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科学及文化组织

**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the World Book and Copyright Day**

**23 April 2016**

There is nothing like a book.

A book is a link between the past and the future. It is a bridge between generations and across cultures. It is a force for creating and sharing wisdom and knowledge.

Frank Kafka once said, “a book must be an ice-axe to break the seas frozen inside our soul.”

A window onto our inner lives, books are also the doorway to mutual respect and understanding between people, across all boundaries and differences. Coming in all forms, books embody the diversity of human ingenuity, giving shape to the wealth of human experience, expressing the search for meaning and expression that all women and men share, that drive all societies forward. Books help weave humanity together as a single family, holding a past in common, a history and heritage, to craft a destiny that is shared, where all voices are heard in the great chorus of human aspiration.

This is what we celebrate on *World Book and Copyright Day*, in partnership with the International Publishers Association, the International Booksellers Federation and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions -- the power of books to nurture creativity and advance dialogue between women and men of all cultures. I thank Wroclaw, Poland, as the *2016 World Book Capital*, for its commitment to spreading this message across the globe.

This has never been so important at a time when culture is under attack, when freedom of expression is threatened, when diversity is challenged by rising intolerance. In turbulent times, books embody the human capacity to conjure up worlds of reality and imagination and express them in voices of understanding, dialogue and tolerance. They are symbols of hope and dialogue that we must cherish and defend.

William Shakespeare died on 23 April, 1616, preceded by only one day by Cervantes. On this day, I call upon all of UNESCO's partners to share the message that books are a force to counter, what Shakespeare called, "the common curse of mankind -- folly and ignorance."

Irina Bokova