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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the 2nd International Conference  
“Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace”**

**Yakutsk, Russian Federation, 12-14 July 2011**

All languages are linked through their origins and borrowing, but each is a unique source of meaning for understanding and expressing reality. As wellsprings of knowledge, languages are essential for the transmission of knowledge and information, they are of vital importance to manage the cultural diversity of our world and achieve the internationally agreed development goals. This is even more important this year, in 2011, as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of UNESCO's universal declaration on cultural diversity.

The digital revolution is providing us with new frontiers for innovation, creativity and development. Increased access to knowledge and information provides new possibilities for individuals and societies. Having the necessary literacies and means to participate in these digital spaces is key to improve the quality of our lives. Such possibilities must be effectively shared by all, in all languages.

The globalization process is very much facilitated by new technologies and the Internet. The success of the online edition of UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* shows the power of the Internet to track the state of languages and multilingualism, and to raise awareness with a global audience.

Globalization is also coupled with a tendency towards standardization, which jeopardizes the presence of many languages in cyberspace and weakens cultural diversity. In a few generations, more than half of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken today in the world could disappear.

UNESCO is committed to promoting multilingualism on the Internet. A plural linguistic cyber space allows the wealth of diversity to put in common. By elaborating and implementing policies that address constraints to linguistic diversity, including in cyberspace, UNESCO contributes to fostering linguistic and cultural diversity and improve the conditions for promoting sustainable development and peace. These goals guide UNESCO in its work with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. Strong initiatives aimed at reinforcing linguistic and cultural diversity on-line as well as off-line are being undertaken. UNESCO's Member States adopted in 2003, the "Recommendation Concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace", and the "Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage". Both instruments provide guidance on steps that are to be taken to advance multilingualism in cyberspace.

This second edition of the international conference on "Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace", is an important step in consolidating and advancing the progress to date. Your endeavours are vital to find appropriate solutions to pressing concerns such as: elaborating public policies on languages in cyberspace; identifying techniques to ensure the presence of absent and under-represented languages; supporting the implementation of UNESCO's normative instruments,. I greatly welcome these actions and encourage you in your efforts to facilitate cooperation and exchange at the national, regional and international levels. Let us all harness the power of progress to protect diverse visions of the world and to promote all sources of knowledge and forms of expression.

I wish you fruitful discussions and look forward with great interest to the outcomes of your conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Irina Bokova