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Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the *World Day for Audiovisual Heritage*

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“Archives at Risk – Much More to Do.”

The theme of the 2014 *World Day of Audiovisual Heritage* says it all -- there is so much more to be done to ensure the long-term preservation of the world's shared heritage.

Audiovisual documents, such as films, radio and television programmes, provide primary records of the 20th and 21st centuries, helping to maintain the common memory of all humanity. As monumental shifts transform the way that information and resources are generated, accessed and managed and as an increasing quantity of audiovisual material emerges in digital form -- including emails, blogs, social networks, and websites -- all audiovisual heritage is endangered today. Millions of films, audio and video tapes and discs are at risk of crumbling into dust, fading away and disappearing.

To respond, we must recognise and raise awareness about these challenges -- this is the importance of the *World Day of Audiovisual Heritage*. We must also craft new approaches to archival programmes and train archivists to adapt to a changing political, technological, and cultural environment. Preservation professionals should be given all of the support that they need to safeguard the common audiovisual heritage of humanity.

These goals guide all of UNESCO's action through the Memory of the World programme, launched in 1992 to protect and promote the world's documentary heritage through improved strategies for preservation and access. We build here on

the comprehensive set of international instruments that UNESCO has developed to protect cultural and documentary heritage, whose implementation we support by building capacities at the local and national levels. This is especially important in situations of crisis or disaster.

We must act today to ensure that future generations can enjoy humanity's common audiovisual heritage tomorrow. This heritage carries lessons, information and knowledge that are essential to share. It is a foundation of identity and belonging as well as a wellspring of innovation and creativity. This is why archives are so important as guardians of our collective memory, guaranteeing the right to truth as well as the 'right to know'.

In this spirit, I call upon all Governments to strengthen national policies to preserve and provide access to audiovisual heritage in all forms and to support professional activities for identifying and preserving collections of enduring value. This is UNESCO's message on the 2014 *World Day of Audiovisual Heritage*.

Irina Bokova