



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
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
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from

Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of World Philosophy Day

20 November 2014

World Philosophy Day provides an opportunity to underline once more the importance of critical thinking to understanding changes in contemporary society. Change forces us to find new ways of living together and building fairer societies, but it can also erode trust and spark tension. In these circumstances, philosophy is an invaluable ally that draws on reflexive reasoning and engagement in dialogue, to open our minds to a wide variety of opinions and views. Such a shift of focus is crucial in a world of rising diversity. This is both the foundation on which tolerance and peace rest and a means of releasing the creative energy that drives societies forward, while respecting human rights.

“If, by speaking and expressing their view of the world, people change the world, then dialogue is the means by which people find significance in this”. – this message by Paulo Freire is enshrined in the *Philosophy Manual, a South-South perspective*, which will be launched officially by UNESCO on World Philosophy Day, produced with the support of Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue. There is no genuine philosophy without dialogue and, in a globalized world, dialogue must embrace the diverse strands of wisdom that have influenced people throughout history and which are not always sufficiently detailed or documented in conventional textbooks. It is this genuine intellectual and philosophical pluralism that will enable us to identify the best viewpoints for the future. By initiating pupils, teachers and the public in the diversity of these traditions, we can lay the foundations for a global community. I hope that the manual will inspire younger generations of students and teachers and I call on all Member States and our partners to support this initiative and all others that help us to reflect on philosophy with others.

This is the spirit of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), and it is this wisdom that UNESCO will continue to promote in order to construct the defences of peace in the minds of men and women, in accordance with its Constitution.

Irina Bokova