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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO,**

**on the occasion of International Day for the Remembrance  
of the Slave Trade and its Abolition**

**23 August 2016**

In the night of 22 to 23 August 1791, men and women, torn from Africa and sold into slavery, revolted against the slave system to obtain freedom and independence for Haiti, gained in 1804. The uprising was a turning point in human history, greatly impacting the establishment of universal human rights, for which we are all indebted.

The courage of these men and women has created obligations for us. UNESCO is marking International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition to pay tribute to all those who fought for freedom, and, in their name, to continue teaching about their story and the values therein. The success of this rebellion, led by the slaves themselves, is a deep source of inspiration today for the fight against all forms of servitude, racism, prejudice, racial discrimination and social injustice that are a legacy of slavery.

The history of the slave trade and slavery created a storm of rage, cruelty and bitterness that has not yet abated. It is also a story of courage, freedom and pride in newfound freedom. All of humanity is part of this story, in its transgressions and good deeds. It would be a mistake and a crime to cover it up and forget. Through its project *The Slave Route*, UNESCO intends to find in this collective memory the strength to build a better world and to show the historical and moral connections that unite different peoples. In this same frame of mind, the United Nations proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024). UNESCO is contributing to it through its educational, cultural and scientific programmes so as to promote the contribution of people of African descent to building modern societies and ensuring dignity and equality for all human beings, without distinction.