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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of International Day of Sport for Development and Peace**

**6 April 2017**

This International Day is an opportunity to raise the banner for the power of sport for development and peace.

Sport is a passion shared by women and men across the world. It is a force for physical well-being and social empowerment. It is an engine for equality, especially gender equality, for including everyone, especially the most disadvantaged. There is no more powerful platform than sport to nurture the values we all share – solidarity, responsibility, respect, honesty, teamwork, equality motivation and self-esteem... Sport is a way to include everyone, including refugees and migrants, to fight against stereotypes, to strengthen the foundations for peace in healthy societies.

As the world takes forward the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, we must do everything to support sport to leave no one behind. This is the spirit driving UNESCO's *International Charter for Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*, to ensure respect for the fundamental right to sport for every woman and man without discrimination. This same spirit inspires the work of volunteers across the world, dedicated to supporting sport for development and peace, whose work we commend today.

Physical inactivity leads every year to an estimated 3.2 million deaths. This is why UNESCO has joined forces with the World Health Organization to combat sedentary lifestyles, starting with inclusive and equitable quality physical education at school. This calls for new commitment and resources from all actors – to ensure public policies, especially in the fields of health, education, urban planning, infrastructure and transport, work also with the private sector in the development of legislation,

regulations and national plans for sport. This is the goal of the 6<sup>th</sup> *Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport* (MINEPS VI) organized by UNESCO, in partnership with the Russian Federation, in Kazan, from 13 to 15 July 2017. We must catalyse real action where it is needed. We must all get moving to make sport for all a reality – this has never been so vital.

Irina Bokova