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

17 November 2016

This year, we celebrate World Philosophy Day immediately after International Day for Tolerance. This coincidence is deeply significant, given the link between tolerance and philosophy. Philosophy thrives on the understanding of, respect and consideration for the diversity of opinions, thoughts and cultures that enrich the way we live in the world. As with tolerance, philosophy is an art of living together, with due regard to rights and common values. It is the ability to see the world with a critical eye, aware of the viewpoints of others, strengthened by the freedom of thought, conscience and belief.

For all these reasons, philosophy is more than an academic subject; it is a daily practice that helps people to live in a better, more humane way. Philosophical questioning is learned and honed from the youngest age, as an essential key to inspiring public debate and defending humanism, which is suffering the violence and tensions in the world. Philosophy does not offer any ready-to-use solutions, but a perpetual quest to question the world and try to find a place in it. Along this road, tolerance is both a moral virtue and a practical tool for dialogue. It has nothing to do with the naive relativism that claims everything is equally valid; it is an individual imperative to listen, all the more striking because it is founded on a resolute commitment to defend the universal principles of dignity and freedom.

This year, UNESCO celebrates the birthdays of two eminent philosophers, Aristotle and Leibniz, who contributed to the development of metaphysics and science, logic and ethics. Both of them, a few centuries apart and in very different cultural contexts, placed philosophy at the core of public life, as the centrepiece of a free

and dignified life. Let us, in turn, celebrate this spirit; let us dare to open spaces for free, open and tolerant thinking. On the basis of this dialogue, we can build stronger cooperation between citizens, societies and States, as a lasting foundation for peace.

Irina Bokova