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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from

**Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO,**

on the occasion of International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

UNESCO, 27 January 2014

Each anniversary of the liberation of the concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau reminds us with horror of the atrocities that were committed by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

This collapse in the values that underpin our humanity reminds us of the fragility of peace and the urgency of strengthening the pillars of tolerance, respect for others and human rights. This obligation applies to all countries, now and in the future.

Auschwitz-Birkenau and its industrialized killing system represent a culmination point in the destruction of humans by other humans. In the name of a racist ideology, of which hatred of Jews was the central element, people of all ages and all conditions were systematically murdered on a continental scale, simply because they were Jewish. Millions of other individuals, because of their supposed racial inferiority, their ideas, or on other grounds, were persecuted and killed by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Second World War.

The genocide of the Jewish people also sought to wipe out a centuries-old European cultural heritage. UNESCO pays tribute to the victims without graves, who would be condemned a second time if they were forgotten by history. UNESCO pays tribute also to the survivors, some of whom share their testimonies in schools.

The more removed this tragedy becomes from us in time, and as the survivors pass on, the greater the need to teach the meaning of this history for the present. The Holocaust shows just how far hatred can go. It also reminds us that the folly of some is often taken forward through the ignorance and indifference of others who, through lack of historical knowledge, fail to heed the harbinger signs of extreme violence. This risk remains present today. Those who deny or relativize the crimes of the Holocaust seek to perpetuate the causes of genocide and to revive violence. Education remains the last bastion to protect us against this threat, and this is where UNESCO's mission takes on its full significance.

Remembrance must be the first step in a common effort to prevent any further genocide and any repetition of new mass violence. For this, UNESCO is helping States to integrate these difficult issues in their educational priorities, developing the network of UNESCO Chairs on this topic and supporting the design and evaluation of educational content.

On this day, I call on all members of UNESCO to persevere in spreading knowledge of this history and to combat all forms of racism and anti-Semitism. Teaching about the Holocaust is a real way to fight intolerance and prejudice around the world, by taking ownership of a history that sheds light on our common humanity.

UNESCO was established in the wake of the Holocaust on the conviction that lasting peace must draw on the mutual understanding of peoples and cultures, nurtured through education and knowledge sharing, in ways that highlight the best of humanity in ourselves. The Holocaust has shown us the worst of ourselves, and remembrance of the victims must accompany us in our quest for a world where such horrors will never reoccur.

Irina Bokova