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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 World AIDS Day**

1 December 2011

World AIDS Day is an opportunity for us all to mobilize ever more to meet a challenge that still devastates our societies.

We are making headway. Recent studies show that early treatment of people living with HIV can reduce sexual transmission to their partners by up to 96 percent. Research indicates that giving antiretroviral therapy to HIV-negative partners of those living with HIV can reduce their chances of acquiring HIV up to 73 percent. There is also further evidence that male circumcision can reduce the risk of HIV acquisition in men.

But progress remains deeply unequal. In wealthier countries and in communities where access to HIV medicine is widespread, AIDS is viewed increasingly as a manageable chronic disease. In developing countries, 1.8 million people die of AIDS every year, and 9 million people are still waiting for treatment. In richer countries, we are seeing the virtual elimination of mother-to-child transmission thanks to new scientific advances available. In poor countries, 370,000 babies are born every year with HIV.

Such inequalities are unacceptable. We must ensure that all those in need receive treatment and care. The stakes are high. If we fail to respond effectively to HIV and AIDS, we will fall far short of the Education for All objectives and the Millennium Development Goals. We will fail to meet our collective commitment to promoting human rights, gender equality and social justice.

At the United Nations high-level meeting on AIDS held in June 2011, States adopted a political declaration on HIV/AIDS that sets bold new targets for 2015. All States must rally around these goals. This is not a time to flag or retreat.

UNESCO is mobilized. We have launched a new UNESCO Strategy for HIV and AIDS to sharpen our action. All arms of the Organization are mobilized at the global, regional and country levels to take forward activities that are culturally appropriate, gender-transformative and evidence-based. UNESCO's signature interdisciplinary approach is well-suited for tackling the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS. We will make the most of it.

Our overarching goal is clear – we must ensure universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. For this, we are structuring our action around three priorities that are strategic: building country capacity for effective and sustainable education responses to HIV, strengthening comprehensive HIV and sexuality education, and advancing gender equality and protect human rights. We must emphasize HIV prevention in the context of wider health promotion. We will continue also to work towards ensuring all girls and boys, women and men, in and out of formal education, have access to comprehensive HIV education.

To reach our vision of zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths, we must move as quickly as the AIDS virus does. This is essential for protecting individuals, families and societies from the impact of the epidemic and for advancing human rights and dignity for all. This is our pledge on this *2011 World AIDS Day*.

Irina Bokova