual cooperation beyond borders.

This logic underpins UNESCO's resolute action to create, through education, science and culture, conditions for the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity. Such intellectual solidarity is embodied in and strengthened by the practice of languages. Francophonie is a cornerstone of this endeavour and its promotion an essential duty, which UNESCO strives to uphold as a force for development and a source of peace.

Irina Bokova