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Message from

Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of *International Francophonie Day*

20 March 2015

International Francophonie Day is an opportunity for UNESCO to celebrate the power of linguistic and cultural diversity as an accelerator of dialogue and cooperation. This is a day when everyone can express themselves directly and accurately without using borrowed words.

To celebrate Francophonie is to show our attachment to values --- democracy, human dignity, human rights, the freedom of expression — that the French language has carried forward throughout its history and that it continues to promote today, by providing a space for vibrant cooperation across borders.

With this day, UNESCO affirms its special link with the *International Organization of La Francophonie*, forged with President Abdou Diouf, long-time friend of UNESCO, reinforced now in our partnership with the Honourable Michaëlle Jean, the first woman at the head of La Francophonie, and former UNESCO Special Envoy for Haiti.

Together, we raise the flag for the power of French as a language of peace and economic development that contributes to the beauty of the world while expressing its complexity. When Patrick Modiano, 2014 Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature, declared that “a writer always expresses the timeless in his work”, we know that he is also speaking of the capacity of a language to grasp and give a voice to the dreams of people for justice, wellbeing, and peace. These fundamental aspirations always express themselves in a precise language, through phrases and words that

hit their target. To celebrate French is to widen our possibilities to be outraged, to be engaged, to be amazed, in ways that allow us each to grow and improve.

Irina Bokova