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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message by

Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of International Day of Peace

21 September 2014

The International Day of Peace reflects the innermost aspiration of all peoples to live together, free and equal in dignity and rights. The theme of 2014 is the “right of peoples to peace”, selected to mark the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace by the United Nations.

The right to peace is of the utmost importance in view of the violence that is tearing the world apart. To build peace, we must understand the new realities of war today, and the way in which both human lives and identities are under attack in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere, in violence that aims to strike at the cultural and religious values of peoples. To build peace, we must open our eyes also to the reality of the hidden crisis facing education in conflicts, with schools being targeted and education becoming a means of indoctrination and to sow the seeds of hatred.

“[S]ince wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

This statement, penned by the founding Member States of UNESCO 70 years ago amid the ruins of the Second World War, holds true to this day. Aware of the ravages wrought by modern warfare, we must be as bold as they were and invest more in levers to build lasting peace, namely, respect for human rights, human dignity and democratic values. To counter discourses of hatred that seek to set cultures against each other, we must guarantee universal access to quality education to enable one to withstand calls to violence. To counter the destruction of cultural diversity and the persecution of minorities, we must protect heritage as a force for mutual understanding. To counter ignorance and censorship, we must

guarantee freedom of expression and protect journalists. We must relentlessly combat racism, discrimination, extremism and the manipulation of cultural and religious identities. The International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), led by UNESCO, is an opportunity for all of us to join efforts to build a genuine “culture of peace”, mindful of the Yamoussoukro Declaration on Peace in the Minds of Men, adopted 25 years ago. Today, I call on all Member States of UNESCO to rally round in order to silence weapons and end all violence.

Irina Bokova