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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of *World Water Day***

**22 March 2013**

This *World Water Day* occurs during the 2013 *International Year of Water Cooperation*. With this, Member States agreed on the importance of water cooperation for human health and well-being, for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and for lasting peace and sustainable development.

The *International Year of Water Cooperation* is guided by the slogan -- “water, water everywhere, only if we share”. This includes the management of transboundary waters between countries – it means also sharing water between different uses and varied users inside national borders. We need stronger water governance between and within States.

Cooperation must be our byword. This is essential to preserve our ecosystems, to eradicate poverty and to advance social equity, including gender equality. Women are key actors -- we must empower them fully with the rights to match their responsibilities. Ensuring equality in access to and control over water resources is important for the well-being of current and future generations.

Water challenges are complex -- solutions must be equally multi-faceted. This calls for innovative thinking and cooperation across the board. For this, UNESCO pursues a wide angle, drawing on its International Hydrological Programme as well as its 29 water-related Chairs and 18 water-related centres. These include the *IHE-Institute for Water Education*, in the Netherlands, which has trained 15,000 water professionals from 160 countries since 1957.

Water cooperation is not a technical or scientific issue. This is about fighting poverty and protecting the environment. It is about laying the foundations for sustainable development and lasting peace.

Governments must commit to finding inclusive and cooperative solutions to water challenges. For this, we must take decisions that involve all relevant actors, from investors to users. Each of us is concerned, and we are all responsible. Water cooperation is not an option – it is an imperative for a better future for all.

Irina Bokova