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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of *International Women's Day*

8 March 2014

International Women's Day has been celebrated by the United Nations on 8 March since 1975 – this is a moment when we review past achievements and look ahead to the challenges that remain, as well as to untapped potential and opportunities.

This stocktaking is all the more important today, as we approach the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Conference and the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals and as we shape a new global sustainable development agenda to follow 2015. In moving forward, we must ensure that women's empowerment and gender equality stand at the heart of all of our work to craft a better future.

The United Nations has always played a leading role here, and this will continue. The United Nations Charter was the first international agreement to affirm the principle of equality between women and men. Over the years, the United Nations and its agencies have promoted the equal participation of women and men in all efforts to promote sustainable development and lasting peace, on the basis of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As the specialized United Nations agency for advancing education, the sciences, culture, communication and information -- the empowerment of girls and women stands at the core all of UNESCO's work. Gender equality has been a global priority for UNESCO since 2008, and it remains so today. As Director-General, I am determined to prioritise the rights of girls and women on the global agenda in all areas of UNESCO's competence as well as in our action on the ground. This work

is especially important in education and culture – two areas that form the nexus from where change for a better world for all women and men can be taken forward.

My conviction is clear – empowering women is a frontline for building a more peaceful and just world. Enduring violence, discrimination and inequalities – which remain deep across the world – are major barriers to positive change, and we must act now and together to tackle them.

On this *International Women's Day*, I call on all partners – in Government, the private sector, civil society, across the United Nations -- and on all women and men, to join forces, to accelerate the pace, to redouble efforts to achieve gender equality in every region of the world. There is simply no more powerful force for lasting peace and sustainable development.

Irina Bokova