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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of Human Rights Day

10 December 2016

On 10 December every year, the world commemorates the day in 1948 on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, proclaiming its principles as the "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations."

Every year, *Human Rights Day* provides an opportunity for all to renew with the spirit of humanity's long struggle for rights and dignity and to mobilise against old and new challenges, in the shape of poverty and inequality, violence, exclusion and discrimination.

Across the world today, millions of women and men are abandoning their homes and risking their own and their families' lives in search of a better future. Unprecedented movements of people are affecting societies in every region. Everywhere, the poorest and most marginalised continue to suffer the most.

This is unacceptable -- responding calls for action by Governments and the international community. Most of all, it calls for each of us to stand up to defend the rights of others. This is vital to take forward the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, to make true the promise to leave no one behind.

UNESCO is working across the board to empower women and men to stand up for their rights and those of others. The full realization of human rights requires access for all to education -- this is our most powerful force for human development, respect and tolerance. This includes our action to defend freedom of expression and information, and to bolster the safety journalists. This is the importance of ensuring

the right of every woman and man to take part in cultural life and draw on the cultures of others to learn to live better together. This brings in also our commitment to sharing the progress of scientific research for the benefit of all.

In the words of the great Nelson Mandela:

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

Standing up for the rights of others means standing up for the humanity we share. In a world of turbulence, this solidarity has never been so important, to celebrate the diversity that enriches our lives and defend the values that bring us together. This must be nurtured, this must be taught, this must be championed, by each of us in own lives, through mutual respect, understanding and dialogue. This is how we will strengthen together the foundations for more inclusive, peaceful and tolerant societies.

Irina Bokova