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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the International Migrants Day**

**18 December 2017**

Millions of women and men are leaving their homes in the search of work and education. Millions are on the move, because they have no choice, to flee war and persecution, to escape the vicious circles of poverty, food insecurity and environmental degradation.

Migration is a global phenomenon driven by many forces. These start with aspirations for dignity, safety and peace. The decision to leave home is always extreme, and, too often, the beginning of a dangerous, sometimes fatal journey.

UNESCO is acting to advance the migration-related commitments of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This starts with education, by promoting access to quality education for Syrian refugees, by facilitating recognition of education diplomas and qualifications. Through our International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, we promote a welcoming approach towards migrants at the local level. We are bolstering the capacities of journalists to address negative narratives and bring the stories of migrants to the fore. UNESCO is deeply engaged with UN partners through the Global Migration Group, to shape a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

The 2030 Agenda promises to leave no one behind -- this must include every migrant. Protecting their rights and dignity means responding to humanitarian needs and advancing sustainable development. Fundamentally, this is about defending our common humanity through solidarity in action.

Audrey Azoulay