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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of International Day for Biological Diversity**

**22 May 2015**

In 2015, the *International Day for Biological Diversity* is dedicated to the theme of 'Biodiversity for Sustainable Development.'

This corresponds to the *Gangwon Declaration on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development*, adopted at the 2014 meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, embedded in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Aligning biodiversity with the mainstream of international cooperation for sustainable development is essential today. Embodying a wide range of values – from ecological, genetic and social to economic, scientific, educational, cultural and aesthetic -- biodiversity must stand at the heart of the new global sustainable development agenda.

UNESCO is uniquely positioned to advance and promote biodiversity, and all of its values, in ways that are vital for building resilient societies.

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves are flagships of UNESCO action to promote sustainable biological diversity at local, national and international levels. World Heritage Sites express outstanding universal values, essential to all humanity, while Biosphere Reserves are active learning sites for sustainable development.

Today, this brings together 197 natural and 31 mixed World Heritage properties -- exceptional examples of the evolution of life, the history of the planet and the

conservation of terrestrial, aquatic and marine biodiversity – along with 631 Biosphere Reserves in 119 countries, covering almost all types of major ecosystems. In all of this, UNESCO promotes deeper cross-border cooperation, to build solidarity and the spirit of peace at a time when these have never been so important.

Partnership is the key to success, and this is why UNESCO works so deeply across the United Nations, including with such platforms as the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, to promote sustainable biological diversity.

Albert Einstein once said, “Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.”

This is UNESCO’s message on *International Day of Biological Diversity*. This must be the message we send throughout this year, as States shape a new global development agenda and address the consequences of climate change.

Irina Bokova