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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the International Day for the Conservation of the  
Mangrove Ecosystem**

**26 July 2016**

Mangroves are rare, spectacular and prolific ecosystems on the boundary between land and sea. They ensure food security for local communities. They provide biomass, forest products and sustain fisheries. They contribute to the protection of coastlines. They help mitigate the effects of climate change and extreme weather events.

This is why the protection of mangrove ecosystems is essential today. Their survival faces serious challenges -- from the alarming rise of the sea level and biodiversity that is increasingly endangered. The earth and humanity simply cannot afford to lose these vital ecosystems.

UNESCO has always been on the frontline of promoting new and harmonious relations between humanity and nature, where the preservation of mangrove ecosystems carries special importance.

To this end, UNESCO is working across the board and with all partners on an open initiative on mangroves and sustainable development. UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves has 86 sites out of 669 that include areas of mangroves. Many are in developing countries and Small Island Developing States – such as La Hotte Biosphere Reserve in Haiti and the island of Principe in Sao Tome and Principe, as well as the Can Gio Mangrove in Viet Nam. The UNESCO World Heritage List includes the Sundarbans, the largest unbroken mangrove system in the World, shared between Bangladesh and India and home to the iconic Royal Bengal Tiger.

The UNESCO Global Geoparks Network also has mangrove sites, like the Langkawi Global Geopark of Malaysia.

On this first *International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystems*, UNESCO's message is clear. Taking forward the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* means forging new sustainable pathways to development in harmony with the earth. This means preserving all mangrove ecosystems.

Irina Bokova