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科学及文化组织

**Message from Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the World Environment Day 2010**

**5 June 2010**

On the occasion of World Environment Day 2010, we celebrate the theme 'Many Species, One Planet, One Future'. Today, and through this year – the International Year of Biodiversity - we celebrate diversity on Earth. In essence, biodiversity is the diversity of all living forms. Diversity also expresses itself through cultural diversity, and the two are inextricably linked.

Biodiversity sustains and inspires our cultures and belief systems. We, in turn, shape biodiversity. For example, through agro-biodiversity, we have obtained the immense variety of crops and livestock on which people depend. We have had a central role in shaping another level of biodiversity – landscapes and seascapes – some of which are nowadays recognized as the common heritage of mankind because of their unique beauty, native life forms and contribution to both nature and culture.

Why must we protect this diversity? First and foremost, it is a matter of sustainability. Biodiversity guarantees resilient ecosystems that contribute to the resources on which our well-being depends. Similarly, cultural diversity is a key ingredient of social organization and stability and is the basis of the diversity of practices for accessing and utilizing living resources.

Science has demonstrated that we, as a species, are an integral part of biodiversity. We are not above the laws of nature and have a moral imperative to maintain the biodiversity of which we are part.

On World Environment Day, we need to think about what we can concretely achieve to protect our environment and planet. I believe that in this Year of

Biodiversity 2010, there are several actions that we can take which would have an enduring positive impact:

We can scale up significantly current efforts in the discovery, naming, describing and classification of natural organisms by scientists and people everywhere. In this era of global change, we can best develop strategies for biodiversity conservation by studying the changing geographical distribution of species and how their distribution will be affected by, for example, climate change.

We can give full and effective recognition to the important contribution of indigenous and traditional knowledge, promoting the dynamic exchange of information and know-how to support biodiversity conservation and healthy ecosystems. We can recognize much more forcefully the role that women play in developing and transmitting specific biodiversity knowledge and their role in biodiversity management and decision-making.

We can conserve many more areas that are important for biodiversity, on land and at sea, taking into account the aspirations and views of various sectors of society. We can strive for a strengthened interface of biodiversity science with policy. These are the main action items that emerged from a major science policy conference which UNESCO hosted on the occasion of the launch of the International Year of Biodiversity.

I profoundly believe that we hold the future of biodiversity largely in our hands.

Biodiversity is life, biodiversity is our life, as the motto of the International Year of Biodiversity reminds us. On World Environment Day 2010, let our actions show that we understand its importance.

Irina Bokova