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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,  
Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the International Day of  
Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust**

**27 January 2008**

Today, in accord with the international community, we commemorate the International Day dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

This solemn day affords us an opportunity to reaffirm our deep commitment to the duty of remembrance and transmission. In addition to its commemorative aspect, however, we consider this Day to be an absolute necessity. We know how much the memory of deportation is fragile, hazy and sometimes endangered. Honouring the victims amounts first and foremost to combating oblivion and the loss of memory. It is also tantamount, when their trace, names and personal histories are ascertained, to restoring the human dignity of those who perished.

UNESCO, founded in the aftermath of the Second World War to express humanity's new hope for a world of solidarity, freedom and dignity, remains committed today to keeping that hope alive by working patiently each day, in all of its fields of competence, "to construct the defences of peace in the minds of men", as stated by its visionary founders in drafting its Constitution.

To think of the suffering, the cruelty, the violence and the war as more than mere fate also entails an endeavour to explain the devices and thought mechanisms that led to them. This is the full import and objective of the important Resolution 61 adopted by the General Conference at its 34th session, in November 2007, requesting UNESCO to place education at the centre of the work for remembrance and, in so doing, to keep this memory "alive".

The memory of the victims of the Holocaust is now honoured in spheres in which it can develop and which we must preserve and promote: in education, the media, museums and history books. An organization such as UNESCO is duty bound to engage in such educational, critical and reflective work, not to sacralize the event, but to understand it, put it into words and into perspective and restore its historic depth without in any way removing the trace of what was vital in the memorial journey of the individuals and societies concerned. This educational function is today central to our concerns, for it primarily requires the young generations to learn about freedom and tolerance.

Lastly, to isolate and study the forms of rationale behind the abominable is also, and above all, to promote the ethics of responsibility to ensure that they can be avoided forever. Memory of mourning, used as a yardstick, must help us today to gauge the suffering of others and to become each day more vigilant about all forms of expression of racism, xenophobia and exclusion, always fraught with danger for all humanity, regardless of their form.

In view of the trivialization of evil and the forgotten lessons of the past, I hope that this collective duty of remembrance, to which the entire international community now subscribes, will merge not only into a duty of education and history, but also into critical and civic vigilance. This compelling duty, voluntarily undertaken, should link us to the past so that we may serve the present and the future better.

Koïchiro Matsuura