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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 World Poetry Day

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Shakespeare, who died 400 years ago, wrote in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that:
"The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to heaven. And as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name".

By paying tribute to the men and women whose only instrument is free speech, who imagine and act, UNESCO recognizes in poetry its value as a symbol of the human spirit's creativity. By giving form and words to that which has none – such as the unfathomable beauty that surrounds us, the immense suffering and misery of the world – poetry contributes to the expansion of our common humanity, helping to increase its strength, solidarity and self-awareness.

The voices that carry poetry help to promote linguistic diversity and freedom of expression. They participate in the global effort towards artistic education and the dissemination of culture. The first word of a poem sometimes suffices to regain confidence in the face of adversity, to find the path of hope in the face of barbarity. In the age of automation and the immediacy of modern life, poetry also opens a space for the freedom and adventure inherent in human dignity. From Korean Arirang to Mexican Pirekua, the Hudhud chants of the Ifugao people, Saudi Arabian Alardah, Turkmen Koroghlu and Kyrgyz Aitysh, each culture has its poetic art that it uses to transmit knowledge, socio-cultural values and collective memory, which strengthen mutual respect, social cohesion and the search for peace.

Today, I applaud the practitioners, actors, storytellers and all those anonymous voices committed to and through poetry, giving readings in the shadows or in the spotlights, in gardens or streets. I call upon all Member States to support this poetic effort, which has the power to bring us together, regardless of origins or beliefs, by that which is at the very core of humanity.

Irina Bokova