



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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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 the International Day of the World's Indigenous People**

**9 August 2014**

In September, the United Nations General Assembly will hold the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. This will review progress towards the fulfilment of indigenous peoples' rights, and efforts to implement the 2007 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Major gaps remain at all levels, which UNESCO is committed to helping to bridge.

UNESCO is leading the way in education with two angles of action – first, to promote the use and survival of indigenous cultures, languages, knowledge, traditions and identity, and second, to provide knowledge and skills that enable indigenous peoples to participate fully and equally in the national and international community.

We are taking this forward also in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. With our partners, we are advocating for an ambitious and comprehensive education goal that provides due respect to local knowledge systems, including those of indigenous peoples.

In the field of culture, UNESCO is working with States to recognize the role of culture as an enabler and a driver of inclusive, sustainable development. For effective and meaningful ownership of all development efforts, we must build on cultural diversity through all public policies and measures.

In December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a third milestone resolution on “Culture and Sustainable Development” (A/C.2/68/L.69). This acknowledges the linkages between culture and the three pillars of sustainable

development, as well as with peace and security, encouraging States to give due consideration to culture in the post-2015 development agenda. Highlighting the link between cultural and biological diversity, the Resolution also underlines the positive contribution of local and indigenous knowledge in tackling environmental challenges.

UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme is the spearhead of our action – to advance respect for indigenous peoples' rights to maintain, control, protect and develop their traditional knowledge, and to participate in environmental decision-making.

To this end, we are working to promote the role of indigenous knowledge in major intergovernmental environmental processes. The 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was important in this respect, concluding that knowledge systems, "including indigenous peoples' holistic views of community and environment, are a major resource for adapting to climate change". The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services has adopted recognition of indigenous and local knowledge as one of its operating principles – with a Task Force focusing on this issue, for which UNESCO has been designated as the technical support unit.

The *International Day of the World's Indigenous People* is a moment to acknowledge the vital contribution of indigenous peoples to innovation and creativity, to sustainable development as well as to cultural diversity. It is also an opportunity for all to mobilise to bridge the gaps that remain to the fulfilment of indigenous peoples' rights. This is essential today and tomorrow, as we shape the new post-2015 development agenda.

Irina Bokova