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para la Educación,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Irina Bokova,

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**on the occasion of the 18th Commonwealth Lecture “Educating for
Inclusion, Dialogue and Peace”**

London, 25 February, 2016

Lord Alderdice, Chairperson,

Excellency Mr Kamallesh Sharma, Secretary-General of the *Commonwealth of Nations*,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your kind presentation and for inviting me today. I am honoured to present the 18th *Commonwealth Lecture*, following in the steps of so many illustrious individuals who share the same values and commitment to peace, tolerance, inclusion and sustainable development.

There is nothing like the *Commonwealth of Nations*... in the range of its Members...in the diversity of cultures it brings together...in the values it carries forward...

The *Commonwealth Charter*, adopted in 2012, makes clear that the special strength of the Commonwealth lies:

...in the combination of diversity and shared inheritance in language, culture and the rule of law...

These ideas resonate powerfully with UNESCO, whose Constitution was adopted over 70 years ago, on 16 November, 1945, here in London, at the Institute for Civil Engineering, presided by Ms Ellen Wilkinson, United Kingdom Minister of Education.

UNESCO and the Commonwealth are guided, I believe, by similar principles of dialogue, tolerance, respect and understanding, cooperation and joint action, and something we share as a passion and a conviction – I am talking about new humanism.

The Commonwealth holds special importance for UNESCO.

Inside UNESCO, the Commonwealth Group of Member States is dynamic, constantly generating new ideas – for this, I am deeply grateful.

Cooperation between UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat was first formalised in 1980 – the time has come to renew it.

Our partnership covers a wide horizon -- with a focus on education, on teachers, on technical and vocational education and training, on higher education, as well as Open Educational Resources, science and of course, mutual understanding and tolerance.

Let me highlight the importance of our joint action with the *Commonwealth of Learning*, in countries across the world.

Last March, Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma gave an inspiring lecture to the UNESCO Executive Board on the issue of empowering youth.

This is an excellent transition to the theme I wish to explore with you -- '*educating for inclusion, dialogue and peace*' – linked also to the 2016 theme of 'An Inclusive Commonwealth.'

Earlier this month, in this very building, the world came together for the *London 2016 Syria Conference* – which I was honoured to attend.

For this first time, the international community addressed the comprehensive impact of the crisis on education at all levels, inside Syria and host countries. I commend the United Kingdom for this initiative.

I believe this is absolutely vital.

Inside Syria today, there are 2.1 million children and youth out of school, out of a total of 5.4 million.

In five major host countries, we estimate there are 0.7 million Syrian children and youth out of school – this represents half of the total 1.4 million.

The danger is clear.

It is to lose a generation to despair, poverty, flight.

It is to lose millions of young women and men to the terrors of war, to the lure of violent extremism.

This is my first message this evening.

Education cannot wait.

It cannot wait until a crisis is over, until disaster has struck, until the dust settles.

In this respect, allow me to take this opportunity to express my deep condolences to the people and Government of Fiji, for the tragic losses suffered after Tropical Cyclone Winston.

Education must be a priority from the top, in disaster risk reduction, in humanitarian action, in peacebuilding – because there is no stronger foundation for reconstruction and recovery, for lasting peace.

This is a human rights imperative.

It is a development imperative.

It is a security imperative.

I start with Syria, because I believe this crisis highlights the wider stakes of *'educating for inclusion, dialogue and peace.'*

The world has never been young -- it is getting younger every day.

You know this better than anyone – the Commonwealth includes a quarter of the world's population, of which 60 percent are aged 25 or younger...

Young women and men today are the most educated, connected and outspoken generation the world has ever known.

At the same time, they shoulder the heaviest burden of change.

An estimated 1.5 billion people live in fragile or conflict affected countries – 40 percent of them are young people, with 28 million girls and boys here out of school.

Over 200 million young women and men live on less than US\$1 a day.

73 million young people are unemployed.

In these circumstances, I think the questions are clear.

How can we promote the values of inclusion, dialogue and peace?

How can we lay strong foundations for just, inclusive, and sustainable development for all societies?

Last August, I was honoured to participate in the first *Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security*, in Amman, initiated by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II.

A few months earlier, in April, His Royal Highness spoke before the United Nations Security Council and said:

We are in a race to invest in the hearts and minds as well as the capabilities of the youth.

I agree.

This is a race.

A race for the hearts and minds of young women and men in poor neighbourhoods, in rural areas.

A race for the hearts and minds of young women, forced into marriages, out of school.

A race for the hearts and minds of young men, lured by violence and extremism.

This is a race to reach and teach and include every young woman and man.

Humanity cannot look to a peaceful future when millions of young people are denied human rights.

Lasting peace and sustainable development are unthinkable while exclusion and deep inequality persist.

We know there is no more powerful force than education, to advance social inclusion, to break the vicious circle of poverty.

This idea stands at the heart of the new *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* -- specifically Sustainable Development Goal 4, which UNESCO helped shape, to ensure "*inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*"

Inclusive education means recognizing and accepting differences across the full spectrum of learners.

It means inclusive schools that are crucibles of tolerance and solidarity.

It means new resources, teacher training, curricula, along with new modes of assessment, new capacities.

UNESCO is working with Governments in every region to take these goals forward.

The *UNESCO International Bureau of Education* has developed resources to bolster inclusion in education systems.

We are supporting countries in reviewing and developing more inclusive education policies.

UNESCO's action is guided by a holistic and comprehensive vision of education.

This is embodied in the publication we launched last year - *Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good?* - co-chaired by Ms Amina J. Mohammed, then *Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning* - and currently Nigeria's Minister of Environment - and Professor John Morgan, UNESCO Chair at the University of Nottingham.

This was drafted in the spirit of two landmark UNESCO publications on education - *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (1972), and *Learning: The Treasure Within*, published exactly 20 years ago.

Given the depth of transformation affecting all societies, I am convinced we need to think big again today about education, to make the most of its transformational force for equity and inclusion, for global solidarity and social mobility.

Here the new idea that UNESCO steered ahead during the preparation of SDG 4 comes into the picture and is becoming a priority for us – global citizenship education.

This is not about citizenship in the legal sense.

It is about learning to live in a world under pressure.

It is about new forms of cultural literacy and competences, on the basis of respect and equal dignity.

It is about connecting the dots between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

This is linked to UNESCO's leadership of the *United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)* – this concluded with the *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development*, organised by Japan in 2014, taken forward now in UNESCO's *Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development*.

This is why it is so important education for sustainable development is inscribed in the *2030 Agenda*.

This is essential also to take forward the *Paris Climate Change Agreement*, adopted at the COP21 last December.

Being a global citizen today calls for new ways of seeing the world, new ways of thinking and behaving.

Being a global citizen means sharing the wealth of cultural and linguistic diversity as a force of renewal, belonging and innovation.

This must begin as early as possible, on the benches of schools.

This is a pillar of the *Global Education First Initiative*, launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2012 and led forward by UNESCO.

In 2013, UNESCO held the *1st Forum on Global Citizenship Education*, with the *Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding* in Bangkok, Thailand.

We held the *2nd Forum* in January 2015, in Paris, to build new partnerships for action.

We have already launched a *Clearing House on Global Citizenship Education*, hosted by the *Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding*, under the auspices of UNESCO, with the support of the *Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development*.

Let me say a few words here about this extremely important institute - the *Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development*, the first UNESCO Institute of its kind, based in New Delhi.

Launched in 2012, the Institute is already active across the world – through its *YESPeace Network*, to strengthen work for global citizenship, peacebuilding and sustainable development, as well as through its *Changemakers Programme*, to promote youth action for transformative learning for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship.

This reflects values with deep roots in Indian society.

As the Representative of India to the UNESCO Executive Board, Dr Karan Singh – a humanist thinker and great political figure – has brought this same vision to the work of the Organisation.

Last April, His Excellency Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, paid a historic visit to UNESCO, when he spoke of the importance of education as “*a wealth that grows with giving*” – for gender equality, for the empowerment of girls, for more inclusive and sustainable development.

This is the spirit of all UNESCO’s work for global citizenship education.

We are developing resources to support policy-makers, to shape new curricula, to assist teachers, to promote education for peace, human rights, interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

This is essential to prevent violent extremism, to counter youth radicalisation.

No one is born a violent extremist.

Young people learn to hate – we must teach them peace.

I see this as a new global struggle for hearts and minds.

Education is the way to disarm the processes that may lead to violent extremism, by undermining prejudice, by fighting ignorance and indifference.

We are living in turbulent times.

Across the world, we see crimes against humanity perpetrated in the name of extremist ideologies.

We see minorities persecuted, journalists killed.

We see cultural heritage destroyed and looted, in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere.

We see a rising humanitarian and refugee crisis, placing pressure on societies everywhere.

Violent extremism is one of the threads tying this picture together.

There is no single cause for its rise.

Nor is there a single trajectory that leads a young woman or man to extremist violence.

What we do know is that 'hard power' is not enough to curb this threat.

We need 'soft power.'

Violent extremists promote fear, hatred and division.

We must respond with education and skills for critical thinking, with opportunities for civic engagement, with competences for dialogue across cultures.

We must do everything to counter the propaganda of violent extremism.

Some 60,000 twitter accounts support Daesh today, with an average of one thousand followers.

This campaign is high quality, multilingual, and well-targeted.

Its siren call is alarmingly strong.

Today, there are 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters in Syria and Iraq, in Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen.

We must respond.

When violent extremists say humanity is not a single community, when they say diversity is unacceptable – we must respond by showing that dialogue between cultures is the driving force of all history.

This is why I went to the University of Bagdad last March, to launch a new global social media campaign -- **#Unite4Heritage** -- to engage young people across the world in countering hate propaganda, in strengthening the narrative of a single humanity.

This is youth inclusion for dialogue and peace.

The same goal guides UNESCO's action against youth radicalisation on the Internet, through youth engagement, through new forms of media literacy.

Last September, at the invitation of the President of the United States, I spoke on the importance of education at the *Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism*, in New York, on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

Here, I recall the words of Prime Minister David Cameron who stated that we have to go to where extremism starts, to stop the process then and not at the end – we have to prevent it from happening.

In November, UNESCO held the first ever *Global Conference of Ministers of Education* on education to prevent violent extremism.

We are leading the struggle on the ground.

In Iraq, in Syria, in Lebanon, in Jordan, UNESCO is investing in education for young Internally Displaced Persons and refugees.

In the *NetMed Youth project*, UNESCO is supporting the civic engagement and inclusion of young women and men in 10 countries around the Mediterranean.

All of this is part of UNESCO's contribution to the implementation of the *United Nations Secretary-General Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*.

Education is a central plank in this struggle.

Education for inclusion - education for the empowerment of every boy and girl, especially every girl and young woman.

In 2000, the world committed to achieve universal primary education and gender parity in education by 2015.

There has been tremendous progress, but we are far from the mark.

Only 60 percent of countries have achieved parity in primary education and only 38 percent in secondary.

UNESCO's new *e-Atlas of Gender Inequality in Education* shows girls around the world are twice as likely as boys to remain completely excluded from education.

On current trends, as UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report shows, the most disadvantaged girls in sub-Saharan Africa will only make it to school in 2086.

The gap is wider in South and West Asia, where 80 percent of girls out of school will *never* start compared to 16 percent of out-of-school boys.

Promoting gender equality is global priority for UNESCO – and an imperative.

In 2011, UNESCO launched the *Better Life, Better Future Initiative* – working with private sector companies in Africa and Asia, this initiative has spurred innovative alliances to empower adolescent girls and young women.

I would highlight the launch took place with H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, who has done so much to advance the education of girls and young women in her country.

In similar spirit, last October, we launched the *Girls' Right to Education Programme* in Pakistan, to support access, improved teacher training and community action in hard-to-reach areas of the country.

In October, I was honoured to welcome H.E. John Dramani Mahama, President of Ghana, to UNESCO, when he spoke of greater public expenditure on education, leading to a significant increase in pre-primary and primary enrolments, catalysing progress towards gender equality.

We will be making this investment case globally with President Peter Mutharika of Malawi, one of the co-conveners with Prime Minister Solberg of Norway, of the International Commission on the Financing of Global Education Opportunity.

I welcome the appointment of President John Dramani Mahama as Co-Chair of the group of *Sustainable Development Goals Advocates*, with the Prime Minister of Norway, Ms. Erna Solberg, to generate momentum by 2030.

UNESCO brings the same determination to its action with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – or Big Ocean Sustainable States (BOSS)...

UNESCO is one of the champions of SIDS – through the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission; through many programmes and initiatives we have launched.

Cyclone Winston in Fiji shows the vulnerabilities all societies share, especially Small Island Developing States – and the importance of education for disaster risk reduction, climate change and education for sustainable development, to build resilience in societies.

Following the *3rd International Conference of Small Island Developing States* in Samoa, UNESCO is strengthening the capacities of SIDS Member States to take forward Disaster Risk Education and Climate Change Education. I commend

Australia and New Zealand for their support to this Conference, and most importantly to UNESCO.

This includes country programmes, for instance in Guyana and Tuvalu, to build capacity.

This includes training planners and curriculum developers from Caribbean countries, to strengthen the disaster preparedness through education and safe school facilities.

The *UNESCO Sandwatch programme* is taken forward in more than 50 countries – most are SIDS -- to monitor changes in coastal environments and build resilience to climate change.

With the Commonwealth, we are advancing sustainability science globally, bridging the interface between science, innovation and policy. Malaysia leads on this front, through projects benefitting SIDS, and under what I would describe as the enlightened guidance of Professor Zakri, hosting the Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board last May.

In April, I will have the pleasure to appoint the former President of Kenya H.E. Mwai Kibaki, as Special Envoy on Water – a crucial dimension of the SDG agenda and of the development of the African continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All of these are questions UNESCO and the Commonwealth are seeking to address together.

To provide young women and men with quality education and skills.

To empower them as agents of change.

To make the most of cultural and linguistic diversity on the basis of human rights.

I see the same vision expressed in the *Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2007-2015* and the *UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021*.

Together, we have implemented youth projects in Africa, notably in Zambia, building capacity with policy-makers in 10 African countries.

Together, we are supporting Governments in leading national youth policies.

Together, we are promoting youth civic engagement and democratic participation, in Africa, the Arab world, Asia.

Together, we are bolstering technical and vocational education and training, to provide young women and men with essential skills.

Education is a basic human right.

It is a huge transformational force, for resilience, for sustainable development.

It is also a security imperative, for more inclusive and peaceful societies.

Today, in a world changing rapidly, I believe this has never been so important.

In this spirit, I wish to end with the words of a man who helped set the course of Africa's renaissance, who remains an inspiration to us all.

This man is Nelson Mandela, who said:

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

In his memoir, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela wrote:

"No one is born hating another person, because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

I believe this is the sense of new humanism.

We must educate for inclusion, dialogue and tolerance.

We need to teach solidarity, mutual respect and peace.

This is the frontline in our struggle to build a more just, more peaceful world and sustainable future for all.

We need societies that recognize diversity as a source of strength and not a weakness, as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently said in Davos – this is our shared conviction.

Once again, I am honoured to be here.

Thank you very much.