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**Message from Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of World Philosophy Day**

19 November 2009

World Philosophy Day 2009, devoted this year to dialogue between cultures, is an excellent opportunity to reflect on relations of exchange, transfer and movement between men and women, ideas and concepts.

In the run-up to 2010, declared by the United Nations General Assembly the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, it is more important than ever before to examine the current foundations for the free flow of discourse and practice, out of which world cultural diversity is woven.

Philosophy, along with the other social and human sciences, can help us renew the debate on how to engage in this dialogue, which could be defined as a dynamic chorus of social and cultural relationships and interactions open to the plurality of the world. As societies increasingly learn how to live in multicultural environments, we need to shed light on our joint capacity to bring together individual and collective imaginations.

Since its creation in 2005, this Day has rallied researchers, intellectuals, students and philosophy teachers from around the world to examine a wide range of topics. It has also provided the general public with an interdisciplinary and plural open forum for discussion and debate.

This year, from 16-19 November, the Russian Federation is hosting the international component of World Philosophy Day in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. I would also like all our partners around the globe – universities, research institutes, UNESCO Chairs, National Commissions, the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS), International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP), and International Institute of Philosophy (IIP) – to join us in our efforts.

To nurture philosophical debate on cultural dialogue today means, first and foremost, restoring the challenges of diversity, dignity and human rights to the heart of the international agenda. Let us lead this debate with confidence.

Irina Bokova