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Message

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

**On the occasion of 'Mandela International Day'
and Nelson Mandela's 94th birthday**

UNESCO, 18 July 2012

Today marks a very special occasion – we celebrate *Nelson Mandela International Day* and Mr. Nelson Mandela's 94th birthday.

On behalf of UNESCO, and in my own name, I extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Mandela, a *UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador* since 2005.

In November 2009, the United Nations General Assembly declared 18 July *Nelson Mandela International Day*, in recognition of his contribution to the culture of peace that is at the heart of UNESCO's mission.

We celebrate today his unwavering commitment to justice, dialogue and freedom.

He helped shape the 20th century in the direction of greater peace and understanding, guided by a profound belief in the dignity of every man and woman.

His every act embodied the idea of 'everyday peace' that guides UNESCO.

"To be free," he reminded us, "is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

He has inspired millions across the world, struggling for freedom and he will remain a beacon of hope for many more in the future.

On this day, let us honour this most generous of men and draw on the profound humanism that inspires him. Let us act the values he has championed. Let us overcome justice through dialogue and build peace on the basis of dignity and rights.

Happy birthday, Nelson Mandela.

Irina Bokova