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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of World Day of Romani Language

5 November 2017

UNESCO proclaimed the World Day of Romani Language in 2015 to promote the preservation of Romani language and culture, improve the well-being of Romani people, and recognize the importance of all languages, whose diversity is a source of strength for all societies to share.

Romani language – Romani čhib – is the official language of Romani people across the world, enriched by a history of migration and a wide range of influences. This also gives rise to steep challenges that place this language in danger of extinction. This endangerment throws a shadow over a core part of Romani identity and culture, threatening a unique heritage, rich with knowledge and wisdom. This is why UNESCO calls for greater support to the Romani language, including education in this language especially for Romani children, for whom this is their mother tongue. Recognizing the importance of Romani language must be part of wider efforts to prevent all forms of discrimination and support Romani people, their human rights, social inclusion and development.

On this World Day of Romani Language, let us all stand with Romani people, to celebrate their culture as part of the wealth of all humanity and to encourage the protection of all languages and cultures across the world on the basis of human rights.

Irina Bokova