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de las Naciones Unidas  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

## Message from

**Ms Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO,**

**on the occasion of  
World Book and Copyright Day**

**23 April 2012**

Our relationship with books determines, to a large extent, our relationship with culture. On 23 April, for World Book and Copyright Day, UNESCO invites everyone to rally around books and support those who make their living from them and those who make them live.

From scrolls to codices, manuscripts to printed matter and tablet computers, books have changed in appearance many times over the centuries. In all formats, books embody ideas and values considered by men and women to be worth passing on. They are valuable tools for knowledge-sharing, mutual understanding and openness to others and to the world.

UNESCO wishes to provide everyone with the means to access this tremendous potential. The effort begins at school, through a determined fight against illiteracy among children and adults, and continues in the strengthening of cultural policies. Without quality education, the pages of a book are silent. Books rarely work alone: they prompt us to read other books, which reveal other treasures. Without equitable access to the content and resources of physical or virtual libraries, the power of books wanes and their diversity diminishes. The book chain is based on fragile balances and requires active vigilance and instruments to support it. The implementation of UNESCO conventions such as the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions is one example. Copyright protection is a cardinal principle of this action and a compass in the ever-changing cultural landscape.

In 2012, World Book and Copyright Day is concerned with the theme of translation. We are celebrating the 80th anniversary of the *Index Translationum*, the world bibliography of translations, managed by UNESCO. This unique instrument is a formidable tool for the dissemination and monitoring of global cultural flows. Faced with increasing numbers of publications, Member States must join forces to build a more comprehensive, efficient and open instrument. Translation is the first step towards the rapprochement of peoples, and is also a decentralizing experience, teaching diversity and dialogue. Translation is one of the driving principles of our creative diversity, which enriches each language through contact with all the others.

Our world needs to understand the diversity of cultures and to develop much stronger intercultural skills in the minds of every man and woman. We need these skills in order to live together in heterogeneous societies. We need them in order to address our common challenges together. On 23 April, UNESCO launches the celebrations of World Book and Copyright Day in Yerevan, in Armenia, World Book Capital for 2012. On this day I call upon all of UNESCO's partners, in universities, Chairs and Associated Schools to remember that books are a force and an opportunity to be placed in the hands of all.

Irina Bokova