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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 for Universal Access to
Information**

28 September 2019

Universal access to information is a fundamental human right that plays a pivotal role in empowering citizens, facilitating fair debate and giving equal opportunities to all. It is a driving force for transparent, accountable and effective governance, and paves the way for freedom of expression, cultural and linguistic diversity, and participation in public life. For this reason, universal access to information is a pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UNESCO continues to play a leading role in building inclusive knowledge societies through the promotion of freedom of expression, media development, and universal access to information. The Organization is also responsible for monitoring this vital issue in line with Sustainable Development Goal target 16.10, which calls for us to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms”.

The theme of this year's celebration is “Leaving No One Behind!”, a mission in which digital technology is an invaluable resource. However, the unprecedented digital transformation of our era is also leading to new forms of inequality. To combat this, digital innovation must go hand in hand with the obligation of Member States to adopt and improve legislation for public access to information. Through implementing laws, investing in relevant infrastructure, and engaging civil society and young people in particular, access to information can protect human rights and drive sustainable development.

This year, UNESCO is celebrating the occasion by hosting a series of “Open Talks”. The main event, to be held in Lima, Peru, will provide a platform for exchanges

between journalists, the public and experts in information transparency and regulation. Other national and regional events are also set to take place across the globe, affording an opportunity to raise awareness and discuss best practices.

In times of growing disinformation and hate speech, the right to access information in the public interest that is held by governments and private actors is more important than ever. On this day, therefore, let us advance this right that is essential to our progress in sustainable development.