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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Women's Security in the Wake of a Changing Climate

25 November 2016

Violence against women is a grave violation of fundamental human rights and a threat to millions of girls and women across the world. At least one out of every three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Entire societies are affected by violence that may be physical, sexual (harassment, coercion or discrimination) and psychological (verbal or emotional abuse, such as bullying or ostracizing).

On this *International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women*, UNESCO draws attention to climate change and scarce resources as factors fuelling violence against women -- at home, on streets, during climate-induced natural disasters.

Climate change is a threat multiplier – it can exacerbate the migration and displacement of populations and contribute to crop failure or flooding, increasing pressure at home and on livelihoods. Studies indicate that women are responsible for 65 percent of household food production in Asia, 75 percent in sub-Saharan Africa and 45 percent in Latin America. It is often the traditional roles of women that place them at greater risk from the consequences of climate change – finding themselves vulnerable to violence as they walk tens of miles every day to secure food, water and firewood or after having been displaced or impoverished by disasters. Lost livelihoods and poverty can also heighten violence at home due to economic pressures, as well enduring from practices of female genital mutilation and child marriage.

UNESCO is engaged across the board to strengthen resilience in the face of climate change, integrating a gendered approach to all its action. Building on partnerships and initiatives, UNESCO is taking forward the idea that women and girls are key to

tackling climate change, notably, for instance, for water management and disaster risk preparedness.

We know that greenhouse gas emissions are impacting the planet. We must also recognise that climate change is impacting the lives of girls and women across the world. As we stand before the entry into force of the Paris Climate Agreement and prepare for a successful COP22 in Marrakech, we must not forget half of our population and the tremendous potential they represent. Women must be at the heart of all solutions to climate change.

Irina Bokova