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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 of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

27 January 2013

On the anniversary of the liberation of the concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, UNESCO reaffirms the urgent need to teach the history of the genocide of the Jews and Nazi crimes. This commitment is guided by the conviction that remembering the fallen can guide the living on the path to peace. On this day, we acknowledge the survivors and their efforts to pass on their experience and to revive the heritage of Jewish communities after the Second World War. Their testimony reminds us that humanity, which we now know is capable of the worst, is also a force of life and solidarity.

The 2013 *International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust* focuses on the theme of rescue. Let us recall that many of those who survived managed to do so because they were helped. They were hidden, warned of a raid, protected by a helping hand or by the silence of those who did not denounce them. They were supported by organized groups of both Jews and non-Jews as well as by individuals. In two countries in particular, Bulgaria and Denmark, whole sections of society mobilized to prevent deportation. Wherever evil struck, the righteous stood up, even at the risk of their own lives, against the violence of killers and the indifference of many others.

These men and women carry a vital message – it is always possible to act against racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance. We must convey this message of resistance and this lesson in humanity, in all its strength and complexity, against the temptation to forget or to take misleading shortcuts due to the passage of time.

Celebrating their bravery means remembering also that it was unfortunately not the rule, but the exception. Six million people from all backgrounds and circumstances were killed in the Holocaust because they were Jewish. The Nazis and their collaborators also persecuted and killed the Roma and Sinti, people with disabilities, political dissidents and homosexuals, among others, in the name of a criminal ideology of inequality among people.

The importance of this moral collapse is universal. We must reflect on its causes and consequences in order to build, through better knowledge of the past, the conditions for lasting peace. This is all the more urgent as the last eyewitnesses are passing away. We must work over the long-term, beyond commemorations, through education, teacher training and the dissemination of content adapted to every media and every audience. UNESCO supports this cause and pays tribute to the victims in order to lay the ground for a better future and to prevent further genocide and mass violence. This is the goal of the conference held on 28 January, organized by UNESCO in cooperation with the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

In the face of the extreme violence shaking the world, the resurgence of racism and anti-Semitism in all forms and the rise of discourse seeking to deny or relativize the distinct reality of the genocide of the Jewish people, our resolve is stronger than ever. It is notable that fifteen African countries have just committed, alongside UNESCO, to strengthen the teaching of the Holocaust in their curricula. This is a historic step for shaping a common memory of humanity around shared values. Today, I call on all Member States to intensify efforts in this mission, in the name of respect and human dignity.

Irina Bokova