



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

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

on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy

15 September 2018

Today, we celebrate the International Day of Democracy. Democracy is an ideal which recognizes that every human being has equal dignity and the same fundamental freedoms: the freedoms of thought, belief, expression and movement.

These universal values are enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, whose 70th anniversary we are celebrating this year, and permeate the UNESCO Constitution. If culture, education, science, communication and information, which UNESCO aims to promote throughout the world, are not upheld by universal values, or if they exclude part of humankind and do not contribute to greater peace and justice, then they lose their essence.

Democracy is not only a moral ideal, but also a political and legal principle. Democracy is organized, constructed and deepened through the granting of political rights to participate in the joint development of laws and institutions, through free elections by universal suffrage, through a system of checks and balances inherent in a State governed by the rule of law, through a free and independent press, and through active citizens and an open and dynamic civil society. UNESCO is actively involved in the promotion of citizenship and works closely with many civil society partners.

One of the defining features of the democratic spirit is the belief that more is obtained through dialogue, consultation and mediation than through coercion and arbitrary practices: in short, the law must prevail over the use of force. The democratic ideal is inextricably linked to a commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and an aspiration for peace. UNESCO bears this aspiration like a standard.

The democratic ideal is an incentive to work relentlessly to ensure greater equality, freedom and justice, the right to quality education for all, the right to information, the right to dignified living conditions, a healthy environment and decent employment. For this reason, the United Nations *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* is the ramification of this ideal, growing ever-deeper according to the new challenges faced by each new generation, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, these difficulties look set to continue.

This International Day is an opportunity, particularly in this anniversary year of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, to examine the progress made in the democratic ideal worldwide and in the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms. Let us rally together to ensure that the promise of peace and justice borne by democracy is fulfilled.