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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of World Book and Copyright Day

23 April 2010

This year, the fifteenth World Book and Copyright Day is being celebrated in the context of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010). The opportunity will be provided today to review the role of books in our constantly evolving world. Policy decision-makers, publishers, educators and civil society as a whole will need to consider once again the most effective ways of promoting that irreplaceable tool for knowledge: the book.

Books improve our knowledge of others and of their philosophies, and therefore enhance our understanding of the world. They also provide development opportunities, for all ages and, in particular, for young people.

Books cannot be celebrated without sparing a thought for the 759 million people who can neither read nor write, two-thirds of whom are women. Freedom to read, to receive an education, to access remote cultures and research findings is nonetheless a fundamental human right. Everyone must be able to enjoy the right to education.

Freedom of circulation is also an essential requirement for everyone to have access to books. Translation of course plays a significant role in the transmission of knowledge derived from books. Innovative publishing policies that meet the needs and aspirations of every human being are, however, also required.

In the light of the emergence of new forms of books, of changes in the design, production and access to contents of books, it is urgent to recall that there can be no book development without respect for copyright. This is particularly the case at a time when digitization further exposes books to risks of illicit use.

To make the fifteenth celebration of World Book and Copyright Day, I invite all partners, communities and UNESCO networks to join forces to promote respect for copyright and ensure that books take their rightful place in the social, educational and cultural spheres.

Books are works of art and science, and vehicles for ideas. They magnificently materialize creative diversity, generate universal knowledge and contribute to intercultural dialogue. They are instruments for peace.

Today, 23 April 2010, let us celebrate every aspect of books across the world.

Irina Bokova