



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

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

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

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

**16 November 2010**

The stakes are high. In a world that is more connected than ever, where communication has never been so easy, and where the difference between the 'local' and the 'global' is but one click, tolerance must remain at the forefront of our thinking and action. It cannot be taken for granted. The International Day of Tolerance is a key opportunity for all of us to mobilize in this direction.

The dangers are real. Even as old dividing lines are disappearing, new walls between people and communities are rising – walls that are built of fear, prejudice, ignorance and hatred. Every day tells us the story that it is not enough to communicate -- we must connect. It is not enough to exchange, we must share. Tolerance is the starting point.

Promoting intellectual and moral solidarity lies at the heart of UNESCO's mandate. The International Day of Tolerance was proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1995 following a proposal from UNESCO's General Conference. This year, UNESCO is leading UN efforts on the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. We work to promote standards for cultural diversity. We promote the benefits of constant exchange and dialogue across cultures and faiths. We build networks and coalitions to fight against racism and discrimination. We support education of quality for all as a core means for building tolerance and inclusive knowledge. We put dialogue forward in every instance as the path towards reconciliation in societies under stress.

Our work starts from the principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect of all men and women. We work to convince all that the increasing complexity of our world cannot take away from the core values of humanity. Identities are not rigid, but rich

and can be multiple. Promoting tolerance is a question of survival – the survival of cultural diversity, of languages, of everything that makes each of us unique. At its core, it is about forging a common humanity.

Tolerance is liberating. It does not mean indifference or simply recognition. It is an act, whereby the differences of others are recognized as the same as our own and whereby the riches of another culture are taken as the wealth of all. Mutual respect provides us with a moral compass to ensure that no one is left aside –men, women and children from all corners of the world. Tolerance empowers individuals, it frees communities and it provides the foundations for real growth and genuine peace. Tolerance is the path for harnessing the forces of globalization in the direction of a prosperous, peaceful and united humanity. This wisdom is age-old, but it remains the foundation for healthy modern societies.

On this International Day of Tolerance, let us celebrate the wealth of our diversity as our common good. UNESCO works in this direction.

Irina Bokova