

That future, the future of all of us, must be built upon common human values. A future made to the measure of people and by the people, to ensure progress and full participation in the drafting and implementation of development measures. A development model that must be balanced and oriented to improve our quality of life, and that must be sustainable to allow future generations continue enjoying the resources we have today.

That development model is only possible if culture, understood as a product and, especially, as a tool that allows processes of knowledge acquisition, dialogue and cooperation, is recognized as an essential pillar of sustainable development.

*Address by Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO,  
On the occasion of her visit to Old Havana,  
Cuba, 29 november 2012*



## MESSAGE FROM IRINA BOKOVA, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO

UNESCO has a unique role to play in strengthening the foundations of lasting peace and sustainable development. Advancing cooperation in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information holds strategic stakes at a time when societies across the world face the rising pressures of change and the international community faces new challenges.

The changes underway across the world call for a renewed commitment by all to the principles that guide UNESCO. More than ever today, lasting peace and sustainable development require cooperation. Their foundations cannot be built solely on political and economic arrangements – they must be constructed in the minds of women and men. We are living in a new age of limits – in terms of the resources of the planet and material assets. In this context, we must make far more of the single most powerful and renewable energy there is – that of innovation. UNESCO must strengthen its work to release the full power of human ingenuity as a source of resilience at a time of change and as a wellspring for creativity and growth. Cooperation in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information has never been more urgent in this context.

The human rights and dignity of every woman and man must be our starting point and the measure of our success. These times are calling for a new humanism that marries human development with the preservation of the planet and that provides equal access to all to the benefits of education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. This new humanism must build on renewed aspirations for equality and respect, for tolerance and mutual understanding, especially between peoples of different cultures. It must seek to craft more inclusive societies, guided by a profound concern for social justice and diversity.

UNESCO's comparative advantages contribute to an accelerated achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs) by 2015, and to prepare for meaningful international objectives to be pursued post-2015. The MDGs and its successor set of internationally agreed objectives must yield concrete, measurable and time-bound results, while also recognizing those “softer” and hard to measure objectives critical for peace and sustainable development.

No doubt, culture should be at the heart of these new development strategies.

UNESCO's position is clear. Culture is a driver of development, led by the growth of the cultural sector and creative industries and the benefits arising from safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It is also an enabler for sustainable development – the context in which development policies can move forward, through local ownership, with efficiency and impact. In this context, intercultural dialogue is essential to make the most of diversity, to deepen the roots of development and share its benefits.

At a time of change, we must broaden the debate about development to harness culture's transformative power. Recognizing and supporting cultural diversity can help to address both the economic and human rights dimensions of poverty and provide creative, cross-cutting solutions to complex issues – from health and the environment to advancing gender equality and education for all.

Culture, in all its diversity, can foster a sense of identity and cohesion for societies at a time of uncertainty. It is also a powerful source of creativity and innovation. No development can be sustainable without it.

*Irina Bokova*