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Organización
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联合国教育、
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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
the Director-General of UNESCO**

on the occasion of the International Day for Tolerance

16 November 2017

“Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human.”

This statement comes from UNESCO's 1995 *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance*. In a new century, in new times, this vision has never been so vital.

Across the world, societies are undergoing deep transformation, just as globalisation is accelerating. This is opening vast opportunities for dialogue and exchange. It is also raising new challenges, sharpened by inequality and poverty, enduring conflicts and movements of people. We see today the rise of exclusive politics and discourses of division. We see diversity being rejected as a source of weakness. We see myths of 'pure' cultures of lore being gloried, fuelled by ignorance and sometimes hatred. We see others being scapegoated and repressed. We see barbaric terrorist attacks designed to weaken the fabric of 'living together.'

In this context, tolerance must be more than indifference and the passive acceptance of others. Tolerance must be seen as an act of liberation, whereby the differences of others are accepted as the same as our own. This means respecting the great diversity of humanity on the basis of human rights. It means reaching out to others across new bridges of dialogue. This means standing up to all forms of racism, hatred and discrimination, because discrimination against one is discrimination against all.

All cultures are different, but humanity is a single community, sharing values, a past and future. All people are different, and this is a strength for all societies, for creativity and innovation. There are seven billion ways of 'being human,' but we stand together

as members of the same family, all different, all equally seeking respect for rights and dignity.

Tolerance is a struggle for peace. This calls for new policies that respect diversity and pluralism on the basis of human rights. Most of all, this calls on each of us, women and men across the world, to act for tolerance in our own lives, in seeking to understand others, in rejecting all racism and hatred, including anti-Semitism.

UNESCO's role in the United Nations is to deepen the binds of a single humanity, through understanding, dialogue and knowledge. This is why we defend humanity's cultural diversity and heritage from pillaging and attacks. This is why we seek to prevent violent extremism through education, freedom of expression and media literacy, to empower young women and men. This is why we work to strengthen dialogue between cultures and religions, spearheading the *International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures*. This is the spirit of the *UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence*. This lies at the heart of UNESCO's collaboration with the Musée de l'Homme (France) through the travelling exhibition, "*Us and Them – From Prejudice to Racism*." This is why UNESCO's *International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities* works to fight racism, discrimination, xenophobia and exclusion.

Tolerance is an act of humanity, which we must nurture and enact each in own lives every day, to rejoice in the diversity that makes us strong and the values that bring us together. This is UNESCO's message.

Audrey Azoulay