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World Book and Copyright Day 2015

World Book and Copyright Day is an opportunity to recognise the power of books to change our lives for the better and to support books and those who produce them.

As global symbols of social progress, books – learning and reading -- have become targets for those who denigrate culture and education, who reject dialogue and tolerance. In recent months, we have seen attacks on children at school and the public burning of books. In this context, our duty is clear – we must redouble efforts to promote the book, the pen, the computer, along with all forms of reading and writing, in order to fight illiteracy and poverty, to build sustainable societies, to strengthen the foundations of peace.

UNESCO is leading the fight against illiteracy, to be included as a crucial ingredient of the Sustainable Development Goals to follow 2015. Literacy is the door to knowledge, essential to individual self-esteem and empowerment. Books, in all forms, play an essential role here. With 175 million adolescents in the world – mostly girls and young women -- unable to read a single sentence, UNESCO is committed to harnessing information and communication technologies, especially mobile technology, to support literacy and to reach the unreached with quality learning.

Books are invaluable platforms for freedom of expression and the free flow of information – these are essential for all societies today. The future of the book as a cultural object is inseparable from the role of culture in promoting more inclusive and sustainable pathways to development. Through its *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, UNESCO is seeking to promote reading among young people and marginalised groups. We are working with the International Publishers Association, the International Booksellers' Federation and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions to support careers in publishing, bookshops, libraries and schools.

This is the spirit guiding Incheon, Republic of Korea, which has been designated *World Book Capital 2015*, in recognition of its programme to promote reading among people and underprivileged sections of the population. This designation takes effect on *World Book and Copyright Day* and will be celebrated with participants from the previous title-holder, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

With Incheon and the entire international community, let us join together to celebrate books as the embodiment of creativity, the desire to share ideas and knowledge, to inspire understanding, dialogue and tolerance. This is UNESCO's message on *World Book and Copyright Day*.

Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO on the occasion of the World Book and Copyright Day