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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of International Jazz Day**

30 April 2017

On the occasion of the 6th *International Jazz Day*, UNESCO celebrates all musicians, poets, painters, writers, historians, academics, and jazz enthusiasts worldwide, who pay tribute to jazz, its ability to unite people and its contributions to peace.

As the great Nina Simone said, “*Jazz is not just music, it is a way of life, it is a way of being, a way of thinking.*” It is everywhere, all around us, inspiring us to better ourselves through music and in life.

Today, we celebrate the international art form of jazz and its power to promote dialogue among cultures, to make the most of diversity, to deepen respect for human rights and all forms of expression.

The story of jazz is written into the quest for human dignity, democracy and civil rights. Its rhythms and variety have given strength to the struggle against all forms of discrimination and racism – this is the message we must take across the world today.

Havana is this year's Global Host City of International Jazz Day, reflecting the city's profound ties to jazz. Hometown of renowned bandleaders, Mario Bauzá and Frank 'Machito' Grillo, the city and, more broadly, Cuba's thriving musical culture gave birth to the Afro-Cuban jazz movement, inspired by a great mix of cultures and peoples across the region. Cuban jazz is a lesson in creative diversity that resonates at the heart of UNESCO.

For the first time, *International Jazz Day* will be the focus of a weeklong celebration in Havana, with workshops, master classes, film screenings, performances and

concerts all throughout the city. The All-Star Global Concert will be a unique opportunity to display the world's greatest talents from Cuba, Latin America and around the world, including legendary jazz pianist and composer *UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue*, Herbie Hancock, and Cuban jazzman, Chucho Valdés.

UNESCO is proud to be associated once again with the *Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz*, as well as with the *Cuban Institute of Music*, to raise the flag for jazz, for freedom, for creativity, for diversity and for unity. This year's focus on Cuba is testament to the power of jazz to build bridges and join women and men together around shared values and aspirations.

Irina Bokova