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

**18 July 2013**

On *Nelson Mandela International Day*, I join women and men across the world in honouring a man whose strength, vision and magnanimity changed South Africa and the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador since 2005, Nelson Mandela once said that "*education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*"

The life of Nelson Mandela is an education to us all – an example of perseverance in overcoming adversity, of courage in braving the steepest challenges, of moral clarity in promoting reconciliation and peace.

Nelson Mandela has taught the world that the dignity of women and men is the only foundation on which to build just societies. He has shown us that peace is not an ideal, or something abstract, but a way of living, a way of interacting with others and with the world.

On this day, let us pay tribute to Nelson Mandela by upholding and sharing the values that inspire him. In a world where all societies are transforming and every woman and man faces rising pressures, let us all stay true to the moral compass set by Nelson Mandela. Respect, mutual understanding and reconciliation are the strongest foundations for peace and freedom. In this spirit, we must help others, we must reach across all dividing lines, and we must cherish the world we live in. This is UNESCO's message today.

Irina Bokova