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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the International Day for  
Universal Access to Information**

**28 September 2017**

In a globalizing world, access to information is vital to build more inclusive, sustainable knowledge societies. This is the message of the *International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI)*, focusing on the key role that access to information plays in taking forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Access to information is a fundamental right. It allows women and men to understand and participate in creating and sharing the knowledge they need to contribute fully to society. It is a condition of informed citizenship, helping to hold governments accountable. It is a driver of innovation and creativity, widening opportunities for all, especially for girls and women.

Being informed starts with the commitment of Governments to develop, promulgate and enforce policies and laws on the Right to Information to guarantee the respect of this human right. This requires efficient implementation mechanisms and a culture of transparency across all types of institutions. Citizens need also to have the critical thinking, literacy and digital skills required to access, analyse and use the information in different ways, offline and online. This is why UNESCO calls on all governments and partners to leverage the power of Information and Communication Technologies to help achieve Sustainable Education Goal 4 for ensuring “*inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*” Access to Information is also about promoting development of content that will be relevant, local and multilingual. All of this calls for proactive policies and strong partnerships at all levels.

The International Day for Universal Access to Information is also an opportunity to renew our commitment to freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. The

media play a crucial role in facilitating access to information to citizens and in monitoring important social issues while enlightening their audiences with insight and knowledge. There cannot be universal access to information without free and independent media.

Access to information is not only a goal in itself; it is also a key contributor to the realization of all other Sustainable Development goals. It is therefore crucial that we continue our efforts to ensure that every woman and man enjoys full access to information.

Irina Bokova