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Организация  
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вопросам образования,  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message by**

**Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO,**

**on the occasion of International Day of Tolerance**

**16 November 2014**

Tolerance is a fundamental principle of life in society, stemming naturally from respect for human rights and human dignity. It is a principle that is more relevant now than ever and it is under serious threat. Cultural diversity is being targeted by extremist groups seeking to impose their sectarian vision on the world, and minorities are being persecuted, falling victim to attempts at “cultural cleansing”. Within societies, economic and social crises are sometimes used as a pretext for blaming and rejecting others. In tackling these challenges, we must reaffirm with determination the need for tolerance by recalling that every culture is worthy of respect and that no belief deserves the hatred or scorn of others.

This message is central to all of UNESCO's action, guided by the conviction that lasting peace must be constructed in the minds of men and women, by nurturing the principles of tolerance and mutual respect through education, the dialogue among cultures and intellectual cooperation. In a globalizing world, it is no longer enough to live side by side, in passive indifference – tolerance requires active vigilance, renewed each day, against xenophobia, discrimination and hatred. We learn through tolerance to reconcile the universal rights that bind us together with the diversity that gives us so much, and to see that we need others, in all their diversity, so that we can be fully ourselves.

More than words, tolerance is behaviour that is also learnt in the classroom. It takes the form of openness to the diversity of cultures and beliefs and respect for freedom of expression and opinion, rooted in attachment to human rights. This is the spirit of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), for which UNESCO is lead agency in the United Nations system. It is also the objective of the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence,

awarded this year to two human rights activists – Mr Ibrahim Ag Idbaltanat (Mali) and M. Francisco Javier Estévez Valencia (Chile).

UNESCO is committed to promoting tolerance through its educational and cultural programmes, through the International Coalition of Cities against Racism and through the mobilization of young people and global citizenship education. On the occasion of this international day, I call on all of UNESCO's Member States and partners to reassert the transformational power of tolerance as a force for dialogue and peace.

Irina Bokova