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**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,**

on the occasion of International Day of Peace

21 September 2018

“There will be no peace on this planet as long as human rights are violated somewhere in the world.”

On this International Day of Peace, the words of René Cassin, one of the architects of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948, remind us that peace will remain an unattainable ideal as long as fundamental human rights are not respected. They are a prerequisite for a peaceful society in which the dignity of all individuals is respected and everyone can fully enjoy equal and inalienable rights.

These words remind us of our duty of solidarity towards our fellow human beings: peace is imperfect and fragile unless everyone benefits from it; human rights are either universal or they are not. This intrinsic link between peace and respect for human rights is the theme of this year's International Day of Peace, as this year we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

The ideals of peace and universal rights are challenged and violated on a daily basis. There are numerous obstacles to their realization. All kinds of challenges test our ability to build a world of harmony, understanding and peaceful coexistence: social and economic inequalities, which lead to distress and poverty; climate change, which gives rise to new conflicts; and the population explosion, which creates new tensions. Forms of populism and extremism are also spreading all over the world.

To overcome these challenges, we must act collectively and build the edifice of peace brick by brick. That is the whole aim of the *United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which calls for concerted action to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals, all of which contribute to a more just and peaceful world by, *inter*

alia, combating poverty, hunger and gender inequality, promoting education, defending justice and committing to a healthy environment.

Every day, UNESCO, through its programmes and action on the ground, reaffirms its original commitment, enshrined in its Constitution: to construct the defences of peace in the minds of women and men. As the lead agency responsible for the *International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures 2013 – 2022*, UNESCO is fully engaged in developing a worldwide culture of prevention through education, international cooperation and intercultural dialogue.

The road to peace is long, but it is up to each and every one of us to influence its course by committing ourselves on a daily basis to a society that is more inclusive, more tolerant and more just.