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联合国教育、
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Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity

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Biodiversity is a common good, an invaluable legacy formed over the course of millions of years, and capital to transmit to future generations. In its definition, it includes the exceptional variety of the forms of life on Earth, as well as the natural environments where these forms developed – the ecosystems. Biodiversity is central to our own existence, offering all nature's resources to our development.

Biodiversity, however, is not inexhaustible. Human interventions – extensive exploitation of resources, unsustainable patterns of consumption, industrial pollution causing climate change – are resulting in irreparable damage to biodiversity.

This was highlighted by international experts at the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), which met last March in Medellin, Colombia. The reports produced by these experts confirmed the rapid deterioration in the state of biodiversity and underlined the direct effects of this deterioration, which are already visible, such as the spread of certain diseases to men.

UNESCO, a partner agency of IPBES, pledges to work towards halting the loss of biodiversity and fostering the sustainable use of ecosystems. The Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), for example, aims to ensure a harmonious balance between human activities and the natural environment. In the context of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020), UNESCO is also contributing actively to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, adopted 25 years ago by 196 parties and aimed at the conservation of biological diversity and a sustainable and equitable sharing of resources. At sites on its World Heritage List, in its World Network of Biosphere Reserves and its Global Geoparks, our Organization

develops, with all its partners, innovative solutions by addressing issues of biodiversity and cultural diversity in a complementary manner.

Beyond the urgent need to preserve biodiversity and restore degraded ecosystems, these programmes are helping to change attitudes and develop economic and social practices. This falls within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15, dedicated to the quality of life on Earth, and requires the sharing of values such as cooperation, respect for diversity, and intergenerational solidarity, values acquired and cultivated through education for sustainable development (ESD).

This International Day aims to raise awareness of these issues that are crucial to our lives today and in the future. On this Day, a beautiful American Indian proverb is particularly fitting: "We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Audrey Azoulay