



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

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the *Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent
Extremism – The Way Forward***

Geneva, 8 April, 2016

H.E. Mr Didier Burkhalter, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland,

H.E. Mr Mogens Lykketoft, President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Mr Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the Government of Switzerland for this initiative.

Preventing violent extremism calls for new forms of action, by States, by international organisations.

This calls for new forms of 'soft power,' to prevent a threat fuelled by distorted interpretations of faith, hatred, and ignorance.

No one is born a violent extremist – they are made and fuelled.

Disarming this process is a new global struggle for hearts and minds.

This is the importance of the *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, to which UNESCO contributed.

Prevention must begin with human rights and the rule of law.

It must begin with dialogue across all boundary lines.

It must begin by empowering young people, especially young women.

Fundamentally, prevention must begin as early as possible... on the benches of schools, through global citizenship education.

I spoke on this at the *Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism* last September, invited by the United States President.

Last November, UNESCO held the first *High-Level Conference on Education to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism*.

Next month, we will launch a *Teacher's Guide on Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation*.

This spirit guides the *UNESCO NetMed Youth* project in 10 countries around the Mediterranean, for youth empowerment.

In countering radicalisation, the Internet must be nurtured as a force for tolerance.

Last June, UNESCO held the first *International Conference on Youth and the Internet – Fighting Radicalisation and Extremism*, when I launched a new *Framework for Action* to bolster media and information literacy and youth engagement.

We will hold a second conference on countering youth radicalization in cyberspace next October in Canada.

To respond to hate propaganda, we must unlock the power of new media to share alternative narratives.

This is why I went to the University of Baghdad last year, to launch a social media campaign -- *#Unite4Heritage* -- to engage young women and men in spreading the message of humanity as a single community, sharing human rights and heritage.

The same goals guide all UNESCO's action to safeguard cultural heritage and diversity – in Mali, Iraq, Syria.

Violent extremists spread exclusion and hatred.

We must teach human rights and tolerance.

Violent extremists promote fear and division.

We must respond with skills for critical thinking and intercultural dialogue, with opportunities for civic engagement, social and professional integration – to provide young people with jobs, to tackle the root causes of radicalisation.

In all this, we must respond with freedom of expression, enhancing the safety of journalists, to raise the flag for powerful messages of human rights and peace.

This is how we can prevent violent extremism and terrorism, working together, with States, across the United Nations.

Thank you.