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联合国教育、
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Message from Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of *International Youth Day*

12 August 2011

On this *International Youth Day* 2011, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of young women and men across the world to the fight for human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

The “youth quakes” that have struck across the Arab world have shown the ability of young people to drive change. The struggle for democratic participation has shaken regimes seemingly impervious to pressure. These movements have shown the power of aspirations for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Young people are one billion strong in the world. They carry a billion hopes for a better future and a billion ideas to change the world. They embody also one billion lives to nurture and support. Young women and men are growing up at the sharp end of change. The capabilities of every young person must be developed, so that their energy works for innovation, for civic participation, for resolving global challenges. Young people are already changing the world and reinventing culture. They must have the skills and tools to do so in ways that strengthen the ties between cultures and that protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In times of change and uncertainty, we must rely on all sources of dynamism to face rising global challenges. Every young woman and man must be given the chance to take part in the decision-making that shapes our societies and that will define their futures.

UNESCO works to leverage education, the sciences, culture, communication and information to empower young people as active stakeholders in the world's society. Quality education is the starting point for their full and positive engagement. We

must provide young people with everything they need to share their ideas and act on them -- to fight unemployment and poverty, to overcome gender inequality and all forms of discrimination, to tackle diseases and marginalization.

This *International Youth Day* marks the end of the *International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding*. On this occasion, I call on all Governments, youth organizations and the international community to reflect on the historic changes underway this year and to consider the next steps we must take together.

This is the goal of the 7th *UNESCO Youth Forum*, which will be held in Paris from 17 to 20 October 2011. Under the theme of youth driving change, the Youth Forum will provide a platform for young people from all Member states and societies across the world to share experiences, to express views and to forge new ideas together.

Young women and men across the world are already shaping the contours of the present. We must do everything to encourage their development and to protect their dignity and rights. Everyone's future depends on it.

Irina Bokova