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Message from

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

on the occasion of World Poetry Day

21 March 2013

Poetry is one of the purest expressions of linguistic freedom. It is a component of the identity of peoples and it embodies the creative energy of culture, for it can be continuously renewed.

This power of poetry is transmitted from generation to generation, in the hallowed texts of great authors and in the works of anonymous poets. We are duty bound to transmit this heritage – the legacy of Homer, Li Bai, Tagore, Senghor and countless others – for it bears living witness to the cultural diversity of humanity. We, in turn, must tend it to bear fruit, as a source of linguistic wealth and dialogue.

In celebrating World Poetry Day, UNESCO wishes also to promote the values that poetry conveys, for poetry is a journey – not in a dream world, but often close to individual emotions, aspirations and hopes. Poetry gives form to the dreams of peoples and expresses their spirituality in the strongest terms-- it emboldens all of us also to change the world.

Poets in all countries have bequeathed timeless verses in defence of human rights, gender equality and respect for cultural identities. Paul Eluard wrote “freedom ... I write thy name”. To this day, poetry brings the winds of freedom and dignity in the struggle against violence and oppression. For all of these reasons, UNESCO supports poets and everyone who publishes, translates, prints or disseminates poetry. It does so by protecting the diversity of cultural expressions and by preserving poetry recitals listed as intangible cultural heritage of humanity, as so

many ways to embellish the world and construct the defences of peace in the minds of men and women.

Irina Bokova