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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 the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2012**

The 2012 International Day of Persons with Disabilities is an opportunity to renew our commitment to build inclusive and accessible societies, including especially persons with disabilities.

Today, more than one billion people live with some form of disability. They are more likely to experience poverty and discrimination and less likely to have access to social welfare services, while their position does not always make it possible for them to uphold and claim their rights.

We must support their dignity, rights and well-being as essential conditions for equality and justice. Disability is a development issue that we must address to achieve all internationally-agreed goals.

Action starts with Governments, which should implement international normative frameworks, and especially the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Across society – in schools, in the private sector, in civil society -- we have a responsibility to ensure that all persons enjoy equal rights and that women and men are empowered to participate fully in social, political, economic and cultural life.

The promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion stands at the heart of UNESCO's work.

This begins with access to quality education. The 2008 International Conference on Inclusive Education was a landmark event where Member States committed themselves to adopt an inclusive approach to reach the goals of Education for All. Nonetheless, persons with disabilities remain marginalized today in education systems, and children with disabilities represent one third of all out-of-school children. By promoting inclusive approaches in education, UNESCO is working for the transformation of schools and other centres of learning, and for the adaptation of learning and teaching practices to cater for all learners. Inclusive education is a foundation stone for more equitable societies. To this end, UNESCO has joined efforts to establish a Global Partnership for Children with Disabilities, to work towards the implementation of Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

UNESCO is working also to build inclusive knowledge societies, where persons with disabilities must be included at all levels, thanks also to the development of new technologies. Assistive technologies, especially those with personalized disability-friendly features, can improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities by providing better access to information and knowledge, to education and healthcare, as well as to employment.