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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of 16th International Day for Biological Diversity:
Mainstreaming Biodiversity, Sustaining People and their Livelihoods**

22 May 2016

The 2016 International Day for Biological Diversity is dedicated to the theme of 'Mainstreaming Biodiversity, Sustaining People and their Livelihoods.'

This echoes powerfully the vision set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Change Agreement.

I see this as a single agenda to chart a new course for people, peace and the planet for the next 15 years. Taking this forward will require an unprecedented global effort to mitigate and adapt to climate change, to reduce its impact on people and their livelihoods, to find ways to use sustainably the planet's resources.

UNESCO is leading from the front in crafting effective and inclusive solutions. Through the World Heritage Convention and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, as well as the Global Geoparks programme, UNESCO is contributing to the conservation of sites with outstanding universal value, including their rich biodiversity. UNESCO's 197 natural World heritage sites and 669 Biosphere Reserves are learning platforms for local sustainable development solutions, covering all major ecosystems. The 120 UNESCO Global Geoparks, in 33 countries, play a major role in geo-heritage protection and education, contributing to biodiversity conservation.

These sites show how ecosystem services are directly benefiting local communities, with nature preservation moving hand-in-hand with local development, providing meaningful examples of sustainable development where new economic, social and cultural values interact in harmony. These sites reflect the importance of partnership at every level, stimulating the emergence of green

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societies that are fairer in sharing benefits, wiser in using resources, and more sustainable in generating livelihoods.

Combining our work across the social and natural sciences, including local and indigenous knowledge, UNESCO is supporting local communities, promoting education for sustainable development, building capacity for sustainable management, sharing best practices and forging new networks to protect biodiversity.

It took billions of years to create the biosphere we now enjoy, with its incredibly rich diversity of plants and animals -- it is our duty and responsibility to act now to preserve it for future generations.

This is UNESCO's message on the International Day of Biological Diversity.

Irina Bokova