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Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

## Message by

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

**on the occasion of International Arts Education Week**

**21-27 May 2012**

Art brings us closer together. It helps feel and understand that which unites humanity in its diversity of cultures and expressions.

As a vector of dialogue in the loftiest sense, art speeds up social inclusion and tolerance in our multicultural, connected societies. A painting, an artefact, a piece of ancestral music – each of these speaks volumes about the history of civilizations and the ties that bind them. Young people must be taught to love art: this will help them understand each other better.

The awareness of art can be acquired from an early age and maintained throughout life. Guided by the conviction that creativity and the arts, and learning about them, contribute to building prosperous and peaceful societies UNESCO encourages its Member States to support arts education, at school and beyond. Arts education is important for fostering generations that are capable of reinventing the world they have inherited. It supports the vitality of cultural identities by emphasizing their links with other cultures, thus contributing to the construction of a shared heritage. It helps to form tolerant and dynamic citizens for a globalizing world.

The General Conference of UNESCO proclaimed the fourth week of May as International Arts Education Week. This will be marked for the first time from 21 to 27 May 2012, and it will highlight the importance and usefulness of arts education. The World Conferences on Arts Education, held in Lisbon in 2006 and Seoul in 2010, identified strong guiding principles. The Seoul Agenda for the development of

quality arts education included an action plan available to all Member States. The time has come to speed up implementation.

As the world seeks new paths to peace and development, we must release the power of culture and cultural diversity. Arts education is one of the keys to unlocking this potential, for the benefit of all. Art and creation must take their rightful place at the heart of society. In this International Arts Education Week, I call on UNESCO's partners, governments, educational institutions and members of society to support projects and activities that draw on the force of art for dialogue, social cohesion and peace.

Irina Bokova