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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of the World Water Day**

22 March 2015

This year, *World Water Day* carries on the theme of 'Water and Sustainable Development,' providing an essential opportunity to highlight the role of freshwater in the sustainable development agenda that States are shaping to follow 2015.

This is a moment to chart a new course – to change practices and actions that favour development at a significant environmental and social cost, including pollution, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and growing urban deprivation. Current trends in consumption show that there will be insufficient water in general, and quality water in particular, to meet the world's growing needs without dramatically changing the way these finite resources are used, managed and shared. In the face of competing demands, neglecting this fact will lead to increasingly difficult decisions to allocate water resources. The risk of localized conflicts cannot be overlooked in such a scenario.

We need concrete steps towards achieving sustainability at the global scale, in order to curb the rate at which the climate is changing. Water-related disasters have become the most economically and socially destructive of all natural hazards, disproportionately affecting women, poor and disadvantaged people and fuelling poverty.

In 2015, building on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals, States will craft a new and ambitious global development agenda and set action-oriented Sustainable Development Goals. The development of science, technology and innovation must have a central place in this new agenda. This will allow for modern assessments of water resources based on sound information systems and

management approaches and it will also provide the foundation to move towards sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

UNESCO is committed to advancing these goals across the board, drawing on its unique 'water family,' including our International Hydrological Programme, the Institute for Water Education in Delft, the World Water Assessment Programme in Perugia, as well as UNESCO centres and Chairs specialized in water around the globe. 2015 must become the year for the international community to enshrine the importance of capacity enhancement and sharing good practices in water to build the future we want for all.

Irina Bokova