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

on the occasion of World Water Day

Water and Energy

22 March 2014

Water is fundamental to life and is the common denominator of all sustainable development challenges. We need water to produce food and we need water to produce energy. Improving access to freshwater is about enabling millions of girls to go to school instead of walking kilometres to fetch water. It is about improving maternal health, curbing child mortality and preserving the environment.

We need to better understand the complex interactions between resources that are closely interlinked, such as water, food and energy. And we must acknowledge that it is impossible to manage these resources sustainably if we treat them in isolation. Each mode of energy production has implications for the quantity and quality of water available. The choices made in one sector have repercussions on the other, for better and for worse. The World Water Development Report released today confirms, for example, that people who lack electricity are also those who lack water. This is no mere coincidence – water is required to produce energy, and energy is required to sanitize and convey water. Both are essential to human wellbeing and sustainable development.

Sustainability depends on our ability to understand all these connections and to develop more relevant policies that take an integrated approach to interconnected resources. The challenge is all the greater as the demand for water and energy is soaring, particularly in emerging economies, where agriculture, industry and cities are developing at a tremendous pace. We must find ways to ensure access to water and energy in sufficient quantity and quality, in a sustainable way.

Sustainability also requires better cooperation between all water stakeholders – policymakers, scientists and businesses, both public and private, who all too often

ignore each other while in reality they depend on each other. The International Year of Water Cooperation in 2013 set important milestones. The initiative on sanitation of Mr Jan Eliasson, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, also calls for greater collective action for the better management of human waste and wastewater. Poor sanitation has devastating consequences, particularly for children, and the key to the problem includes energy.

There is enough water in the world for everyone. What we continue to lack is better governance and the collective courage to craft fair compromise solutions. These should be based on research results and reliable data. UNESCO will continue to commit its resources to this cause, in particular through our International Hydrological Programme, the Institute for Water Education in Delft, our centres and Chairs specialized in water, and the data from the World Water Assessment Programme, which are all ways of building capacity, carrying out research and sharing good practices. Together, we can better integrate water and sanitation and the link between water and energy as positive levers for sustainable development.

Irina Bokova