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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of International Day of the Girl Child**

*EmPOWER girls: emergency response and resilience planning*

**11 October 2017**

This *International Day of the Girl Child* comes at turbulent times, with the world facing the rising challenges of forced displacement, climate change and violent extremism.

Whether caused by armed conflict or natural disaster, humanitarian crises always hurt women and girls the most – they account for more than 75 percent of the refugees and displaced persons at risk from war, famine, persecution and natural disaster. They are also vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, during conflicts and in refugee camps.

The theme of this International Day -- “EmPOWER girls: emergency response and resilience planning” -- resonates with UNESCO’s commitment to promote the protection of girls from conflict and violence and to strengthen their resilience, while ensuring their full participation in mediation and negotiation processes.

This is the goal of landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, to increase women’s role in decision-making for conflict prevention and resolution.

Seventeen years later, empowering girls and women is essential to the successful implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The 2030 Agenda promises to leave no one behind – this must start with girls whose needs are greatest.

Working with Member States and partners, UNESCO is leading forward the *Education 2030 Framework for Action*, to nurture education as a force to transform socially, economically and politically the lives of girls and adolescents. In 2011, I

launched UNESCO's *Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education*, "Better Life, Better Future", to educate adolescent girls as a catalyst to break cycles of poverty and foster greater social justice. Across the world, the Partnership has provided adolescent girls with knowledge, values and skills, creating positive benefits for families and communities, today and tomorrow.

No society will flourish and no peace agreement will be lasting without empowering girls in peacebuilding and reconstruction. It is time to put this imperative at the heart of all of our efforts in addressing fragility, conflict and violence. This is UNESCO's message today.

Irina Bokova