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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,**

**Director-General of UNESCO,**

**on the occasion of the International Day for Tolerance**

**16 November 2007**

On 16 November 1995, the Member States of UNESCO adopted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance and declared 16 November as International Day for Tolerance. As the authors of the declaration noted, ours is "an age marked by the globalization of the economy and by rapidly increasing mobility, communication, integration and interdependence, large-scale migrations and displacement of populations, urbanization and changing social patterns. Since every part of the world is characterized by diversity, escalating intolerance and strife potentially menaces every region. It is not confined to any country, but is a global threat."

If anything, the conditions described at that time have exacerbated greatly since: the imperative to tolerance is an increasingly urgent one that requires a proactive approach that goes far beyond acceptance to mutual understanding. Certainly, universal human rights and freedoms depend upon legal mechanisms, but these will be respected only if we tolerate one another in the fullest possible sense of that term, which is to say that we respect and appreciate the variety of our cultures, our forms of expression and the different ways of being human.

Since its creation in 1945, UNESCO has always worked to promote tolerance throughout the programmes of its fields of competence - education, culture, the sciences and communication and information. But it has continuously modulated its approaches in terms of the changing possibilities of action and also the challenges of an evolving world, because the types and manifestations of intolerance themselves are not static.

The constituency for tolerance is universal. Just as the fears that give rise to intolerance are individual and private, the struggle for tolerance is individual, and by

extension, it must be embraced by each of us. Organizations such as UNESCO are indeed catalysts, but the affirmation of the dignity of others and the attainment of the harmony of difference are the work of every human heart and mind. As we celebrate International Day for Tolerance, let us also think what we have achieved - as organizations and as single human beings - and what we must still accomplish.

Koïchiro Matsuura