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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the World Book and Copyright Day

23 April 2017

World Book and Copyright Day is an opportunity to highlight the power of books to promote our vision of knowledge societies that are inclusive, pluralistic, equitable, open and participatory for all citizens.

It is said that how a society treats its most vulnerable is a measure of its humanity. When we apply this measure to the availability of books to those with visual impairments and those with learning or physical disabilities (with different causes), we are confronted with what can only be described as a 'book famine'.

According to the World Blind Union approximately one in every 200 people on Earth—39 million of us—cannot see. Another 246 million have severely reduced vision. These 'visually impaired persons' or 'persons with a print disability' can access an estimated 10% of all written information and literary works that sighted people can read.

Poorly designed or inaccessible books also limit reading and comprehension of those who have learning disabilities. According to the International Dyslexia Association, 3-5 percent of the school population requires special accommodations and support.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals mark a paradigm shift in recognizing the right of disabled people to access books, knowledge and cultural life on an equal basis as others.

With the framework of the convention, UNESCO is working to promote a better understanding of issues related to disability and to mobilize support for the recognition of the dignity, rights and wellbeing of persons with disabilities and of the benefits of their integration in society.

This is the spirit guiding Conakry, Guinea, which has been designated World Book Capital 2017, in recognition of its programme to promote reading among youth and underprivileged sections of the population.

With Conakry, and our international partners, the International Publishers Association and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, let us join together to celebrate books as the desire to share ideas and knowledge, to inspire understanding, tolerance and inclusive societies.

This is UNESCO's message on World Book and Copyright Day.

Irina Bokova