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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

6 April 2016

What role can sport play today in building peace and inclusive societies? This International Day offers us an opportunity to uphold the essential values of sharing, mutual respect and self-improvement that embody the spirit of sport.

Sport brings us together around positive values and makes it possible to promote a culture of dialogue across boundaries – the history of sport has shown its power to break down prejudices, to pave the way for and promote the movements striving for the rights and dignity of individuals, giving them a global audience.

Sport is a powerful vehicle for social inclusion, gender equality and youth empowerment, with benefits that are felt far beyond the stadiums. Indeed, the values acquired in and through sport – such as fair play and a team spirit – are invaluable to the whole of society.

It is vital, therefore, to protect sport as a space for education and respect, to safeguard it from the cheating and doping that undermine the sporting ethic and the health of the athletes. I am delighted that the Member States of UNESCO adopted the new International Charter of Physical Education and Sport in November 2015. The revised Charter, in laying down the ethical principles and standards of quality to ensure participation for all in sport, marks a major step towards a fairer, more inclusive and more tolerant sporting environment. It also needs to ensure support for all those women and men in the world who show their commitment each day, as volunteers and professionals, to fostering the spirit of sport as an infinite source of renewal and vitality for societies.

Irina Bokova