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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

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 the International Day of Solidarity with
the Palestinian people**

29 November 2011

The *International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People* is a moment to mark our support to the Palestinian people in their quest for a more peaceful future.

The decision taken by UNESCO Member States during the 36th Session of the General Conference to admit Palestine to the Organization strengthens UNESCO's resolve to deepen international cooperation in all of our areas of competence. Quality education, support to culture, promotion of freedom of expression are essential conditions for a better future for all peoples in the region. This is our message on the occasion of the 2011 *International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People*, which we will celebrate through the arts and culture at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

UNESCO has a clear position. Lasting peace can only be built on equal respect for the human rights and the dignity of every woman and man. This is the foundation for solidarity within societies and between them. This is also the basis for promoting dialogue and fostering mutual understanding.

UNESCO has been long engaged with the Palestinian people to strengthen the process of state-building and to till the ground for a more tolerant, prosperous and sustainable future for all.

This starts with education, where UNESCO works to promote tolerance and supports the psychosocial needs of students by developing schools as

comfort zones. We are training teachers and helping to build a high-quality education system. We provide scholarships and learning opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized communities, and we offer catch-up courses and free-of-charge tutoring for thousands of students every year.

Our work in culture also contributes to help sustain the Palestinian identity and develop the culture sector as a social and economic outlet. UNESCO supports efforts to protect a number of major cultural sites and monuments and to underpin the cultural expressions and cultural entrepreneurship of the Palestinian people. These are sources of social cohesion and vectors for development.

Freedom of expression is a core ingredient of vibrant democracy and the rule of law. This is why UNESCO is working with the Palestinian people to promote independent and pluralistic media, to strengthen freedom of expression, and to ensure access to information – including, for instance, training courses for women journalists.

Peace must be built in classrooms, through respect for cultural diversity, and on the basis of inclusive and professional media. It must be taken forward by tolerant schoolchildren, better equipped teachers and independent journalists. These are the foundations for solidarity and sustainable peace.

Irina Bokova