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Message

from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

21 May 2016

Celebrating cultural diversity means valuing an outstanding source of exchanges, innovation and creativity, recognizing that the wealth of cultures is the constitutive power of humanity and an important asset for peace and development, the promotion of which is inseparable from the observance of human rights.

Celebrating cultural diversity also means being aware of the ties that bind us to our environment, because cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature, as clearly stated in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted in 2001.

Celebrating cultural diversity means opening up new perspectives for sustainable development and promoting creative industries and cultural entrepreneurship as sources of millions of jobs worldwide – particularly for young people and especially for women. Culture is a sustainable development accelerator whose potential has been recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations. Culture offers the unique opportunity to reconcile the economic and social aspects of development – cultural goods and services have identities, reference points and values, while enabling millions of creators, artists and professionals to make a living from their work. Celebrating cultural diversity means enabling them to practice their trade and helps them to enrich the cultural landscape, which in turn enriches us.

Celebrating, at the same time, cultural diversity that broadens our horizons and human rights that unite us: this is the core of UNESCO's mandate, for heritage, education, information and knowledge sharing. The enemies of human rights always attack cultural diversity, which symbolizes the freedom to be and to think,

and which is unbearable to them. On this day, let us dare to respond to them collectively: I call upon all Member States to strengthen the spirit of this day, as a peaceful weapon against the temptations of isolationism, closure and exclusion, which lead humanity to renounce itself, ignoring its own wealth.

Irina Bokova