



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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Organización
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para la Educación,
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

21 May 2019

A diverse world is not only more peaceful, it is also more prosperous and more equitable. Today is an opportunity for us all to celebrate the cultural diversity we cherish and strive to promote at UNESCO, through the 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Diversity takes many forms, but language is perhaps one of the first we encounter as social beings. Language is what defines our internal world just as much as it defines the way we communicate in the outside world. It is what connects us to our roots, our culture and history, but also to our communities and our families.

The year 2019 has been declared the International Year of Indigenous Languages by the General Assembly of the United Nations, an initiative to bring awareness to the importance of linguistic diversity. There are over 7,000 languages spoken across the world, the majority of which are spoken by indigenous people. Each language is a treasure of knowledge and memory, a unique point of view, and a resource in the face of global challenges. For how can we hope to solve the issues of climate change, education for all, or assist communities recovering from periods of conflict without the participation of the world in all of its diversity?

Through the plurality of its voices, cultural diversity is believed to be one of humanity's original renewable resources, as it offers a constant source of innovation and creativity. As stated by the 2002 Johannesburg Declaration: "Our rich diversity...is our collective strength". At the heart of a rich intangible heritage, diversity is a resource for development, but also for dialogue, reconciliation and resilience – in these challenging times, there is a need to speak up for the value and the power of cultural diversity.

On 21 May, the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, UNESCO encourages people around the world to join us in celebrating cultural diversity, and advocating for ways to protect and promote it in their own communities. In this way, all will be included and no one will be left behind.