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Организация
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联合国教育、
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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of African World Heritage Day**

5 May 2020

At a time of crisis, anxiety and uncertainty, the world's cultural and natural heritage is an invaluable resource that fuels our resilience, helps us find solutions, and brightens the future. This is the role that the African World Heritage, celebrated on this Day, can play for the African populations as well as for humanity as a whole.

Despite the closure of almost all world heritage sites, and despite the lockdown that prevents intangible heritage from flourishing in public, this heritage is more alive than ever, as we have seen with our “#ShareOurHeritage” campaign.

This campaign honours in particular the men and women who work daily to preserve and sustain these sites, through crises and difficulties, and sometimes, unfortunately, even risking their lives to do so. As the closure of the sites represents an immense challenge for them, they need our support and recognition more than ever.

This year's theme also highlights the importance of youth engagement. It is real and it is necessary, because it is through the involvement of youth that heritage will continue to be the lifeblood of contemporary African culture.

Indeed, African artists have demonstrated during this crisis how much they can play a key role in a crisis like the one we are currently going through.

Often, they find themselves on the front line of awareness raising, as we have seen with our “#DontGoViral” campaign: mobilizing writers, painters, singers, creative artists and experts, working to fight against misinformation and the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID).

By constantly creating and bringing their art to life, they are also laying the foundations for the world following this crisis. There is no doubt that they will find in Africa's cultural and natural heritage an infinite resource and, among its defenders, unwavering allies. For in the post-COVID world, in order to reopen the future, we will need to anchor ourselves in all that makes up the wealth of our world and our humanity.

This day is therefore an opportunity to pay tribute to all these craftspeople of the future, particularly the young, artists, heritage professionals and amateurs; by working to preserve this heritage of humanity, they enable everyone, everywhere in the world, to be enriched by the inexhaustible cultural and natural wealth of the African continent.