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联合国教育、
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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO,**

on the occasion of International Day for Tolerance

16 November 2016

In a world of diversity, tolerance is a prerequisite for peace. It is also a lever for sustainable development, as it encourages the construction of more inclusive and thus more resilient societies that are able to draw on the ideas, creative energy and talents of each of their members.

Tolerance is often a minority idea and one that is sometimes threatened. In too many countries in the world I have noted the rise of doctrines based on withdrawal and rejection. I have noted that migratory crises, the tragic situation of refugees and armed conflicts are being used as tools to whip up hatred of the other, stigmatize minorities and legitimize discrimination. I have heard the rise in racist attitudes and stereotyping of religions and cultures, as it is said that different peoples cannot live together and that the world would be a better place if we returned to olden times when “pure cultures” lived alone, protected from outside influence, in a mythicized past that has never existed.

We must counter this tendency to isolationism by restoring strength and substance to the culture of tolerance. We must again emphasize the extent to which cultures are enriched by mutual exchange. We must remember the historical facts, recall how peoples and identities have mingled, engendering richer, more complex cultures with multiple identities. Using the living testimony of world heritage sites, we can show that no culture has ever grown in isolation, and that diversity is a strength, not a weakness. We must say again that tolerance is not naive or passive acceptance of difference: it is a fight for the respect of fundamental rights.

Tolerance is not relativism or indifference. It is a commitment renewed every day to seek in our diversity the bonds that unite humanity.

The promotion of the spirit of tolerance is the source and purpose of UNESCO's actions. It is inspired by the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, adopted in 1995. It draws on many educational, cultural and scientific programmes, in the framework of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, and the promotion of global citizenship education. These programmes need to be supported and relayed by public policies, in official speeches and in daily behaviour, in the media and in the streets of our towns and cities. I call upon all UNESCO's Member States and all the citizens of the world to take up this message, to build together societies that are more inclusive, more peaceful and more prosperous, because they are more tolerant.

Irina Bokova