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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 Youth Day

12 August 2016

Young people are not only our future -- they are our present. Our planet has never been so young, with 1.8 billion young women and men. They are the most connected, the most outspoken and the most open-minded generation the world has ever seen. They are powerful agents of positive change, essential to taking forward the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

It is not enough to hope for a better tomorrow -- we must act now. Change is underway, and millions of citizens are already transforming the way we produce, consume, behave and communicate. Young people, such as our #YouthofUNESCO sustainable consumption advocate, Ms Lauren Singer, show us the way towards a zero-waste life-style, fitting all of her refuse produced over the past four years into one small jar! This is an inspiration for this year's celebration -- The Road to 2030: Eradicating Poverty and Achieving Sustainable Production and Consumption.

There are countless initiatives like this, all giving shape to a new humanism, to new forms of solidarity and citizenship to combat poverty, marginalization and despair.

Optimism and confidence do not mean we minimize the challenges ahead. Most young people live today in least developed countries, and shoulder the heaviest burden of conflicts and poverty. There can be no sustainable development if they remain on the side-lines, and I call upon all Member States and UNESCO partners to support their initiatives, to give them voice, to let them grow, to shape together the future of dignity that we are building today.

Irina Bokova