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

on the occasion of *International Jazz Day*

30 April 2015

Henri Matisse once defined Jazz as “*rhythm and meaning*”.

Jazz means music at its most creative, its most free.

Jazz means diversity at its most varied — from free jazz, swing and Afro-Cuban jazz to Latin jazz, Indo jazz, acid jazz and jazz rap... each style reflects a rich blend of local, national and regional influences.

Jazz means dialogue, reaching out to others, bringing everyone on board.

Jazz means respecting the human rights and dignity of every woman and man, no matter their background.

Jazz means understanding others, letting them speak, listening with respect.

Jazz means courage – it means standing up for freedom, in the spirit of solidarity.

All of this is the power of jazz – expressed most of all in its ability to touch upon the essential of human experience, which is sharing values and emotions, aspirations and dreams.

In times of change and uncertainty, we need the spirit of jazz more than ever before, to bring people — especially young women and men – together, to nurture

freedom and dialogue, to create new bridges of respect and understanding, for greater tolerance and cooperation.

In essence, jazz is a music of peace, and this has never been so important, to fight against new forms of hatred, racism and discrimination, and to strengthen humanity as a single community, sharing a past and a destiny.

On this *International Jazz Day*, women and men across the world are joining together to celebrate this power. This year, the event is woven into the celebration of UNESCO's 70th anniversary, and we are putting out the message to people everywhere, from Paris to Sidney. With the support of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and jazz giant, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock, live performances, jam sessions, workshops are being organized all around the world. Come join us!

Irina Bokova