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

**on the occasion of World Environment Day  
*Beat Plastic Pollution***

**5 June 2018**

For more than forty years, World Environment Day has reminded us of our responsibility for the preservation of our planet.

On the initiative of the Republic of India, host to this year's World Environment Day, the theme is "Beat Plastic Pollution", an environmental, social and economic concern.

Today, nearly one-third of the plastic packaging we use bypasses collection systems and ends up polluting our environment. This pollution particularly concerns our oceans. Carried by the seawater currents, billions of plastic fragments are amalgamated in the oceans. Over the last four decades, the amount of this waste has increased a hundredfold in the Pacific Ocean, to the point of forming what is now called the "seventh continent" of plastic, a vast garbage patch swirling around in the North Pacific, the size of one-third of the United States of America.

While ocean plastic pollution is primarily a threat to marine ecosystems, it is also a danger to human health as plastic waste enters the food chain. In recent years, these risks have increasingly attracted attention from policy-makers, the private sector, environmental NGOs, the media and the scientific community.

UNESCO fully associates itself with reflection and action in support of sustainable development, through its scientific, educational and cultural programmes for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. In this endeavour, plastic pollution is a significant challenge. For example, the Island of Principe Biosphere Reserve (Sao Tome and Principe) and the Programme on Man

and the Biosphere (MAB) have launched an awareness-raising and mobilization campaign entitled “No plastic. A small gesture in our hands”.

It is above all about changing behaviours and attitudes.

On this World Environment Day, let's share our ideas and solutions on #BeatPlasticPollution. Together, we can change our habits and beat this problem.