



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

“2010, International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures”

We are living in a world that is increasingly marked by a growing interdependence in all areas of human activity. The resultant cross-fertilization of our societies offers new opportunities to strengthen the ties between peoples, nations and cultures at the global level. At the same time, with globalization, incomprehension and mistrust have increased in the last few years. The economic, environmental and ethical crisis has further increased this sense of insecurity and mistrust. In the light of these developments, I have proposed a new universal vision, open to the entire human community, which I have called the “new humanism”. I am convinced that UNESCO has all the strengths needed to provide a humanist response to globalization and crisis. In response to the sense of vulnerability which permeates all levels, there is indeed a need to invent new forms of action to safeguard social cohesion and preserve peace.

In view of this urgent necessity, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2010 as International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures and designated UNESCO as lead agency in the celebration of this Year, having regard to its experience of more than 60 years in the work of advancing “the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples”.

Cultures encompass not only art and literature, but also lifestyles, value systems, traditions and beliefs. In this globalizing world, marked by increasingly rapid exchanges and greater complexity, the protection and promotion of this rich diversity present numerous challenges. True, culture is not included among the Millennium Development Goals in its own right, which I regret. But the links between culture and development are so strong that development cannot dispense with culture. I firmly intend to show, through new initiatives, that these links cannot be separated.

The objective of this International Year is to help dissipate any confusion stemming from ignorance, prejudice and exclusion that create tension, insecurity, violence and conflict. The task will be, in campaigning for dialogue and mutual knowledge, to foster respect for each other's culture and break down the barriers between different cultures. Exchange and dialogue between cultures are the best tools for building peace.

Four main strategic lines of action for the Year have been devised. They involve promoting reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity; building a framework for commonly shared values; strengthening quality education and intercultural competences, and fostering dialogue for sustainable development.

I should like to call on all UNESCO's partners to mobilize with the purpose of reaching these objectives: the National Commissions for UNESCO, agencies of the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, Goodwill Ambassadors and Artists for Peace, UNESCO Chairs and Associated Schools, Clubs and Centres, parliamentarians, locally elected officials, the world of culture, the sciences, education and the media, opinion leaders, youth organizations, and civil society as a whole, including the private sector. With the efforts of all, the celebration of the Year 2010 will receive a high profile and will have the greatest possible impact at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Given the new challenges of an increasingly interconnected world, our shared task is to build solid bridges, based on solidarity between all cultures so as to create a new universal ethics of living together.

Irina Bokova

For further information, consult the Year 2010 website: www.unesco.org/culture/dialogue