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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 International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia
and Biphobia**

17 May 2017

Every day, we receive alarming reports about the situation of homosexual and transgender people in the world. In its first global report, *Out In The Open*, published in 2016, UNESCO showed that LGBT students in several countries and regions are two to five times more likely to have suicidal thoughts or to commit suicide than their heterosexual peers.

Today, I am deeply concerned by the excessive trivialization of insults, sexist and homophobic remarks in the media, in everyday life, on social networks, even from political leaders -- and I am frightened by the results of investigations on discrimination, violence and even persecution of homosexual and transgender people.

History teaches us how far homophobic violence can go -- we must remember the past to prevent new violence today. Let us remember the situation of homosexuals under the Nazi regime, interned in "re-education" camps, and killed. The United Nations was created to prevent such crimes from happening again. Today, it is more important than ever to defend these principles.

UNESCO is committed to protecting the rights of homosexual and transgender people by drawing across its mandate to advance education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. These are powerful tools to fight the prejudice, verbal violence and stigmatization that foreshadow physical violence and that violate the equality and inherent dignity of all. This work for reason and tolerance begins on the benches of school. In 2011, UNESCO launched a global initiative to prevent and

combat homophobic and transphobic harassment in school settings. In 2016, education ministers from over 20 countries launched a global call for the education sector to respond effectively to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, whether real or perceived.

Some Member States have made remarkable progress in implementing these recommendations -- by monitoring the prevalence of violence in educational settings, by adopting appropriate educational policies, and by providing accurate information on the rights of everyone and how to respond to stereotypes. We all need to act. No one should feel humiliated, vulnerable or threatened because of their identity or sexual orientation, whether real or perceived. In 2003, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recalled that discrimination based on "sexual orientation of teenagers" is prohibited. This applies throughout life, because human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. They are not reserved for the few -- they apply to everyone, everywhere. It is essential to reaffirm this fundamental principle and join forces to make it a reality.

Irina Bokova