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Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the event organized by Albania, Jordan and the Holy**

**See “Fighting radicalization and extremism through Education”**

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H. E. Mr Ditmir Bushati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania,

H.E. Ms Dina Kavar, Ambassador Extraordinary of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United States of America,

His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, The Holy See,

Mr David N. Saperstein, US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom,

Professor Abbadi Ahmed, Secretary General, *Muhammadan League of Religious Scholars*, Morocco,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the Governments of Albania and Jordan, and the Holy See, for this initiative, as well as related regional initiatives.

Violent extremism is a threat to human rights and to international peace and security – it is tearing societies and communities apart.

Tackling this threat is a huge responsibility, of which UNESCO is deeply aware, and this is why we are acting across the board.

This goes to the heart of the UNESCO Constitution, to build the defences of peace in the minds of women and men, starting with education, starting with the soft power of learning, the sciences, intercultural dialogue, on the basis of shared values.

There is no single cause, there is no single trajectory, leading a young woman or man to extremist violence – nor, indeed, are there talismanic responses, as Professor Ahmed said.

What we do know is ‘hard power’ is not enough to *counter* a threat fuelled by distorted visions of faith and hatred -- we must seek to *prevent* it, as highlighted in the UN Secretary General’s *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, to which UNESCO contributed.

Violent extremists promote fear and hatred.

We must respond with skills, with dialogue.

Violent extremists preach exclusion and racism.

We must teach human rights and tolerance.

Young people are learning to hate – we must teach them peace.

In August 2015, I was honoured to participate in the *1<sup>st</sup> Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security*, initiated by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II.

A few months earlier, in April, His Royal Highness spoke before the Security Council and said:

*“We are in a race to invest in the hearts and minds as well as the capabilities of the youth.”*

I agree fully.

I recall the speech of His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, at UNESCO last year, on education for peace, which left a deep imprint on all Member States.

We know the importance Albania ascribes to this threat, which I wish to commend – UNESCO is supporting Albania in crafting new curricula on global citizenship education, as part of efforts to prevent violent extremism.

Let me give you a telling example. This is the spirit guiding UNESCO's support to Malaysia – notably in the ground-breaking *Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025* -- to strengthen inclusion, to deepen education for peace, education to learn to live together – this is *prevention*, this strengthens the foundations for peace and non-violence, and this is an excellent example for many other countries.

In May 2015, I launched the *YesPeace Network* in Malaysia, to support youth engagement and education for peace, with the *Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development*, based in India.

Prevention must begin as early as possible... on the benches of schools, through global citizenship education, through Holocaust Education, by taking forward SDG 4 on education, by supporting teachers and teacher training, on the basis of human rights, as led by Columbia University.

I spoke on this at the *Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism* last September, invited by the United States President.

Last November, UNESCO held the first *High-Level Conference on Education to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism*, with Mr Anthony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State.

This year, we launched a *Teacher's Guide on Countering Violent Extremism*.

As we speak, UNESCO is leading the *1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism Through Education* in New Delhi, exploring a draft *Guide for Policy-Makers on Preventing Violent Extremism*.

To counter radicalisation, we must nurture the Internet as a force for tolerance.

In June 2015, UNESCO held the first *International Conference on Youth and the Internet – Fighting Radicalisation* – we will hold a second on countering youth radicalization in cyberspace next month in Canada, to foster new multistakeholder partnerships.

Last year, I went to the University of Baghdad, to launch a social media campaign -- #Unite4Heritage -- to strengthen the message of a united humanity.

The same goals guide UNESCO's action to safeguard cultural heritage and diversity -- in Mali, Iraq, Syria.

Violent extremism is a threat to the humanity we all share.

We must respond with skills, with jobs, to tackle root causes.

We must respond with freedom of expression, to raise the flag for messages of human rights and peace.

We must respond with more culture, more history, indeed, to delegitimise violent extremists.

This is how we can prevent violent extremism.

Thank you.