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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO  
on the occasion  
of International Day for Tolerance**

**16 November 2009**

On 16 November 1995, the day of its fiftieth anniversary, UNESCO's Member States, meeting at the 28th session of the General Conference, proclaimed 16 November International Day for Tolerance and unanimously adopted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. Every year since then, the International Day for Tolerance has provided an opportunity for a critical reflection on progress and the next steps to be taken in our work to make the world a more tolerant place for everyone, particularly the most vulnerable communities.

In today's rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world, people of different cultural and religious backgrounds naturally come into daily contact. Unfortunately, such encounters are not always embraced as enriching experiences and we see daily evidence of how ignorance and intolerance provide fertile ground for mistrust and conflict. The financial and economic crisis of the past year has exacerbated this situation, with more than 100 million people slipping into poverty and often seeking someone to blame.

We need to stem this trend through bold programmes that promote pluralism, peace, justice and human solidarity as the foundation for a more just, inclusive and sustainable future. Education is a powerful vehicle for countering influences that lead to fear and exclusion of others. By developing capacities for independent judgement, critical thinking and ethical reasoning, we can raise awareness about people's shared rights and freedoms and encourage tolerance in all areas of public life.

The International Day for Tolerance 2009 takes on special significance, falling as it does on the eve of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, 2010. It is an occasion to mobilize educators, the media, and public and private institutions to increase their efforts to raise public awareness of the dangers of intolerance and reaffirm a collective determination to promote dialogue and non-violence.

It is also my first opportunity to address the International Community since assuming my functions as Director-General of UNESCO. My message is clear: each of us shares the responsibility for building a better global order through mutual respect and understanding. I am determined during my tenure to do my utmost to promote these values, which are the foundations of democracy and peace. On International Day for Tolerance 2009, let us redouble our efforts to construct a tolerant world, for all people, everywhere.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line to the left of the name.

Irina Bokova